

MY SIXTY DAYS IN GREECE.

I. THE OLYMPIC GAMES, OLD AND NEW.

I.

WHEN it was reported that, after many years of hope deferred, I was at last to visit Greece, the local newspapers had it that the prime object of my trip was to witness the Olympic games at Athens. Now that the Olympic games at Athens have proved a brilliant success, nothing could seem more natural than that a professor of Greek and an editor of Pindar should speed across the water to behold the wonderful revival. But at the time those who believed most in the old Olympic games were not the most enthusiastic about the new. Private letters seemed to indicate that the celebration would be a failure, perhaps deserved to be a failure. The stadium was there, and that was a great point. It had been called into being again for the purpose, but no one who had not seen it could have imagined how it would stand out in its unique beauty among the great theatres of the modern world. There was to be running, — nothing more antique than running. There was to be leaping, throwing the discus, the long-distance race, and wrestling. But the latter part of the programme was very modern. Boxing was to be banished as too brutal, and the bicycle was to take the place of the four-horse chariot. The swimming-match was not Olympic. The fencing-match was too Roman. Your genuine Greek abhorred the sports of the amphitheatre. Lawn-tennis was really too airy a pastime for the Olympic games, and there was mention in one newspaper of croquet. Croquet is an estimable game, but hardly a sport to lure one across the Atlantic, though one would vault over the “salt, unplumb’d, estranging sea” to witness a match game of kottabos, say, between

Theramenes and Kritias; nay, your true pedant would almost have himself ferried over the Styx for that. However, “croquet” was a misprint for “cricket.”

Then the press began to teem with extemporized erudition about the old Olympic games. Krause’s learned work was dusted and disemboweled, and the very emphasis repelled the classical scholar. Besides, the writers nearly all overlooked what seemed to be the religious significance of the games, and as a devout Hellenist, who belonged to the church of which Pindar was pastor, I was shocked at the flippancy with which the whole matter was handled; and being called on for a deliverance on the subject, I freed my mind by a discourse addressed to a small congregation of the faithful. I will not give my sermon in full. An outline will be a sufficient trial to the reader’s patience.

II.

We call this age an age of intelligent sympathy. We try to understand the past and to reproduce it in order to put our understanding of it to the test. No modern age has comprehended classical antiquity so well as has ours, and the close of the century has witnessed many reproductions of the antique. Every few months a Greek tragedy, every year or two a Greek comedy, is brought on the stage. The music of the Greeks has become vocal once more, and we can hear pæans sung as of old. Why should we not have a revival of the Olympic games? The site will not be the same, but there were elaborate Olympic games at Antioch as well as in Elis. Why not at Athens? No environment could be more noble, and Olympic games of some sort were performed there in antiquity. Nor must we insist pedantically on the

season of the year. Think of Christmas in Australia. It is still Christmas. And as for the difference in the games, were there not changes enough in the old days? The mule-race came in and the mule-race went out. Why might not boxing share the same fate, in accordance with the spirit of the age? But there's the rub. Is there anything left of the old spirit, or can anything of the old spirit be evoked? Will the new Olympic games be anything more than athletic sports? What is there to make them differ from baseball contests and football contests, from polo and lacrosse? The antique spirit? But what was the antique spirit, and where shall we look for its truest expression? The answer comes unhesitatingly: In antique poetry.

A nation is to be judged by its poetry as well as by its prose, by its aspirations as well as by its performances, by the bread of angels which it craves as well as by the husks which swine do eat, and if we are to catch the spirit of the Olympic games we must go to the great interpreter of that spirit when it was at its height: we must go to Pindar. Not for the description of the games themselves. That was needless for his time. It is not needless for ours. And our time, equipped for sympathy as no other age has been in the long procession since the close of antique life, rejoices in a truer vision and has earned a truer vision, in the Greek fashion, by "toil and cost." Earlier efforts to picture the scene of the Olympic games leave us cold, no matter how skillfully the writers weave in the details from antiquarian and from scholiast, whereas now everything has become more vivid for all that has been revealed to us by the excavations at Olympia. Gardner's chapter on Olympia and Shorey's article on the Olympic games breathe the breath of life.

"Everything that has been brought to light at Olympia has brought with it new light for the scene, for the games.

The Hermes of Praxiteles is henceforth for us the impersonation of the youthful athlete, whose physical prowess has not made him forget tenderness and reverence. The Nike of Paionios revives for us the resistless rush of victory. We mingle in the eager crowds, we feel the tremulous excitement; we too become passionate partisans and swell the volume of cheers." But in the presence of the brilliant scene and in the midst of the flush of the contest we must not forget what it all means. We must not forget the great altar that dominates Olympia. We must not forget that there were priests and prophets among the victors. The festival was sacred to the supreme god. The year was a sacred year; the poems that celebrated the victories were sacred poems. Pindar, the last prophet of the Doric creed, with its great exemplar Herakles, was a consecrated man. The athlete served God with his body; the victor in the chariot-race served God with his substance.

The life of the Olympian victor was a term of comparison, not for happiness merely, but for blessedness, which is more; and this blessedness had not lost its significance even in the time of Plato. There still abode that supernal element, which cannot be restored, which has departed with the mystic meaning of the olive leaf; for the two surfaces of the olive leaf symbolized to the reverent Greek the two worlds, the upper and the lower.

Athleticism has been made so prominent in the games that we need to be reminded that the victories celebrated by Pindar do not all involve physical prowess. A certain risk was run by those who drove the chariots; but these were not always the owners, and a good third of Pindar's odes tell of those who gained the victory by purse rather than by prowess. No wonder; for these high and mighty people who indulged in chariot-races were the very people who could afford to pay for so expensive an adorn-

ment of the triumph as one of Pindar's golden odes. "Expense and toil" are emphasized as well as "toil and expense." To be sure, it might not be well to compare a victory in the chariot-race with building a church or founding a divinity school; yet the consecration is there. When Demaratus, one of the most romantic of Greek characters, leaves Sparta forever to join the Persians, Herodotus watches his receding figure in sympathetic mood. Demaratus had done the state good service, and more especially, of all the Spartan kings he alone had won for the Lacedæmonians an Olympic victory with the four-horse chariot. In this whole class of Pindaric odes there is a marked recognition of the favor of God, and in one of them we have a vision of the world to come. How foreign is all this to us! What a contrast between the Dantesque vision of the ode in honor of Theron's victory and the record of the latest trotting-match! But after all, when we think of the Greek games, we think first of athleticism, and it is well. The first recorded victory was a victory in a foot-race, the most simple of all, the most Greek of all. And athletic victories were something to date by. So Thucydides dates by them, — Thucydides, who does not deal much in side-lights, who keeps to the inexorable march of events, the merciless chain of causation, the remorseless machinery of politics and war: "It was the Olympiad in which Dorieus was victor for the second time." He dates by Dorieus as he dates by the priestess of Hera at Argos, who had been fifty years in office when the war broke out, and who in the ninth year of the war was so unlucky as to set the temple on fire. Somehow, these dates do not produce exactly the same effect as the fire at Chicago, — also due to an old woman, — and the fight between Corbett and Sullivan.

The temple at Argos and the Olympic games are on the same plane. They

are consecrated by the same spirit, and it is this spirit we should do well to study when we consider the revival of the Olympic games. In the passage of Thucydides, dating by Dorieus is the most natural thing in the world. Olympia had just been mentioned, and everybody had heard of Dorieus. Next to his father he was the most famous athlete of the period. It was that father, Diagoras, who won the famous victory that called forth Pindar's immortal ode on Rhodes. It was Diagoras who won unparalleled distinction as a boxer and was victorious in all the great games, and of whom a familiar story is told by Cicero, enhanced by later writers, as is the wont of later writers. Not only was he victorious himself, but sons and grandsons were successful as well; and when two of his victorious sons bore the old man aloft, the assembled multitude showered garlands upon them, and a Spartan drew nigh and said, "Die, Diagoras, for you are not going to mount up to heaven." Heaven was at that time reserved for the gods, and the Greek deemed it best to die at the summit of happiness. This was a good deal for a Spartan to say, for the Spartans were a reserved race, and one would have expected rather some such Scottish utterance as "Your luck is no that bad." But his feelings were too much for him; and then he was only quoting Pindar, and quoting is not highly emotional.

We read further that the daughter of Diagoras was present at the games, for as a rule women were not allowed to attend the games, and a scene from George Meredith's recent novel, *The Amazing Marriage*, comes up to the mind, — the scene in which the heroine is forced by her bridegroom to look at a prize-fight. It is somehow not the same world.

We began with Dorieus. Let us go back to him. He was a successful athlete, but something besides a successful athlete. In modern times we might say "something higher," just as men

to-day count the present Speaker of the House of Commons something higher than his father, who was a noted pugilist. But with the example of Diagoras before us we dare not say that, and simply add that Dorieus, son of Diagoras, as Thucydides is careful to tell us in the proper place, commanded the Thurian fleet in the Peloponnesian war, and manned his vessels and equipped them at his own expense. He bore himself in lordly fashion, and there was a high and free air about his conduct of the campaign. Captured by the Athenians, he was released because of his great renown as an athlete, or, as Ernest Myers has it, by favor of Athena, who had chosen Rhodes for one of her homes.

"She too her own Athenians stirred
To that fair deed of chivalry,
That high imperishable word
That set the Rhodian Dorieus free,
And linked in unison divine
Her Lindian to her Attic shrine."

Surely a greater than Tom Cribb is here. But Dorieus does not stand alone. Whenever a man who has won Olympic or Pythian victory figures in the war, his victory is mentioned as a title of honor. And it is not strange that such men should have figured in the war, for the victors in the games were at that time the flower of Hellas. But the point to be insisted on is that it was not the social position merely, it was the religious consecration that gave them this privilege. Thucydides, whose deity is said to have been the "strong god, the chance central of circumstance," found the victors as inevitable as did devout Herodotus, as inevitable as he found the oracles, whether he believed in the oracles or not. When the conspiracy of Cylon is mentioned, both historians tell us that he had won an Olympic victory, whereupon a later Greek rhetorician, who had lost the point of view, takes Herodotus and Thucydides to task for referring to a circumstance which was out of place except in eulogy. He did not understand that

this statement was essential to the story; that it served to explain the influence that Cylon exerted, and served to emphasize the depth of his fall. But, for that matter, the great orator who has helped to make the story of Diagoras popular takes pains to tell us that Olympic victories had lost something of their value in the eyes of the Greeks of his time. As a Roman he had little sympathy with what he evidently considered an overestimate. And it is an overestimate except from the earlier point of view of worship. Take away the religious spirit, and the Olympic games lose their right to be. The ethical element is potent, but it does not suffice; and if it be said that our warrant for the religious principle is to be found largely in poetry, be it so.

Even in Pindar there is not much detail of the contest. There are many moral lessons incarnate in the myths that form the bulk of his poems, there are many moral lessons expressed in weighty words; for the Greeks were given to moralizing, and one might construct a Mirror of Athletes out of the odes of this last prophet of Dorism. But of the "events" themselves little is said. True, the *gaudia certaminis* are not altogether overlooked. How could they be? And yet there is little picturing of the hateful wrong side of victory, defeat. The Greeks were not generous victors, thinks Professor Gardner. "Respect for a vanquished competitor could never be counted among Greek virtues." Let us not be too sure of that. At all events, Pindar has only two conspicuous passages in which there is a note of savage exultation; in which we see the defeated skulking home to their mothers by lanes and back ways in "suspense of their foes," while "sweet laughter" is ringing in their ears. Both these poems have to do with wrestling, have to do with boys, and both remind us of the issue of certain college football games. The Eternal Boy is too much even for the calm Greek.

But even these odes are steeped in morality, in religion.

It has been said that true athleticism had but a brief bloom in Greece, but it might be maintained that it had a longer bloom than anything else. Professionalism, we are told, was the death of it, — the same professionalism that has been the death of so many good things. But when shall we put the acme of the Olympic games? We have made Pindar the interpreter of the true spirit of these great contests, and yet before Pindar framed his greatest songs a voice was heard in opposition to the honors paid to the victors of the Olympic games, — the same voice that protested against the abominations which Homer and Hesiod had consecrated to the gods. "Better," said Xenophanes, "than the strength of men and horses is our wisdom." Euripides, himself an athlete, and a successful athlete too, has indulged in a formal tirade against the whole tribe. It is said that he was forced into this line of work by his father, and hence the bitterness of his oburgation; but fathers are not always to blame. We have had instances of like rebellion in our own day, and such Grecians as Lord Lyttelton and Miss Swanwick have joined in the cry, "Too much Greek." At all events, Euripides' counterblast against athleticism has come down through the ages as a manner of baccalaureate sermon against sports. The athletes, according to him, are slaves to appetite; they have no thrift; they cannot bear changes of fortune. In youth they are brilliant creatures, idols of the city. When old age comes they are threadbare cassocks. And what is the use of it all, their swiftness of foot, their hurling the discus, their countering on the jaw? What avails all this in battle? One does not hurl a discus in a fight, nor knock one's enemy out of the country with the fist. The wreaths are ill bestowed; wise men and good are those who should be crowned. Isocrates whines at the same lack of judgment,

and even Plato, who was himself an athlete and won prizes, whose own appellation is supposed to be a gymnastic nickname, dreads the tendency of athleticism, and throws out here a grave word of warning, and there a light jest.

Those who cite the evidence of later writers for the decline of athleticism are apt to consider too little those earlier evidences of an opposition which is very much such an opposition as makes itself heard and felt in intellectual circles now. The dispute was a traditional dispute, and the voices that we hear in the time of the Antonines are the voices of Galen and Lucian. Lucian is for, Galen against, and Galen's testimony is much insisted on. Indeed, this learned and philosophical physician goes into the subject with minute detail, and one listens to very nearly the same language as physicians of the present day employ in their deliverances on boat-racing and football, or any form of overdoing.

But one must not be too quick to draw inferences as to the later degeneracy. In the student of the Greek Renaissance there is bred a perfect distrust of every allusion to daily life. The trail of the bookworm is over the whole period, and it is extremely hard to tell what is vision, what reminiscence. There is not one among all these writers who is not open to the suspicion of cribbing. There is not one among them all who writes purely out of his own life. There is no Pierre Loti among them all; no, not one. Lucian, who has defended Greek athletics, is so joyous and so jaunty that one does not suspect him at first, but he too is a reminiscentialist, though he is much more than that. The literary atmosphere is so thick that the writers of the period cannot see their own times.

Religion hallowed athleticism; it hallowed the Olympic games. The games were part of the worship of the gods, victory was a token of their favor. Religion hallowed athleticism; philosophy secularized it. To renew the Olympic games

we must have a religious basis. The body must be more than a tabernacle; it must be a temple, and as a temple it must be dedicated to a higher service. Self-development is naught unless it have a noble aim. "Toil and expense," the homely words in which the Greeks, most practical and most ideal of people, laid down the avenues of success, mean self-sacrifice, mean devotion. In the new Olympic games we shall see the "poet's dream," for the spectacle will be marvelous; but shall we have "the consecration" as well as the poet's dream? Perhaps a modern instance may illustrate my meaning. The Passion Play of Oberammergau was discovered by Eduard Devrient in 1850. It was my privilege to see it in 1860, and again in 1890. In 1860 it was feared that the performance might degenerate into a spectacle, that the religious feeling in which it was originally steeped might evaporate in the dust and sun of publicity; and the same fear returned in stronger measure in 1890, when the performance was much more elaborate, much more artistic. But no process of disillusionment to which I subjected myself the first time, no sharpening of the critical faculty such as comes with ripper years, availed against the overpowering effect. Lift the Passion Play out of the religious life of the people which gave it birth, make it a mere show, a mere perambulatory function, with "one-night stands" and "two-night stands," and it would be not only a sham, but a horror. True, we are not Greeks as we are Christians, and our religious sensibilities will suffer no shock in the new Olympic games; but while there will doubtless be much to help the world to an appreciation of the scenic effect of the great games of Greece, the antique basis will be lacking. When we witness the performance of a Greek tragedy like the *Agamemnon*, like the *Œdipus*, like the *Antigone*, a religious awe descends on us, because the "sacred poet" has inter-

preted the meaning of the drama to the modern soul. So here, too, if we are to invoke the spirit of the past out of the shows of the present, we must seek "the holder of the keys;" and my own words come back to me after many years: "Reconstruct Greek life and we shall better understand Pindar. With all my heart; but after the reconstruction we shall need the poet's light as much as ever, if not more."

III.

Such were my meditations and my utterances. I was, as has been said, a trifle resentful of the imputation that I had timed my visit to Greece with distinct reference to performances which could, after all, be nothing more than spectacles. The foremost editor in the Confederate States, John M. Daniel, told me once, in his grim way, that no one had more reason to believe in the power of the press than he. "No sooner," said he, "do I insert a ringing editorial on the subject of the war than some wretched compositor lays down his 'stick,' shoulders his musket, and goes to the front." And if alien eloquence is so effective, what is to be said of one's own? Assuredly, the late political campaign has shown how men become dupes of their own phraseology. So I had sophisticated myself into the conviction that it was not worth while to make any special sacrifice in order to see the new Olympic games. "You are right," wrote a classic friend to me on the eve of my departure. "Athens will be vulgarized by the crowds. Seek Sicily first."

I had failed to secure a passage by the steamer which would have enabled me to combine with ease a visit to Sicily and the vision of the games. Only a few days were at my disposal. "Naples," I said to myself, "is a Greek town, and though it has little of the Greek flavor, still the background is there, and I cannot hurry away from Naples without seeing Pompeii again. And Sicily,—no

thing can be more Greek than Sicily. To a man whose last chance it is, in all human probability, how much better to behold Ætna than to follow the revolutions of the bicyclist or the carte and tierce of the fencer, — Ætna! the Ætna that Pindar saw, the Ætna of the immortal First Pythian, that ‘pillar of heaven,’ ‘the year-long nurse of biting snow,’ the symbol of aristocratic power, high and lifted up, with a chill smile on its face as it crushes beneath its foot the hundred-headed Typhoeus of revolt! To see Ætna will be to understand Pindar better. Now, if a bicycle were a monocycle, it might be brought into line with the magic wheel to which the wryneck was bound in the incantation of antique lovers, or with Ixion’s wheel, of which, as I understand, there is a noteworthy painting in the newly uncovered *domus Vettiorum* at Pompeii. Pindar tells of both these wheels. But I cannot see any gain for classical studies in the bicycle.”

However, the earlier games of the programme were inviting, and my thoughts dwelt much on the Marathon race, the long-distance race. Apart from the familiar association with the great battle, there is an especially attractive ode of Pindar’s for the victor of a long race. But then the victor was from Himera, and that takes one to Sicily again. And so musing, I embarked.

IV.

On the steamer that took me from New York to Naples were the two American “teams” that were destined to win so much glory in the next few weeks. One of them was from Boston, the other from Princeton. The Princeton boys were from my own college, and their captain was from Baltimore, my own home. Any one would have been proud of such representatives, so modestly, so becomingly did they bear themselves, and I watched their lithe forms and their springy steps, as they exercised on deck, with a delight that was somewhat tem-

pered with bitterness as I thought of the universal neglect of athletics in the collegiate America of my time. There is doubtless much overdoing in modern athleticism, but the cult of the body is Greek, and the forms that the Hellenist worships are not merely the forms of the Greek verb. To be Greek is to be agile in body as in mind, and I did not trouble myself to ask anything about the “class standing” of the young athletes, towards whom my heart went forth as I saw them landing at Naples, and speeding, without the loss of a train, to the scene of the contest. It was a Thursday, and there was not much time to spare, if they were to arrive in condition at Athens, for Monday was the first day of the games. So I bade them good-by, not to meet them again until I saw them in Athens fresh from the success which they wore as simply and modestly as if each one had been an *ephebos* of the best Greek period.

Meanwhile I renewed my acquaintance with Naples and revisited Pompeii. No matter what was pending, no lover of antiquity could neglect the house of the Vettii, but recently restored to the light of day. To those who recognize the hand of Providence in everything, this little Oscan town of Pompeii seems to have been hidden from our eyes for so many centuries just to shame our pride. What must the external glory of antique civilization have been when an insignificant corner of it could yield such wealth of art? The same thought pursued me through my travels in Greece. It is not what one finds at Athens; it is what one finds at Rhamnus, at Oropos, that staggers the imagination. This is the lesson of Pompeii, and the impression produced by Pompeii is indefinitely deepened by this new disclosure.

A day at Palermo, that wonderful cross-section of history; a hasty run through the heart of Sicily, — a heart equally attuned to love and to hate; a day at Syracuse; a day at Taormina, most

beautiful of visions ever granted to my eye. Taormina had haunted me long in photographs, and I was to see it at last; I was to see the chill smile of Ætna, and to look out on the surface of the deep, and to understand — nay, almost to hear in Pindar's resonant verse, the plashing of the masses of stone upflung by Typhoeus. Nor these things alone. The works of men's hands were about me, — the theatre for the past, and the wonderful tilth of the soil for the present. Just as I was leaving the theatre the officials of the town took possession of the sacred building, — for the antique theatre is a manner of temple, — and began to desecrate it by all manner of fussy ornamentation in honor of the expected arrival of His Majesty the German Emperor, William the Sudden, and I was glad to escape the turmoil and take my way to Catania. Catania holds the site once occupied by the town which Hieron built for his son, Deinomenes. Æschylus celebrated the founding of it, and Hieron himself, in the superscription of the First Pythian, is called an Ætnæan. But Catania lives all unhaunted by classic memories; a coquettish city, much given to the cult of her greatest son, Bellini. This was the port from which the Birmania, of the Florio-Rubattino line, was advertised to sail at two in the afternoon; but the vessels of this line are freight-boats first, and passenger-boats afterwards, and hour after hour was spent in listening to the puffing of the donkey-engine and the groaning of the derricks, and in watching the lighters as, one after another, they poked their snub-noses out from the shelter of the shipping. Was there to be no end of boxes of lemons and bags of sulphur? Brimstone to brimstone! It was nearly nightfall before we got off, and envious darkness shut out the view.

Next morning we were out of sight of land, and had time to meditate and study. A merry party of young Americans from the school at Rome had boarded the steamer in the harbor of Catania.

They had been exploring the architectural treasures of Sicily, and, like myself, had not quickened their pace for the Olympic games. Much had they to tell of their adventures, or would have had much to tell; but Hadria is as froward and choleric as he was in the days of Horace, — or at least he seemed so to them as he rocked our vessel with his foot. I was alone except at meal-times, when I bore the captain company, and thus worked my passage. For while I have a Greek reverence for the master of a ship, I find, as a rule, that conversation between an unclassical sea-dog and a grammatical land-lubber is apt to languish. And it languished here. Still, as the medium of communication was the French tongue, I gathered some pretty specimens of "speech mixture," and I shall never forget the dramatic air with which the captain, on comparing his chronometer with the cabin clock, cried out, "*La montre est fermée!*"

Early the morning after, the coast-line of the Peloponnesus was visible. Cape Gallo was the first land I saw, the southernmost cape of Messenia, and from Cape Gallo to the Piræus the voyage was a delight to the eye. I had not forgotten those islands of the blessed, the Azores, by which I had passed a few days before, nor the gracious harbor of Palermo, nor the wonderful coast above which Taormina rises. But Tænarum means more than Taormina, and Taygetus afar off is more than Monte Pellegrino near at hand. Tænarum recalls many things, but whenever one sees a famous locality one special thing is apt to force itself to the front, and often it is a schoolboy memory, such as the chapter in Herodotus that tells of Arion's landing at Tænarum, and Arion's votive offering, the statue of a man seated on a dolphin. It was a small affair, that votive offering. One remembers that, and wonders why Arion was not more liberal, for he must have made up for his losses. But we are crossing the wide

mouth of the Laconic Gulf. These gulfs that run up into the land have a strange drawing power, and as the *Birmanian* keeps on her course one envies the little Greek coasting steamer that skims towards Marathónisi, the ancient and official Gytheion, where I was to spend a day not altogether willingly. We are in Odyssean waters now. There on our right is Kythera, and we can imagine how Odysseus felt when he was swept away from the island. But his next stage was the land of the lotus, which is the modern jujube, and some of his crew may have forgiven Fortune. The world was younger then, and the poetical lotus of those days had the same charm for men that the prosaic jujube paste had for the children of my time. So this is that Kythera of which Cheilon, the Lacedæmonian sage, one of the seven wise men of Greece, said: Would that it had never come into being; or, having come into being, would that it had been sunk in the depths of the sea! Doubtless the Lacedæmonians felt the point of the saying when Nicias, the victorious, seized the island in the first part of the Peloponnesian war. But pointed or not, the saying has passed into the repertory of *l'esprit des autres*; and I remember a testy old Union man who, at the outbreak of the Civil War, uttered the wish that the wretched little State of South Carolina, the breeder of so much trouble, had been scuttled and dropped into the Atlantic Ocean. I question much whether he had ever heard of Cheilon.

We rounded Malea, dreaded of old by sailors, but no wave or current or north wind drove us off our course, as befell Odysseus. The *Birmanian* was a steady boat, built as she was on the lines of Rubattino himself, whose stout effigy adorns the harbor of Genoa. If the bleak coast of the Peloponnesus, of which the guidebooks tell, had been ten times bleaker, it would not have lost its charm. It was desolate. I grant. Few houses were visible, — here and there a high-

perched church or monastery or lighthouse. But it was not bleak on that beautiful spring day. It was dipped in an amethystine light, and above and beyond were the mountains crowned with snow. The receding gulf in which Naulpia nestles drew the eye in longing towards Argolis and her palaces; and well it might, as I was soon to learn. In the December number of *The Atlantic* there is a quotation from William Morris's story of *Gertha's Lovers*, which woke in me, as I read it, the longing for Argolis: "One extremity of it was bounded by the washing of the purple waves, and the other by the solemn watchfulness of the purple mountains." That, in brief, is Argolis. The color is the Greek color, and, as Mérimée says, one must go to Greece in order to understand it.

The magic does not lie in the name alone. True, the modern Argos itself is not "sweet Argos" except perhaps to a dying Argive. Like all cities and men that have had a long continuous life, Argos itself is prosy; but not the land as viewed in the springtime from the Larisa of Argos or from the platform of the temple of Hera. No, the magic does not lie in the name alone. In those who know the history of the Greek war of independence Spetsa and Hydra wake heroic memories. Pityussa and Hydrea, their ancient names, mean little to those who live chiefly in the far past, and the bulk of Hydra is almost a surprise, so small a figure does she make in ancient history; but Spetsa and Hydra are a delight to the eye, as is the lonely island of St. George, a solitary jewel on the forehead of the deep. Have you ever read of Belbina except in a gazetteer?

Next came Poros, on which I was to spend a memorable afternoon, — Poros, the ancient Kalaureia. Never shall I forget the town, beautiful for situation, nor the royal yacht that dashed past us, a strange modern contrast to the ancient history of the place, nor the ride

through the fragrant woods, nor the site of the temple of Poseidon, nor the threshing-floor from which one looks out on Athens without the film that gathered over the vision of Demosthenes, as he staggered out of the temple and looked for the last time towards the city for which he was dying. Next, grim Methana, and Ægina with its Mount St. Elias, one, and not the least, of the many heights that bear the name in Greece, — Ægina, a name to conjure with even when it is pronounced in the unfamiliar modern Greek fashion. We are now near the heart of Greece, to which our hearts beat responsive. We strain our eyes towards Salamis, for night is rushing down, and as we enter the harbor of the Piræus night is there.

v.

This, then, was the sad conclusion. It was for this that I had renounced so much. It is of the utmost moment, I had said to myself, how one approaches the city of one's love. Long before I saw Rome itself the dome of St. Peter's floated into the air, as it were, to greet me, and I received my first impression before I verified the statement of an observant American traveler that "Rome, sir, has the longest railroad *deeps* I ever beheld." Naples I saw first from the land side, but night had fallen, and as I looked out of the railway carriage it was to see Vesuvius aflame. But I shall never forgive myself for entering the palace of the Queen of the Adriatic by the kitchen back stairs; and as one comes from Milan to Genoa the Superb, the view is one, not of palaces, but of "frescoed jails," as they have been called, festooned with underwear. Hence I was passionately bent on approaching Athens the right way, on coming to the front door of Athena's mansion as a lover should, and my reward was darkness.

No, not darkness, for the Piræus was illuminated. It was the Piræus night

of the great festival. All the shipping was starry with lights, and not the least brilliant constellation was an American war-ship, the San Francisco. The shore was all strung with festoons of lanterns and all resonant with music, and we could see the swaying of the black crowds, and hear their jubilation, and watch the shining trail of the rockets, as we sat on the dark deck of the Birmania. One of our number, who had lain a motionless wreck during the brief voyage, gathered up what remained of him and went ashore. The rest of us, all Americans, waited for the day, and the air was vocal with college songs such as I was to hear again on the Ægean. My calendar told me that it was the day of the Marathon race, and my heart told me that the Greek had won. Small comfort did I find in the college songs, for my college days fell before the musical period as well as before the athletic period; indeed, before all those things that have brightened the life of the undergraduate and darkened the brow of *paterfamilias*. The music of the ancient Greeks may not have been so catchy, but the words were nobler, and my thoughts were more than two thousand years away, with the Ægina of the past and with the Eighth Pythian of Pindar. "What is man? What not? A dream of a shadow is man." And then, by one of those vaulting processes of which the mind is capable, I recalled a letter of Dickens, a letter of consolation, in which he wrote, "I think of her as of a beautiful part of my own youth, and the dream that we are all dreaming seems to darken." That is a natural thought for a letter of condolence, but "Life is a dream" is commonplace by the side of "A dream of a shadow is man." A strange reflection to come after the jubilant outburst with which the poet celebrates the victory of Aris-tomenes. But the Greeks were not the jocund race they are supposed by many to have been. The shadows are as black as the light is bright, and in this poem

a broad belt of darkness comes between two illuminations.

I too was sitting in the dark, a darkness deeper for the lights on shore. But the joy was for others, and I thought of the poem again the next day when I learned that a peasant of Marousi had won the Marathon race. The peasant of Marousi who won the Marathon race was at a long remove in time and rank from the proud member of the clan of the Midylidai, but "hope winged the steps" of the Marathon runner, and he was "borne aloft on the pinions of manly achievements" as was the Æginetan wrestler. I have read somewhere that Sir Henry Holland traveled through Greece Pausanias in hand. It sounds well, and in a large company of classical pilgrims a few copies of Pausanias may be found; but Pindar is a better book to take with one than Pausanias. He is tougher, but not so heavy.

VI.

The next day the harbor looked very quiet and very plain. The glory was but the glory of a night, and one took one's dusty drive to Athens and did all the things laid down in the book of Baedeker. The coachman stopped at his pet shanty — "shanty" is the only possible word — and took his *masticha*, a drink which every traveler is advised to try. *Masticha* has a very innocent taste which carries one back to the days of childhood and the comforting draught of paregoric; but for all that it belongs to the American genus "tanglefoot," the *temptatura pedes* of Master Virgil, and our missionaries in Constantinople make merry over tourists when they praise the sobriety of the Turk who eschews wine, but is no stranger to the "innocent cordials" of the country.

I did not find a classical nepenthe in *masticha*, but I did find the dust of which the ancients make so much. The Piræus road is a dusty road, but it is after all a better first approach to Athens than the

Peloponnesus station. The ride from Corinth has its attractions; what ride in Greece has not? But to arrive in a new quarter that has not grown out to the station, and after the bustle of the station to drive through streets that are desperately modern, and to ensconce yourself in a modern hotel, — that is not the way to look into the eye of Greece, or rather, to be strictly classic, this eye of Greece. For Greece is not a Cyclops. She has two eyes, and the other eye is Sparta. And as there is but one first approach to Athens, so there is but one first approach to Sparta. You must come from the north, not from the south. Not that I would be understood as saying anything against the approach to Athens from Daphni on the Eleusis road. That is the road that Chateaubriand took, and it may have been well enough for him then. For us it would be affectation, and there is affectation enough in travelers as it is.

The Piræus road is, as I have remarked, a dusty road, but you can see the traces of the long walls, you pass by olive groves that are descendants of those that Athena planted, and there is a sudden turn which reveals the House of the Virgin, whose shrine you came to visit. It is a doll's house at that distance, and somehow suggests the pettinesses of Ibsen's stage settings. But you divine what it will mean to you ere long.

From what I had seen of the Piræus the night before, I expected something festal on the way; but there was no crowd, no excitement, along the forty stades that we traversed. Forty stades? Forgive the classicism, but the invaluable and infallible Baedeker which accompanied me on all my journeyings, even in the land of dreams, had forgotten to mention the distance between Athens and the Piræus, and so I had to fall back on my recollections of Thucydides. But when the forty stades had been passed and the town entered, everything was wild with excitement. Athens

was no longer the violet-wreathed. Violet was but one color of her prism. The streets were thronged; there was joy on every face. A Greek had won the Marathon race, and the whole population was mad with delight. Up to Thursday the Greeks had borne their defeats cheerfully. They had, it is true, counted absolutely on success with the discus; but if they were to be surpassed by any one, the American victor was the most tolerable. The Americans have always been true Philhellenes. But the Marathon race they had set their hearts on, and the most patriotic of foreign contestants would not have begrudged them that; and when the victory was won, and the Marousian peasant Louis came in first, dazed by his own achievement, welcomed by the acclaim of the vast multitude within and without the stadium, received by the princes of his people with open arms, a national hero for life, the scene was one, I shall have to add, must have been one, to stir the most sluggish soul. Even now that months have elapsed, and I can find consolation in what I have seen before and since, I cannot forget the sudden wave of blank disappointment, the sudden revelation that I had been the victim of my own pedantic ratiocination. At that moment the coast-line of Greece did not speak to the soul as did the simultaneous joy of a hundred thousand men and women with blood in their veins and the light of gladness on their faces. I have seen the light of battle on the soldier's face, but I have never seen faces more brilliantly illuminated than the countenances of the throngs that pervaded the streets of Athens. Yet this was but the afterglow of what had been the day before. To be frank, Ætna was cold comfort then, and the resolute crushing of Typhoeus with his hundred heads. There is no use in arguing about such matters, and saying to one's self that better things have been done in America. There is no use in making light of the achievements of the victors in these

Olympic games, and months afterwards I felt a Greek's indignation at the travesty of the Marathon race set on foot by a Parisian sheet, the *Petit Journal*. It was an undignified scramble from Paris to Conflans; and as the nature of the ground was not duly taken into account, the claim that several of the contestants outdid the Attic winner was clearly false.

VII.

Sitting in one's study, it was easy enough to wax eloquent, or at any rate to wax emphatic, on the spirit of the old contests, the spirit that had flown never to return, and it was not surprising that a student should see naught in the projected games but the every-day desire for the mastery that stirs every man child born into the world, — a desire which is by no means a religious feeling. Yet the consecration was there. Even in the old times when Zeus was the patron deity, the contestant strove for his people, his canton, his city; and while the poet of the games gives due honor to the god of the games, he does not forget the claims of the land of the victor. This is the consecration that has remained after the other has passed away, and the cry "*Zito i Ellás!*" (Long live Greece!) hallowed the new Olympic games, and gave them the sacredness that they would otherwise have lacked.

As I heard that cry on every hand caught up and thundered forth in the great torchlight procession even by those who knew no other Greek, I could not keep from reflecting on the disadvantage under which we Americans labor in the matter of a cry. "*Hurrah for America*" is too wide a call. "*Hurrah for the United States*" is too formal. Do people hurrah for the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland? In fact, apart from campaign cries, in which the candidates figure, the real enthusiasm of American devotion is perhaps to be heard only in the college yell. The college yell is really a remarkable return

to an early form of worship, and deserves closer study than it has received at the hands of anthropologists; but I must confess that the articulate Greek cry appealed to me more forcibly, though the Greeks themselves, recognizing the Olympic spirit of the American yell, did their best to imitate it as a return for the "Zíto i Ellás," which the foreigners were so quick to catch.

This intense love of country is a characteristic of the Greek nation that covers a multitude of deviations from European standards. The expression of it may be a trifle too theatrical for our taste, but the reality is there, and Greeks have been known to relinquish a good bargain in response to an appeal made to their patriotism. Modern Athens is a series of monuments to this noble devotion, and the patriotism of the Greeks is strangely contagious. In the vast throng assembled at the games there was scarcely a foreigner who did not hope for Greek success in the things that belonged especially to the Greeks. There would have been general mourning if a Greek had not won the Marathon race, and proud as we Americans were that our man had beaten the Greeks at their own discus, still there was a touch of sorrow blended with our pride.

The swimming-match, which came the day of our landing, the day after the great Marathon race, was well worth seeing, not for the match itself, but for the setting, for the landlocked harbor of Zea and the crowds of spectators. There were twenty-five thousand, I heard, in the black ring that surrounded the white circle of the port. There were gay banners which seemed to be gayer for all that had been accomplished the day before, and high and mighty dignitaries in resplendent uniforms, — kings and princes gathered in the pavilion to behold the contest. But the port itself was the great thing. Here were the ship houses, and here doubtless the Athenian fleet mustered for the expedition against Sicily; and I thought of

the long inscription about the arsenal of Philon, published in the philological journals years before, and I thought of the famous etching that Thucydides gives of the departure of the fleet, and somehow I thought of myself as one who had escaped from the quarries of Syracuse and reached Athens just too late to see the Marathon race.

The day the prizes were announced I was in the Peloponnesus, for such was the good pleasure of our leader, and *post festum* was *post festum*. But the new Olympic games have never ceased to haunt me, and will never cease to haunt me. Every new acquaintance, every old acquaintance, has had the same questions to ask. The Olympic games stared at me from every shop window, every wall. The newspapers had no other news. The great statesman Trikoupis, who by the way did not favor the games, died during the performance, but the mention of the "Gladstone of Greece" was perfunctory until the games were over. Then, to be sure, he had the newspapers to himself, until he also was crowded out by the Cretan troubles. The resources of the Greek newspapers in the way of illustration are not very great, but they were given freely, such as they were, and the effigies of my fellow passengers greeted me at every turn. The popularity of the American contestants was unbounded. Treating is a Greek vice, and the American visitors were treated and toasted everywhere. As a fellow citizen of the victor with the discus, I was received with distinguished consideration wherever I made the fact known, and that one discus seemed to be halo enough for a multitude. Nor did the excitement die out with the week. Olympic contests were instituted all over Greece. Every square, every street in Athens, was alive with young people, running races, jumping, putting the shot. Gymnastic societies flourished amain. Grave articles were written as to the expediency, nay, the necessity, of remodel-

ing the educational system of Greece on the basis of physical culture. A new era had dawned for Hellas.

In the same compartment of the train that took me to Corinth sat one of the German judges, who discoursed most learnedly on the performance of the American contestants, and went back to antique monuments for parallels to the admirable pose of the American "agonyists" in the vaulting contest. Not long afterwards I was a guest in the monastery of Megaspélæon, and the monk to whom I was assigned welcomed me afresh with both hands when he heard that I was a countryman of the men who had done so well at the Olympic games. I

opened a newspaper on my return to Athens. The first article on which my eye fell was an account of the Olympic games at Patras, with a jubilant paragraph about the Greek who had beaten by a few millimetres the "rekor" of "Garrett, the terrible Olympic victor." Like Jonah I took ship, but the Olympic games gave me no peace. My sin of omission found me out, and I bought of an importunate peddler who boarded the Euterpe the popular photograph of the group of victors, among them my young townsman, whom I had seen daily exercising his men on the deck of the Fulda, — ὁ Γκάρεττ ὁ φοβερὸς Ἀμερικανὸς Ὀλυμπιονίκης.

Basil L. Gildersleeve.

VILLAGE IMPROVEMENT SOCIETIES.

"WHAT do you think is my employment out of doors, and what it has been for this week past? My garden? No such elegant thing, but making a gutter, a sewer, and a pathway in the streets of Edgeworthstown, and I do declare I am as much interested about it as I ever was in writing anything in my life." Thus wrote Maria Edgeworth to her aunt Ruxton in 1831; and in this, as in many educational reforms, she was the forerunner of that admirable body of executive women who have been doing valuable work in their own communities ever since.

Everywhere that village improvement takes active form we find women connected with it, for there is something about it congenial to the feminine temperament, even as the intimate connection between a woman and a broom-handle is an obvious and natural fact. My lady's quick eye, her relentless spirit, her uncompromising activity, hitherto largely manifested in house-cleaning, here find a broader field to preëempt,

and the full utilization of that energy which now goes to waste in many futile pursuits may in the end create force enough to sweep this globe from pole to pole, and neatly dust every continent. However that may be, she begins, in village improvement, as Miss Edgeworth did, literally at the bottom, with drains and paths and hidden health precautions, on which foundations alone a beautiful superstructure can safely be raised, and proceeds from them upward to the higher graces of the art.

Of the various branches of public improvement, that which concerns the villages may be called the most vital, in that it closely appeals to all the inhabitants, no matter what their age or sex or station, and gives something to do with purse or hand to every man, woman, and child who takes an interest in producing organized beauty. Even those who disdain everything but what is practical may gratify their taste by dealing with sewers and electric wires; the orderly may be utilized in seeing