

HISTORY OF GREECE.

CHAPTER XI.

CIVIL HISTORY OF ATTICA TO THE EXPULSION OF THE PISISTRATIDS.

WE have already taken a survey of the legends relating to the origin of the people of Attica, and to the events of their history down to the Ionian migration. We must now look back to the same period, in order to trace the progress of their political institutions, from the earliest times to the establishment of that form of government under which the Athenians were living when they first came into conflict with the power of Persia.

Among the few facts which we are able to collect with regard to the state of Attica in the earliest times, there are two which seem to be so well attested, or so clearly deduced from authentic accounts, that they may be safely admitted. We read that the territory of Attica was originally divided into a number of little states; and tradition has preserved the names of some petty chiefs, who are said to have ruled in these districts with the title of king.¹ These communities were independent of each other and of Athens in their internal government, and sometimes even made war on

¹ Colænus at Myrrhinus (Pausan. i. 31. 5.). Porphyriion at Athmonia (Paus. i. 14. 7.). Crocon, whose palace had stood near Rheiti (Pausan. i. 38. 1.). Compare Plut. Thes. 32. Thucydides, ii. 15. But it is not clear that there is any reference to this state of things in the tradition that Cranaus, when dethroned by Amphictyon, fled to the deme of Lamptrae, and was buried there (Paus. i. 31. 3.); which Platner (Beitraege, p. 25.) considers as another example.

their neighbours. On the other hand, we are informed that attempts were made, at a very early period, to unite the forces of the whole nation for the purpose of mutual defence. It was Cecrops, according to an Attic antiquarian¹, who first established a confederacy among the inhabitants of Attica, to repel the inroads of the Carian pirates, and of the Bœotians, who invaded it on the land side. The same author indeed speaks as if Cecrops, with this view, had founded twelve cities, or had divided the country into twelve districts, which were members of this confederacy: and this it was necessary to suppose, if Cecrops was believed to be sovereign of Attica. But, though we reject this opinion, we need not on this account question the existence of the league itself. The number (one which predominates in the Ionian institutions) was made up, according to Philochorus, of the following names: — *Cecropia, Tetrapolis, Epacria, Decelea, Eleusis, Aphidna, Thoricus, Brauron, Cytherus, Sphettus, Cephisia, Phalerus*. The first of these names probably represents the town which afterward became the capital, but which may not have been more ancient than several of the others in this list, nor for a long time more powerful. Among the rest, the Tetrapolis (which contained the four villages, *Ænoe, Marathon, Probalinthus, Tricorythus*) and Sphettus were, according to other traditions, founded long after the time of Cecrops. It seems to be a similar event, if it is not the same, that is implied in the name of the Attic king, Amphictyon. This may be probably interpreted to signify the foundation of an Amphictyonic congress, such as appears to have subsisted in early times in almost every part of Greece. But the influence attributed to Cecrops, and the mention of Amphictyon among the kings of Athens, indicate that Athens was acknowledged as the head of this confederacy. The periodical meetings of its council were probably held in Cecropia, and the religious rites, which

¹ Philochorus in Strabo, ix. p. 397.

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were invariably connected with such associations, celebrated in the temple of the Athenian goddess.

It is not so clear what kind of foundation ought to be attributed to other accounts, in which the whole country, or people, is said to have been divided into four tribes, which changed their names, if not their constitution, under several successive kings. Thus, in the reign of Cecrops, these tribes received the names, *Cecropis*, *Autocthon*, *Actæa*, and *Paralia*. Under Cranaus, either a new distribution was made, or the old one was designated by the new names, *Cranais*, *Atthis*, *Mesogæa*, *Diacris*. Under Erichthonius again each tribe took its name from a god: they were then called *Dias*, *Athenais*, *Posidonias*, *Hephæstias*. It must be observed that, as the last series of names is entirely derived from the religion of the country, so in the two preceding some of the names relate to the natural features of the land (*Actæa*, *Paralia*, *Mesogæa*, *Diacris*, and perhaps *Atthis*), others to the origin or political relations of its inhabitants (*Cecropis*, *Autocthon*, *Cranais*). We may readily believe that the inhabitants of Attica were very early distinguished from one another by various names, according to the different stocks from which they sprang; which may perhaps be indicated by the names of some of their mythical kings, as Cranaus and Cecrops: or according to the nature of the regions which they occupied, in the plains, or the highlands, or the coast: or according to the habits and pursuits belonging to these various situations: or finally according to the deities who were exclusively or pre-eminently objects of worship among them. And it would not be difficult, without much violence, to make the three above-mentioned divisions tally with each other.¹ But we have so little assurance that they are any thing more than arbitrary combinations, invented by writers who transferred the form of institutions which

¹ The reader may see how this has been done for the first two divisions by Dr. Arnold (*Thucyd.* i. p. 656.), and for the third by Platner in a little dissertation, *De Gentibus Atticis*.

existed in the historical period to the mythical ages, that the attempt is scarcely worth making.

Even if we believe that, in the period represented by the reigns of Cecrops and Cranaus, Attica comprehended four main divisions, described by any of the above-mentioned names, it will not follow that the term *tribe* is correctly applied to them in a sense implying the existence of a political unity pervading the whole nation. They may still have been connected by no bond but the temporary fear of a common enemy. The fourfold distribution of the country is the foundation of another tradition, which distinctly asserts the absolute independence of the several parts. The four sons of Pandion share his dominions among them, and rule their respective portions with supreme authority. But all these divisions were finally superseded by one much more celebrated and lasting, which is said to have been instituted by Ion, the progenitor of the Ionian race, and to have derived its names from his four sons. This last feature in the tradition indeed, though it is adopted with perfect confidence by Herodotus, excited the suspicion of many even among the ancients, who perceived that the names of the tribes founded by Ion were all or mostly descriptive of certain occupations.¹ They were the Teleontes, or as it is also found written, Geleontes, or Gedeontes; the Hopletes; the Ægicores; and the Argades. With regard to the second and third of these names, there is no question that the former denotes a class of warriors; and there seems to be as little room to doubt, that the latter was once applied to the race which tended its flocks on the Attic hills. And this is ground sufficient for inferring, that the two other names are similarly significant; but their precise mean-

¹ With the highest respect for Mr. Malden's judgment, we cannot be satisfied with his assertion (History of Rome, p. 140.) that "the notion that the four Ionic tribes were castes, deriving their names from their employments, is founded on nothing but bad etymologies." He should at least have proposed some better etymology for "Ὀπλητῆς and Αἰγικόρες. Niebuhr's objection, from the order in which the names occur, is weighty, but not conclusive. On a point of etymology Buttman's authority is at least sufficient to shelter those who agree with him from the suspicion of having fallen into any very palpable error. See his Mythologus, ii. p. 318.

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ing is still the subject of a controversy, which is not likely to be ever decided, because each of the conflicting opinions may be easily connected with a plausible theory. With the assistance however of other descriptions left by the ancients of these divisions, we perceive that the last name, which will signify *labourers* in general, must have been applied in this case either to a class of husbandmen, or to one employed in other laborious occupations. Our choice between these meanings must depend on that which is to be assigned to the first name, which is unfortunately both variously written, and, according to each way of writing it, ambiguous in sense: and the difference amounts to nothing less than the whole interval between the summit and the base of the social scale. For according to one opinion the Teleontes, or Geleontes, were a sacerdotal caste, according to another they were peasants, who tilled the land of their lords, and paid a tribute, or a rent, for the use of it.

This question is subordinate to another as to the origin and nature of these divisions; for it is doubtful in what sense they are to be called tribes. The mythical story describes Ion as their founder, just as Romulus is said to have instituted the distinction between the patricians and the plebeians at Rome. This supposition needs not now be refuted: but we still have to inquire, whether these four tribes were from the beginning comprehended under a higher national unity, or whether they remained insulated and independent of each other down to the period represented by the reign of Theseus. One of the four names — that of the pastoral tribe — implies a geographical separation, and it must have been contrasted in the same sense to one of the rest, that which describes the tillers of the plain. This leads us to believe that the other two were similarly separated from each other and the rest, though a tribe of warriors or priests was not necessarily connected with any peculiar habitation. If however the warrior tribe was chiefly composed of foreign conquerors, it may easily

be imagined that it may have occupied a separate district, and that it was thus locally distinguished from the rest. But here we find ourselves perplexed by the ambiguity of the name Geleontes, which in Herodotus stands first, and by this position seems to confirm the opinion that it denoted a priestly caste. In this case no reason can be assigned for limiting it to any situation distinct from the others. Still it is not impossible that it may have occupied a territory of its own; and it is not an improbable conjecture that this territory was the hallowed land of Eleusis. On this supposition the four tribes would correspond to a geographical division of Attica, which may be compared with that which is attributed to the sons of Pandion, and which may also be easily adjusted to that which we find at a much later period determining the state of political parties in Attica — the threefold division, of the plain, the highlands, and the coast. On the other hand if the tribe which has been taken for a priestly caste, was really composed of a dependent peasantry, they cannot so well have been locally distinguished from the warriors; for these must then have been the lords whose lands they tilled: as on the other supposition both the priests and the warriors must be conceived to have employed the services of a similar class of subjects in cultivating their possessions; and it would therefore be necessary to suppose either that the warriors were confined to the town and a district in its immediate vicinity, while their serfs inhabited the country, or that the Geleontes were a tribe of free husbandmen, who occupied a different part of the Attic plains. But in any case we perceive that no political union is implied by the four tribes of Ion. The Eleusinian priesthood indeed might only be protected by its sanctity; but the inhabitants of the mountains and of the maritime valleys might have been able long to maintain their independence against the warrior tribe, notwithstanding the advantages it may have possessed in its weapons, or its armour, or its closer and more orderly array.

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We have spoken of the priestly tribe as a caste : and if there was such a tribe, it can scarcely be considered in any other light. Hence we are naturally led to apply the same term to the other three : and undoubtedly there may have been a period during which the occupations from which they derived their names continued hereditary in the same families. But we have no ground for believing that this separation was ever enforced by any religious sanction, or was any thing more than the natural result of situation and circumstances. We have no reason to imagine that the four tribes constituted a hierarchy, after the manner of the Indian or Egyptian : on the contrary it is probable that, in proportion as they became more closely united in one body, the primitive distinctions, to which they owed their names, were gradually obliterated by mutual intercourse. The difficulty of conceiving how this may have been effected with regard to the priests, is rather an objection to the hypothesis that they once formed a caste, than a ground for doubting that they had ceased to be one, before they became a part of the Attic nation. For if they once occupied such a station by the side of the warrior tribe, it could only have been through some convulsion, of which no trace is left in history, that they lost their sacred character, with its consequent privileges and influence. Such a revolution may undoubtedly have occurred : but if so, it must have preceded that settlement of the Attic population which is designated in the legend by the arrival and the institutions of Ion ; for from this epoch we must date the commencement of a heroic age in Attica, during which the state of society became more and more similar to that described in the Homeric poems, when a priestly caste was utterly unknown in Greece, or at the utmost all that remained of such a one were a few scattered fragments — sacred functions appropriated to certain families — affording doubtful traces of a long past existence.

The four tribes of Ion then were perhaps originally not members of one body, but distinct communities,

long kept apart by differences of descent, of situation, of pursuits, and of religion, yet still connected by neighbourhood, by affinities closer or looser of blood and language, and by the occasional need of mutual assistance. Thus was their gradual interfusion prepared and promoted; while the superiority of the race which occupied Athens, as it became more and more felt, disposed all to look to their city as the natural centre of political union. The time at length arrived when the effect of all these causes became visible, in the important change which is commonly described as the work of Theseus, by which the national unity was consolidated, and many of the germs were fixed, out of which the institutions to which Athens owed her greatness finally unfolded themselves.

Theseus is said to have collected the inhabitants of Attica in one city, and thus for ever to have put an end to the discord and hostilities, which had till then prevented them from considering themselves as one people. The sense in which this account is to be understood, is probably not that any considerable migration immediately took place out of other districts to Athens, but only that Athens now became the seat of government for the whole country; that all the other Attic towns sank from the rank of sovereign independent states to that of subjects; and that the administration of their affairs, with the dispensation of justice, was transferred from them to the capital.¹ The courts and councils in which the functions of government had hitherto been exercised throughout the rest of Attica were abolished, or concentrated in those of the sovereign city. This

¹ Dr. Arnold (Appendix iii. to Thucydides i. p. 662.) seems to think that residence at Athens was the condition on which the nobles were admitted to a share in the government; and that those parts of the population of Attica which still remained in their original habitations, were not included in the tribes at all. We conceive both these points to be very doubtful, and the second extremely improbable. Indeed the former proposition is a little qualified in a subsequent page (664.), where it is said *the Eupatridæ seem mostly to have resided at Athens*; and as it is there admitted that some inhabitants of the country were enrolled in the tribes, it does not appear in Dr. Arnold's statement on what principle the rest were excluded.

union was cemented by religion, perhaps by the mutual recognition of deities, which had hitherto been honoured only with a local and peculiar worship, and certainly by public festivals, in which the whole people assembled to pay their homage to the tutelary goddess of Athens, and to celebrate the memory of their incorporation.¹ That this event was attended with a great enlargement of the city itself might be readily presumed, even if it was not expressly related. Thucydides fixes on this as the epoch when the lower city was added to the ancient one, which had covered little more than the rock, which was afterwards the citadel, though it still retained the name of the city. And hence there may seem to have been some foundation for Plutarch's statement that Theseus called the city Athens, if this name properly signified the whole inclosure of the Old and the New Town. But though, after this revolution, new temples, and other buildings public and private, must have continued to rise at the foot of the Cecropian rock, it is not necessary to suppose that any considerable addition was immediately made to the population of Athens. It is probable that the families who were induced by the new order of things to change their abode, were chiefly those of the highest rank, whose members had constituted the ruling class in their respective states, and were admitted to a similar station under the new constitution.

This leads us to consider the ambiguous light in which Theseus is represented by the ancients, on the one hand as the founder of a government which was, for many centuries after him, rigidly aristocratical, and on the other hand as the parent of the Athenian democracy. If we make due allowance for the exaggerations of poets or rhetoricians, who adorn him with the latter of these titles, in order to exalt the antiquity of the popular institutions of later times, we shall perhaps

¹ The *Συνόικιστος* (Thuc. ii. 15. and Steph. Byz. voc. *Ἀθῆναι*.), Panathenæa, Festival of Aphrodite Pandemus (Pausan. i. 22. 3.). To the same head may perhaps be referred the introduction of the worship of Dionysus, which is said to have taken place under Amphictyon.

find that neither description is entirely groundless, though the former is more simply and evidently true. Theseus is said to have accomplished his purpose partly by force, partly by persuasion. With the lower classes, we read, he found no difficulty; but the powerful men were only induced to comply with his proposals, by his promise that all should be admitted to an equal share in the government; and that he would resign all his royal prerogatives, except those of commanding in war, and of watching over the laws. This promise he fulfilled in his regulation of the state, when he laid aside his kingly majesty, and invited all the citizens to equal rights. But on the other hand, to guard against democratical confusion, he instituted a gradation of ranks, and a proportionate distribution of power. He divided the people into three classes, nobles, husbandmen, artisans¹; and to the first of these he reserved all the offices of the state, with the privilege of ordering the affairs of religion, and of interpreting the laws, human and divine. This same division however is also represented to have been made in each of the four tribes, so that each included a share of each class. This can only be conceived possible on the supposition, that the distinctions which originally separated the tribes had become merely nominal; and that although the occupations from which two of them at least derived their names were always held ignoble, there were families among them no less proud of their antiquity, than the most illustrious of the warriors or the priests. Still we need not imagine, that the numbers of the noble class were equal in each of the tribes. The nobles of the tribe to which Athens itself belonged may have formed the main body, and may on that account have been the less unwilling to extend and strengthen their power on condition of admitting a few additional partners.

The privileges which Theseus is said to have conferred on his nobles, were undoubtedly the same which they had enjoyed, in narrower spheres, before the union.

¹ *Ευπατρίδαι, Γεωμόροι, Δημιουργοί.*