

# HISTORY OF GREECE.

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## CHAPTER I.

### GEOGRAPHICAL OUTLINES OF GREECE.

**T**HE character of every people is more or less closely connected with that of its land. The station which the Greeks filled among nations, the part which they acted, and the works which they accomplished, depended in a great measure on the position which they occupied on the face of the globe. The manner and degree in which the nature of the country affected the bodily and mental frame, and the social institutions of its inhabitants, may not be so easily determined; but its physical aspect is certainly not less important in a historical point of view, than it is striking and interesting in itself. An attentive survey of the geographical site of Greece, of its general divisions, and of the most prominent points on its surface, is an indispensable preparation for the study of its history. In the following sketch nothing more will be attempted, than to guide the reader's eye over an accurate map of the country, and to direct his attention to some of those indelible features, which have survived all the revolutions by which it has been desolated.

The land which its sons called *Hellas*, and for which we have adopted the Roman name *Greece*, lies on the south-east verge of Europe, and in length extends no further than from the thirty-sixth to the fortieth degree of latitude. It is distinguished among European coun-

tries by the same character which distinguishes Europe itself from the other continents,—the great range of its coast compared with the extent of its surface; so that while in the latter respect it is considerably less than Portugal, in the former it exceeds the whole Pyrenean peninsula. The great eastern limb which projects from the main trunk of the continent of Europe grows more and more finely articulated as it advances toward the south, and terminates in the peninsula of *Peloponnesus*, the smaller half of Greece, which bears some resemblance to an outspread palm. Its southern extremity is at a nearly equal distance from the two neighbouring continents: it fronts one of the most beautiful and fertile regions of Africa, and is separated from the nearest point of Asia by the southern outlet of the *Ægean* sea,—the sea, by the Greeks familiarly called their own, which, after being contracted into a narrow stream by the approach of the opposite shores at the *Hellespont*, suddenly finds its liberty in an ample basin as they recede toward the east and the west, and at length, escaping between Cape Malea and Crete, confounds its waters with the broader main of the Mediterranean. Over that part of this sea which washes the coast of Greece a chain of islands, beginning from the southern headland of Attica, Cape Sunium, first girds Delos with an irregular belt, the *Cyclades*, and then, in a waving line, links itself to a scattered group (the *Sporades*) which borders the Asiatic coast. Southward of these the interval between the two continents is broken by the larger islands *Crete* and *Rhodes*. From the isle of *Cythera*, which is parted by a narrow channel from *Laconia*, the snowy summits of the Cretan *Ida* are clearly visible, and from them the eye can probably reach the Rhodian *Atabyrus*<sup>1</sup>, and the mountains of *Asia Minor*; smaller islands occupy a part of the boundary which this line of view

<sup>1</sup> Diodorus, v. 59. Apollod. iii. 21. On the distance at which objects may be distinguished in the atmosphere of the Archipelago, see Dodwell, *Travels in Greece*, vol. i. p. 194.

may be conceived to fix to the *Ægean*. The sea which divides Greece from Italy is contracted, between the Iapygian peninsula and the coast of Epirus, into a channel only thirty geographical miles in breadth; and the Italian coast may be seen not only from the mountains of Corcyra, but from the low headland of the Ceraunian hills.

Thus on two sides Greece is bounded by a narrow sea; but toward the north its limits were never precisely defined. The word *Hellas* did not convey to the Greeks the notion of a certain geographical surface, determined by natural or conventional boundaries: it denoted the country of the *Hellenes*, and was variously applied according to the different views entertained of the people which was entitled to that name. The original *Hellas* was included in the territory of a little tribe in the south of Thessaly. When these *Hellenes* had imparted their name to other tribes, with which they were allied by a community of language and manners, *Hellas* might properly be said to extend as far as these national features prevailed. Ephorus regarded *Acarmania*, including probably the southern coast of the *Ambracian gulf* up to *Ambracia*, as the first Grecian territory on the west.<sup>1</sup> Northward of the gulf the irruption of barbarous hordes had stifled the germs of the Greek character in the ancient inhabitants of Epirus, and had transformed it into a foreign land; and it must have been rather the recollection of its ancient fame, as the primitive abode of the *Hellenes*, than the condition of its tribes after the Persian war, that induced Herodotus to speak of *Thesprotia* as part of *Hellas*.<sup>2</sup> On the east, Greece was commonly held to terminate with *Mount Homole* at the mouth of the *Peneus*; the more scrupulous, however, excluded even Thessaly from the honour of the *Hellenic* name, while Strabo, with consistent laxity, admitted Macedonia. But from *Ambracia* to the mouth of the *Peneus*, when these were taken as the extreme northern points, it was still impossible to draw

<sup>1</sup> In Strabo, viii. 334.

<sup>2</sup> ii. 56.

a precise line of demarcation ; for the same reason which justified the exclusion of Epirus applied, perhaps much more forcibly, to the mountaineers in the interior of Ætolia, whose barbarous origin, or utter degeneracy, was proved by their savage manners, and a language which Thucydides describes as unintelligible. When the Ætolians bad the last Philip withdraw from Hellas, the Macedonian king could justly retort, by asking where they would fix its boundaries ? and by reminding them that of their own body a very small part was within the pale from which they wished to exclude him. “ The tribe of the Agræans, of the Apodotians, and the Amphilocheians,” he emphatically observed, “ is not Hellas.”<sup>1</sup>

The northern part of Greece is traversed in its whole length by a range of mountains, the Greek Apennines, which issue from the same mighty root, the Thracian *Scomius*, in which *Hæmus*, and *Rhodopé*, and the Illyrian Alps, likewise meet. This ridge first takes the name of *Pindus*, where it intersects the northern boundary of Greece, at a point where an ancient route still affords the least difficult passage from Epirus into Thessaly.<sup>2</sup> From Pindus two huge arms stretch toward the eastern sea, and enclose the vale of *Thessaly*, the largest and richest plain in Greece : on the north the *Cambunian* hills, after making a bend toward the south, terminate in the loftier heights of *Olympus*, which are scarcely ever entirely free from snow ; the opposite and lower chain of *Othrys* parting, with its eastern extremity, the Malian from the Pagasæan gulf, sinks gently toward the coast. A fourth rampart, which runs parallel to Pindus, is formed by the range which includes the celebrated heights of *Pelion* and *Ossa* ; the first a broad and nearly even ridge, the other towering into a steep conical peak, the neighbour and rival of Olympus, with which, in the songs of the

<sup>1</sup> Polybius, xvii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> That of Metzovo, particularly well described by Dr. Holland, *Travels*, pp. 216—218.

country, it is said to dispute the pre-eminence in the depth and duration of its snows.<sup>1</sup> The mountain barrier with which Thessaly is thus encompassed is broken only at the north-east corner, by a deep and narrow cleft, which parts Ossa from Olympus; the defile so renowned in poetry as the vale, in history as the pass, of *Tempe*. The imagination of the ancient poets and declaimers delighted to dwell on the natural beauties of this romantic glen, and on the sanctity of the site, from which Apollo had transplanted his laurel to Delphi.<sup>2</sup> From other points of view, the same spot no less forcibly claims the attention of the historian. It is the only pass through which an army can invade Thessaly from the north, without scaling the high and rugged ridges of its northern frontier. The whole glen is something less than five miles long, and opens gradually to the east into a spacious plain, stretching to the shore of the *Thermaic* gulf. On each side the rocks rise precipitously from the bed of the Peneus, and in some places only leave room between them for the stream; and the road, which at the narrowest point is cut in the rock, might in the opinion of the ancients be defended by ten men against a host.<sup>3</sup> But *Tempe* is

<sup>1</sup> Holland, p. 348. Clarke, vol. iv. p. 278.

<sup>2</sup> Ælian's description, V. H. iii. 1., may be compared with those of Clarke, vol. iv. pp. 290—297. Holland, pp. 291—295. Dodwell, pp. 109—117., who prefers Ælian's description to Pliny's, not only as more beautiful, but more faithful. Holland compares the scenery of *Tempe* to that of St. Vincent's Rocks at Clifton, Gell (*Itin. of Greece*, p. 280.), to that of Matlock.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Cramer (*Description of Ancient Greece*, vol. i. p. 379.) conceives, from Livy's description, xlv. 6., that before the time of Julius Cæsar the road through *Tempe* was carried along the heights on the left bank of the Peneus, and that the modern road was constructed by the proconsul L. Cassius Longinus, of whom an inscription, cut in the face of the rock by the road side near the narrowest part, records "*Tempe munivit.*" Gell, *Itin. of Greece*, p. 278., has confounded this L. Cassius with the C. Cassius who was consul A.U.C. 581. But I do not find that any traveller has been struck by the same thought with Dr. Cramer; and it seems scarcely credible that the ancient road on the northern side should have continued till now entirely forgotten. Dodwell's interpretation of the inscription, according to which Longinus repaired the forts of *Tempe*, is at least quite as probable; and since the remains of a fort exactly answering to one of those mentioned by Livy are still visible on the right of the river (Dodwell, vol. ii. p. 112. Gell, p. 278.), it can hardly be doubted that they all stood on the same side. If it had been otherwise, how could Livy have avoided noticing the new southern road, which must have rendered his description ambiguous, and, in fact, incorrect?

at least equally interesting as the only channel which nature has provided for discharging the waters which descend from the Thessalian mountains into the sea. An opinion, grounded perhaps rather on observation and reflection than on tradition, prevailed among the ancients, that these waters had once been imprisoned, and had covered the country with a vast lake, of which those of *Nessonis* and *Bœbæis*, at the foot of Pelion, were considered as remains, till an outlet was opened for them by a sudden shock, which rent the rocks of Tempe assunder. This beneficent convulsion was ascribed by the legends to the arm of Hercules, or the trident of the god Poseidon or Neptune: the appearance of the plain and of the pass has impressed modern travellers with a similar conviction of the fact. The Peneus itself, though it is fed by all the most considerable rivers of Thessaly, is a very diminutive stream; and though, when swollen by the melting of the snows, it sometimes floods the surrounding plains, in its ordinary state is sluggish and shallow. The vale through which it flows from the north-west corner of Thessaly is contracted in its upper part between the lower ridges of Pindus and an extensive range of hills branching off from the Cambunian chain, the highlands of *Hestiæotis*. Near the rocks of *Meteora*, in the neighbourhood of Homer's craggy *Ithomé*, the basin of the Peneus expands into a vast level toward the south-east. At *Tricca* the river takes an easterly direction, and the plain widens on the right, but is still confined by the hills on the left, until within about ten miles from *Larissa*, where it is bounded on the north only by the skirts of Olympus, and extends a gently undulating surface southward to the foot of Othrys: a tract not less than fifty miles in length, comprehending, as its central part, the districts called *Thessaliotis*, and *Pelasgiotis*, or the *Pelasgian Argos*; the territory of the *Perrhæbians* in the north, and in the south the inland part of *Achaia*, or *Phthiotis*, the region which included the ancient *Hellas*. On the eastern side of

the ridge which stretches from Tempe to the gulf of *Pagasæ*, a narrow strip of land, called *Magnesia*, is intercepted between the mountains and the sea, broken by lofty headlands and the beds of torrents, and exposed without a harbour to the fury of the north-east gales. A chain of rocky islands, beginning near the eastern cape of *Magnesia*, and in full view of Mount *Athos*, seems to point the way toward *Lemnos* and the Hellespont. The shores of the gulf of *Pagasæ*, which open into some rich plains bounded by a range of low hills, which link *Pelion* with *Othrys*, may be considered as one of the most favoured regions of Greece; and its natural beauty and singular advantages, which fitted it to become the cradle of Greek navigation, were undoubtedly associated by more than an accidental connection with its mythical glories. In the overhanging forests of *Pelion* the fated tree was felled, which first found a way through the *Cyanean* rocks to revive the dormant feud between *Europe* and *Asia*; and on the same ground the *Muses* met at the marriage of *Peleus* and *Thetis*, to predict the birth of *Achilles* and the ruin of *Troy*.<sup>1</sup>

South of this gulf the coast is again deeply indented by that of *Malia*, into which the *Spercheius*, rising from Mount *Tymphrestus*, a continuation of *Pindus*, winds through a long narrow vale, which, though considered as a part of *Thessaly*, forms a separate region, widely distinguished from the rest by its physical features. It is intercepted between *Othrys* and *Æta*, a huge rugged pile, which, stretching from *Pindus* to the sea at *Thermopylæ*, forms the inner barrier of Greece, as the *Cambunian* range is the outer, to which it corresponds in direction, and is nearly equal in height. From Mount *Callidromus*, a southern limb of *Æta*, the same range is continued without interruption, though under various names, and different degrees of elevation, along the coast of the *Eubæan* sea, passing through the countries of the *Locrian* tribes, which

<sup>1</sup> Euripides, *Med.* 3. *Iphig. A.* 1040.

derived their distinguishing epithets, the *Epicnemidian* and *Opuntian*, from Mount *Cnemis* and the town of *Opus*, till it sinks into the vale of the Bœotian *Asopus*. Another branch, issuing from the same part of Pindus, connects it with the loftier summits of *Parnassus*, and afterward skirting the Corinthian gulf, under the names of *Cirphis* and *Helicon*, proceeds to form the northern boundary of Attica, under those of *Cithæron* and *Parnes*.

At the parting of these two great branches, the head of the vale through which the *Cephisus* flows into the lake *Copais*, lies the little country of *Doris*, obscure and insignificant in itself, but interesting as the foster-mother of a race of conquerors who became the masters of Greece. It is described as a narrow plain, gently undulating between the rugged precipices and shaggy glens of *Œta* and *Parnassus*, which, by their vicinity, render its winters comparatively rude and long<sup>1</sup>, but the soil is fertile in grain and pastures. It is watered by several little streams, which swell the *Cephisus* into a considerable river, even before the valley has begun to open into the broader plains of *Phocis*. Two passes afford an entrance into Doris from the north; one, the more narrow and difficult, leading across the eastern end of *Œta*, the other crossing the same ridge farther to the west. Southward, a mountain track traverses the heights of *Parnassus*, and descends on the vale of *Crissa*; a more circuitous, but less difficult, route leads through the heart of *Ætolia*, to the shores of the Corinthian gulf near *Naupactus*. *Phocis*, which, though it once possessed a port on the *Eubœan* channel, was, in the later period of its history, entirely parted from the sea by *Locris*, includes some narrow but fertile plains on the banks of the *Cephisus*, stretching to the skirts of *Parnassus* on the one side, and to the *Locrian* mountains on the other. The passes to the north across Mount *Cnemis* are steep and difficult;

<sup>1</sup> Dodwell, however (vol. ii. p. 132.), found the corn nearly ripe on the 11th of June. His description teaches us to qualify the epithet *λυπεόχωροι*, which Strabo (ix. 427.) applies to the Dorian towns.

but the range which separates Phocis from the coast of Opus sinks into a hollow of easy ascent. Parnassus itself and the adjacent mass of Cirphis, between which the valley of Crissa descends upon the Corinthian gulf, belonged to the Phocian territory. The basin of the Cephissus is suddenly contracted, by a ridge jutting out from Parnassus toward Mount *Edylion*, into a narrow outlet, which is the entrance to Bœotia, and opens on the spacious level which extends to the edge of the lake Copais.

The mountains which inclose the inland territory which formed the main part of *Bœotia*, and separate it from the narrow maritime districts on the Eubœan sea and the Corinthian gulf, have been already described. The interior of the country is by no means a uniform tract, but is broken into several distinct valleys and plains. A ridge of hills, which joins Helicon with the eastern range, and parts the lake of *Copæ* (*Copais*) from that of *Hylica*, may be considered as dividing Bœotia into two great portions. The northern contains the lower vale of the Cephissus, and the Copaic lake, into which it flows. The hills which rise from the southern and eastern edges of the lake afford no visible outlet for its waters; and the influx of the Cephissus, and the smaller streams that spring from the side of Helicon, seem to threaten to reduce this part of Bœotia to the state from which Thessaly was said to have been delivered by the trident of Poseidon. The tradition of the Ogygian deluge appears to preserve the recollection of a period when the whole plain was one vast lake; and it is highly probable that it first became capable of cultivation, when one of those convulsions by which Greece was frequently visited, had opened a subterraneous channel for the flood through the rocky barrier which confined it. The eastern end of the lake is contracted into a narrow cove, which is closed by the craggy skirts of Mount *Ptöon*: a ridge of three or four miles in breadth parts it from the plain on the shore of the Eubœan channel. The art and industry of the

people which inhabited the borders of the lake in the earliest times of which any account remains, would perhaps have been equal to the task of piercing the bowels of the rock even to this extent; but since the land could scarcely have been habitable before such a passage had been formed, the origin of that which actually exists must clearly be ascribed to the hand of nature: and this conclusion is confirmed by the appearance of every part that has yet been explored. Several natural chasms open on the lake; but it would seem that all these clefts convey their streams into one main current, which is discharged through a single mouth on the eastern side of the hill, whence it rushes rapidly to the sea. The passage, however, was liable to be blocked up by causes similar to that which appears to have produced it; and tradition and history have recorded some instances of such a stoppage. One in the mythical period was attributed, like the severing of Tempe, to the strength of Hercules, who was said to have adopted this expedient to humble the pride of the wealthy city of *Orchomenus*, which stood near the lake. A still earlier calamity of the same nature is intimated by the tradition that some ancient towns, among them a Bœotian *Athens* and *Eleusis*, had been destroyed by the rising of the lake. The removal of such obstructions was unquestionably not left to time and chance, but was speedily effected by the industry of the people, whose fruitful fields had been laid under water. A natural perpendicular chasm, which descends to the surface of one of the subterraneous streams, might suggest the possibility of seconding the process of nature. During the better days of Greece, the level of the lake appears to have been kept regularly low, though it might be occasionally raised by extraordinary floods; but in the time of Alexander, either long neglect, or some inward convulsion, again choked up the channel, and produced an inundation. An engineer, named Crates<sup>1</sup>, was employed to clear the passage, and he

<sup>1</sup> Strabo's account of the operations of Crates, ix. 407., admits of various interpretations. That of Kruse (*Hellas*, vol. ii. p. 454.) seems pre-