

computed both by years and by olympiads; for it has been customary to allow four precise years to an olympiad instead of fifty months. The Greeks did not begin to compute the time by olympiads, from the period when those games were first instituted. They had even subsisted some centuries before they began to reckon by them; and the first olympiad, according to Usher's chronology, begins only 776 years before the Christian era, 29 years before the Babylonian era of Nabonassar, and 149 before the building of Rome.

The amusements of the people in all these public games were of the same nature, and consisted principally in viewing contests of skill in all the athletic exercises. The prizes bestowed on the victors were not rewards of any intrinsic value, as those given at the ancient funeral games; they were originally of the most simple nature. A crown of wild olive or of parsley was accounted the highest reward in the times of virtuous simplicity, when glory was a sufficient incitement to excellence without the sordid allurements of interest; and so powerful is habit in its influence on the mind, that even in the latter ages of Greece, when luxury had introduced corruption of every kind, the victors in those games had no other reward than a garland of leaves. In a political view, these public games were, during the first ages of their institution, of the most important consequence. Independently of their effect in promoting in the youth a hardy and vigorous conformation of body, and that activity and address in martial exercises and in single combat, which, according to the ancient system of war, were of the utmost importance, a most beneficial consequence of those public games was the frequent assembling together of the inhabitants of all the states of Greece, and thus promoting a national union; to which the difference of their governments, and their separate interests, were otherwise opposing a constant resistance. Assembled on these public occasions from motives of pleasure and amusement, to which was joined the notion of performing a duty of religion, and indulging in every species of festivity, they could not avoid considering each other as brethren and fellow citizens. Whatever were the political interferences of the several states, or their national animosities, every grudge of this kind was at least for the time obliterated. Thucydides informs us that all hostile operations between states actually at war were suspended during the performance of those solemnities. Another consequence of those meetings was the dissemination of knowledge, arts, science, and literature; for it must be observed, that although the chief contests in the sacred games were those in the martial and athletic exercises, there were likewise trials of skill in poetry, history, and music; and it is chiefly to these latter exercises of genius that we must attribute the eminence of the Greeks in those sciences above all the nations of antiquity.

CHAPTER VIII.

Early period of the Greek history continued—Earliest state of agriculture in Greece—Erectheus institutes the Eleusinian Mysteries—Obtains the sovereignty of Attica—Theseus unites the cities of Attica—This the age of the marvellous—End of that period—Expedition of the Argonauts—Course of their voyage—The solstitial and equinoctial points fixed by Chiron—This the foundation of Sir Isaac Newton's chronology—Twofold proof on which it rests—Progress of maritime affairs in Greece—State of the military art—War of Thebes—War of the *Epigoni*—War of Troy—Ancient system of warfare—The tactic or arrangement of their troops—Subsistence of the armies—Arms—The war of the *Heracleidae*—Change of government in Greece—Commencement of the democracy of Athens—Origin of the Greek colonies—Causes of their rapid advancement.

FROM the period of the arrival of the first of those Eastern colonies which formed establishments in Greece, down to the era of the war of Troy, is an interval of above 300 years, in which the Greeks were gradually shaking off their original barbarism, and advancing in civilization and the knowledge of the arts of life. This whole space of time, however, is accounted the fabulous period of the Grecian history. Not that it contains no facts of which the authenticity can be relied on, but that it abounds with many, which, with a basis of truth, have served as the foundation for an immense superstructure of fable. Part of the history of this period I have given in the preceding chapter, in which I have shortly traced the progress of the Greeks from their most barbarous state down to the introduction of letters into Greece by Cadmus. I shall now throw together such facts as are tolerably well authenticated, and may be relied on as the great outlines of the history of what remains of that doubtful period down to the Trojan war. From that era, when it is generally allowed that fiction ceases to mix itself with authentic history, we shall proceed with a greater degree of light, and find the objects of our study gradually rising upon us in point of importance.

Greece, which is not naturally a fertile country, nourishing only a few inhabitants, and these seeking their sustenance, like other savages, from the woods and mountains, did not begin to practise agriculture till about 150 years after the time of Cecrops. At this time Erectheus, either a Greek who had sailed to Egypt, or the leader of a new colony of Egyptians, is said to have introduced agriculture into Attica, and to have relieved that country, then suffering from famine, by the importation of a large quantity of Egyptian grain. The only produce of the native soil at this time

was the olive, which served as a very nourishing food, but of which the various uses were then so little known that it has been doubted if, even in the days of Homer, the Greeks used oil for the purpose of giving light. It is certain that this great poet, who is abundantly minute in describing every circumstance of domestic life, never mentions oil as applied to that purpose.*

Erectheus, called by the latter Greeks Eriethonius, is said to have cultivated the plains of Eleusis, then a barren waste, and to have instituted, in honor of Ceres, the Eleusinian Mysteries, in imitation of the Egyptian games of Isis. Ceres is feigned to have come herself into Greece at this period; and the poets have recorded many prodigies of her performance. As to the precise nature of those Eleusinian mysteries, the moderns can only form conjectures; since, even among the ancients, they were kept an inviolable secret from all but those who were initiated. They certainly were of a religious and even of a moral nature; since we find the wisest among the ancients expressing themselves with regard to them in strains of the highest encomium. Cicero, speaking of them, says, (De Leg. 1. 2.) "Among many other advantages which we have derived from Athens, this is the greatest; for it has improved a rude and barbarous people, instructed us in the art of civilized life, and has not only taught us to live cheerfully, but to die in peace in the hope of a more happy futurity." For a very learned conjectural explanation of those mysteries, we refer the reader to Bishop Warburton's *Divine Legation of Moses*; and many curious particulars regarding the actual ceremonies performed in those sacred solemnities are enumerated by Mr. Cumberland in his *Observer*, a work which contains a great deal of valuable research on various topics of the antiquities and literature of the Greeks.†

* Their apartments were lighted only by fires, and in the palaces of princes odoriferous wood was employed for that purpose.—Odyss. v. 59; Ibid. vi. 306. They likewise used torches of pine and resinous woods.—Odyss. xviii. 309.

† According to Mr. Cumberland, the Eleusinian mysteries were celebrated in the time of autumn, every fifth year, at Eleusis, where a great concourse of people met on the occasion. The ceremonies of initiation were preceded by sacrifices, prayers, and ablutions. The candidates were exercised in trials of secrecy, and prepared by vows of continence; every circumstance was contrived to render the act as awful and striking as possible; the initiation was performed at midnight, and the candidate was taken into an interior sacristy of the temple, with a myrtle garland on his head; here he was examined, if he had duly performed his stated ablutions; clean hands, a pure heart, and a native proficiency in the Greek tongue, were indispensable requisites. Having passed this examination, he was admitted into the temple, which was an edifice of immense magnitude: after proclamation made that the strictest silence should be observed, the officiating priest took out the sacred volumes containing the mysteries; these books were written in a strange character, interspersed with figures of animals, and various emblems and hieroglyphics; they were preserved in a cavity between two large blocks of stone, closely fitted to each other, and they were carefully replaced by the priest with much solemnity, after he had explained what was necessary to the initiated out of them. The

The services of Erectheus were rewarded by his obtaining the sovereignty of Attica, which, from that time, began to advance in civilization; and in the succeeding age, during the reign of Theseus, the Greeks in general began to display an active and ambitious spirit, which signalized itself in some very extraordinary enterprises. Such were the expedition of the Argonauts under Jason; the war of Thebes, in which seven kings combined against Eteocles, its sovereign; and the war of Troy, which engaged all the states and princes of Greece.

Attica, before the time of Theseus, though under one sovereign, was divided into twelve detached states or cities, each governed by its own magistrates and laws. This prince laid the foundation of the grandeur of Attica, by uniting these twelve states, combining their interests, and throwing them into one people. The separate magistracies were abolished, and the whole agreed to be governed by the same code of laws, in the framing of which the principal men of each state had an equal suffrage. Erectheus had divided the citizens into four classes: Theseus reduced them to three—the nobles, the laborers, and the artisans. As the two last were the most numerous and the most powerful, he balanced that inequality, by conferring on the first the sole regulation of all that regarded religion, the administration of justice, and public policy. But there were in this institution the seeds of future discord and faction; for it was in the power of an ambitious noble, by ingratiating himself with the inferior orders, to obtain such an ascendancy as to regulate every thing by his will; and, in fact, the constitution of Attica was at this time perpetually fluctuating, and the people for ever embroiled in civil commotions.

initiated were enjoined to honor their parents, to reverence the immortal gods, and abstain from particular sorts of diet, particularly tame fowls, fish, beans, and certain sorts of apples.

When this was finished, the priests began to play off the whole machinery of the temple, in all its terror; doleful groans and lamentations broke from the fane; thick and sudden darkness involved the temple, momentary gleams of light flashed forth every now and then, with tremblings as if an earthquake had shaken the edifice; sometimes these coruscations continued long enough to discover all the splendor of the shrines and images, accompanied with voices in concert, dancings, and music; at other times, during the darkness, severities were exercised upon the initiated by persons unseen; they were dragged to the ground by the hair of their heads, and beaten and lashed with stripes, without knowing from whom the blows proceeded, or why they were inflicted: lightnings, and thunderings, and dreadful apparitions were occasionally played off, with every invention to terrify and astonish; at length, upon a voice crying out some barbarous, unintelligible words, the ceremony was concluded, and the initiated dismissed. The garment which he wore upon this occasion was not to be laid aside while it would hang together, and the shreds were then to be dedicated at some shrine, as a tattered trophy of the due performance of the mysteries of Ceres. These mysteries were held in such general respect, that it afforded great cause of reproach against Socrates for having neglected his initiation. The vows of secrecy, and the penalties to be inflicted on their violation, were as binding as could possibly be devised.—Cumberland's *Observer*, Vol. v. No. 115.

It is principally on the age of Theseus, that the Greeks have indulged their vein for the marvellous. Every thing is supernatural, and every great man is either a god or a demi-god. The most probable source of this I conceive to be, that the princes, who had then become really powerful, and exercised a high control over their subjects, taking advantage of the superstitious character of the times, and of the people's credulity, assumed to themselves a divine origin, in order the better to support their new authority. Having at all times the priests under their influence, they could do this with great facility, by instituting religious rites in honor of their divine progenitors; and if they could thus prevail so far as to pass with their contemporaries for the offspring of the gods, it is no wonder that the succeeding ages should retain the same idea of them, and decorate their lives and exploits with a thousand circumstances of fabulous embellishment.

But the taking of Troy is the era when the marvellous part of the Grecian history ceases all at once. The reason appears to be this:—the absence of the kings and chiefs at this tedious siege involved the several states in great disorders. Many of these princes were slain, or perished by shipwreck; others were assassinated or deposed. The few who survived found every thing in misery and confusion, the country ravaged, the people pillaged and oppressed. In this state of things, the mind, awake only to real calamities and sufferings, is little disposed to indulge itself in romantic and poetic fictions. The games, which cherished that spirit, were for many years interrupted, and when again renewed, the more enlightened character of the Greeks, and the decline of that superstitious turn of mind which disposes to the love of the marvellous, had drawn a distinct line of separation between fiction and authentic history.

But even in the latter part of the fabulous period, there are some events of which the great outlines are sufficiently authentic, and which, as strongly characteristic of the genius, spirit, and manners of the times, are too important to be passed over without some reflections. The expedition of the Argonauts, the sieges of Thebes and of Troy, are very singular enterprises in so rude a period of society.

The Greeks, among other arts which they learned from the Phoenicians, were indebted to them for that of navigation; and they had not been long in possession of this art before they put it in practice in a very bold experiment. The voyage of the Argonauts to Colchis was undertaken 1280 years before the Christian era, according to Usher's Chronology, and 937 according to that of Sir Isaac Newton; and, when all its circumstances are considered, was certainly a very remarkable enterprise. What was the real purpose of the voyage, is extremely difficult to be determined. The poets have feigned a variety of fabulous circumstances, both of the enterprise and of its object; but among the ser-

ous opinions of the best informed writers, the most probable seems to be that of Eustathius, who conjectures this voyage to have been both a military and a mercantile expedition. The object, in his opinion, was to open to the Greeks the commerce of the Euxine Sea, and to secure some establishments upon its Asiatic coasts. For these purposes a fleet and troops were necessary. The armament consisted of many ships, of which *Argo*, the largest, was 50 cubits, or 75 feet, in length; about the size of a modern vessel of 200 tons burden. A number of heroes from every quarter of Greece joined in the expedition—the fathers of those brave warriors who afterwards distinguished themselves at the siege of Troy.

The Argonauts, under the command of Jason, set sail from the coast of Thessaly. Their expedition was lengthened by unfavorable weather, unskilful seamen, and the consequent necessity of keeping as near as possible to the coasts. The variety of adventures which they met with in touching at many different islands and ports in the course of their voyage, have furnished ample matter of poetical fiction, resting on a slender basis of truth. Apollonius Rhodius, in Greek, and Valerius Flaccus, in Latin heroics, have sung the exploits of the Argonauts with no mean powers of poetry. The outlines of their expedition may be very shortly detailed. From the isle of Lemnos, where they made some stay, they proceeded to Samothrace. Thence sailing round the Chersonesus, they entered the *Hellespont*; and keeping along the coast of Asia, touched at Cyzicus, and spent some time on the coast of Bithynia; thence they entered the Thracian Bosphorus, and proceeding onward through the Euxine, at length discovered Caucasus at its eastern extremity. This mountain was their landmark, which directed them to the port of Phasis near to Oea, then the chief city of Colchis, which was the ultimate object of their voyage. Following the Argonauts through this tract of sea, and coasting it as they must have done, it appears evident that they performed a voyage of at least 440 leagues. Those who consider not the times and the circumstances in which the Greeks accomplished this navigation, have not perceived the boldness of the enterprise. These daring Greeks had been but recently taught the art of sailing, by the example of foreigners; it was their first attempt to put it in practice. They were utterly ignorant of navigation as a science; and they went to explore an extent of sea that was altogether unknown to them. Let us do those heroes justice, and freely acknowledge that the voyage of the Argonauts was a noble enterprise for the times in which it was executed.

Preparatory to this remarkable voyage, the Argonauts were furnished with instructions by Chiron, the astronomer, who framed

for their use a scheme of the constellations, giving a determined place to the solstitial and equinoctial points; the former in the 15th degrees of Cancer and Capricorn, and the latter in the 15th degrees of Aries and Libra. This recorded fact* has served as the basis of an emendation of the ancient chronology by Sir Isaac Newton, of which I shall here give a short account.

Sir Isaac Newton's amended chronology is built upon two separate species of proofs: first, on an estimate of the medium length of the generations of men, or of the lives of the kings taken in succession, which former chronologists had enlarged very much beyond the truth; secondly, on a calculation instituted from the regular procession of the equinoxes. As to the first mode of proof, it may be observed, that when we are accurately informed from history that a certain number of generations intervened, or a certain number of sovereigns reigned, between any two events, we are enabled to ascertain pretty nearly the length of that interval, provided we can fix upon a reasonable number of years as the medium length of the generations of man, or the reigns of a succession of princes: a medium or average which is to be formed from a comparison of the successions of the sovereigns in the authenticated periods of modern and ancient history.

Between the return of the Heraclidæ into Peloponnesus and the battle of Thermopylæ, the date of which last event is well ascertained, though the former is not, there reigned a succession of seventeen kings in one branch of the sovereignty of Lacedæmon, and the same number in the other. Now, by comparing together a variety of authenticated successions of sovereigns in ancient and modern times, it is found that the medium duration of each reign is from eighteen to twenty years. The seventeen princes, therefore, who filled the interval above-mentioned, must, at the rate of twenty years for each sovereign, have reigned 340 years. These, computed backwards from the sixth year of Xerxes, and allowing one or two years more for the war of the Heraclidæ, and the reign of Aristodemus, the father of Eurysthenes and Proclus, will place the return of the Heraclidæ into Peloponnesus 159 years after the death of Solomon, and forty-six before the first Olympiad, in which Chorabus was victor. Instead of this moderate estimate, which is founded on rational data, the ancient chronologists, and their followers among the moderns, have assigned a space of thirty-five or forty years to each sovereign, which is double the true average calculation, and have thus placed the return of the Heraclidæ 280 years farther back than its true date.

Mr. Hooke, in his Roman History, has, upon these data, cor-

* See, however, the reasons for questioning the authenticity of this fact in Goguet, t. ii. b. 3. sect. 2.

rected the chronology of the Roman history under the kings; and has shown that the assignment of nineteen or twenty years to each of the seven kings, is more consistent with the series of events recorded in that period, than the ordinary computation given by historians, which supposes each of those princes to have reigned at a medium thirty-five years. If, by the same moderate estimate, the succession of the kings who reigned at Alba be compared with that of the kings at Rome, this computation will fix the coming of Æneas into Italy, and the era of the siege of Troy, exactly at the period to which the estimate of generations in the Greek annals would assign those events.

The second mode of proof on which Sir Isaac Newton has built his emendation of the ancient chronology, and which gives great additional strength to the former, is that which is founded on the regular procession of the equinoxes. This procession is known, by a series of the most accurate observations, to be at the rate of one degree in seventy-two years; that is, the sun crosses the ecliptic so much more to the west every succeeding year, that at the end of seventy-two years his progress westward amounts to one degree; by which means it happens, that the places of the equinox are continually receding from the constellations in the middle of which they were originally found at the time of the earliest observations. Whenever, therefore, the situation of the equinoctial or solstitial points, or any appearance depending on them, is mentioned, it is easy to ascertain the time of any event with which such an appearance was connected: for we have only to observe how many degrees the equinoctial points were then distant from their present position, and to allow seventy-two years for each degree. If we can depend upon the historical fact that the astronomer Chiron found that the two colures cut the ecliptic exactly in the cardinal points, at the time of the Argonautic expedition, it was a fair inference of Sir Isaac Newton, when he found, in the year 1689, that these colures cut the ecliptic at the distance of $1^{\circ} 6' 29''$ from their original position, and were then found to intersect it in $8^{\circ} 6' 29''$, $8^{\circ} 6' 29''$, and $8^{\circ} 6' 29''$, $8^{\circ} 6' 29''$, this advancement or procession being known to go on at the rate of a degree in seventy-two years, the length of the intervening space must therefore have been exactly 2627 years; which fixes the Argonautic expedition to 928 B. C.

After this first successful experiment, we shall find the Greeks turn their attention more particularly to maritime affairs; and we may judge of their progress by the fleet which was assembled thirty-five years after the Argonautic expedition, for transporting the troops to the siege of Troy. Yet still it was not till the war with the Persians that the Greek marine became an object of serious importance. The naval victory of Salamis showed to what a height it had then attained. At this battle, the united fleet of