

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE FIRST PERIOD OF COLONIZATION; THE EPIC OR HOMERIC AGE

#### I. THE FIRST PERIOD OF COLONIZATION (ABOUT 1500-1000 B.C.); THE HELLENIC RACES

**92. The Aeolians.** — As soon as the Hellenes in their migrations reached the sea, they began to cross to the neighboring islands. This early period of colonization within the Aegean began and ended approximately with the opening and close of the Mycenaean age. We shall review their principal settlements in geographical order from north to south.

From Thessaly colonists crossed the wide expanse of the sea to the island of Lesbos. There they founded Myt-i-le'ne and other cities. Thence passing over to the mainland of Asia Minor, they occupied a narrow strip of coast extending some distance to the south of Lesbos. Their territory on the mainland was Ae'o-lis, and the inhabitants were Ae-o'li-ans. The same dialect of the Greek language, with slight variations, was spoken in Aeolis, in Lesbos, in most of Thessaly, and in Boeotia. Hence we group the inhabitants of all these countries together under the name Aeolians. In speaking of the Aeolians as a race, however, we must bear in mind that along with the colonists from Thessaly went people from other parts of Greece, and that the emigrants, on reaching their new home, mingled with the natives. Blood was mixed in the colonies to a greater extent than in the homeland, and the same thing is true of the other Greek races which colonized the Aegean area.

**93. The Ionians.** — Meanwhile emigrants from Attica were taking possession of the Cyclades. Two of those islands, Delos and Paros, have been mentioned. Near Paros is Nax'os, which in time

became politically important. Beyond the Cyclades, near the Asiatic coast, they occupied Samos and Chios, and lastly the adjacent strip of coast known as Ionia. "Of all men whom we know," says an ancient Greek historian,<sup>1</sup> "the Ionians had the good fortune to build their cities in the most favorable position for climate and seasons." The soil, too, is remarkably productive. The greatest of their cities was Mi-le'tus, a centre of industry, commerce, and intellectual life. In fact, for centuries after its founding Miletus took the lead in Hellenic civilization. In its widest and most popular sense the word Ionian applies not only to the people of Ionia, but to their kinsmen on the islands and in Attica. The Ionic race accordingly occupied the central section of Aegean islands and coasts south of the Aeolians.

94. **The Dorians.** — While the Aeolians and the Ionians were thus expanding across the Aegean Sea, Dorians from Peloponnese settled Me'los and The'ra in the southern Cyclades, and conquered a part of Crete. The population of this island was now a medley of races and tongues, as the poet Homer<sup>2</sup> describes it: "There is a land called Crete in the midst of the wine-dark sea, a fair land and rich, begirt with water, and therein are men innumerable and ninety cities. And all have not the same speech, but there is a confusion of tongues; there dwell Achaeans, and there, too, native Cretans high of heart, and Cy-do'ni-ans there and Dorians of waving plumes, and goodly Pelasgians." Farther on, the Dorians settled Rhodes and the adjacent coast of Asia Minor. In this way the Dorian race came to occupy the southernmost section of Aegean coasts and islands. The Aeolians, the Ionians, and the Dorians were the three races most prominent in earlier Greek history.

The period closed with the colonization of Cyprus by Arcadians (about 1000 B.C.).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Herodotus, i. 142.

<sup>2</sup> *Odyssey*, xix. 170 ff.

<sup>3</sup> The Arcadians and their colonists together formed a fourth race — the Arcadian-Cyprian. For the sake of completeness a fifth and sixth race may be mentioned here: (5) the so-called northwest Greeks, occupying Epeirus, Actolia, and the other countries of that region, with Achaea in northern Peloponnese, (6) the Eleians in northwestern Peloponnese. This classification is based on the dialects.

## II. THE EPIC OR HOMERIC AGE

About 1000-700 B.C.

95. **The Source: Homer.** — An epic is a long narrative poem which celebrates the deeds of real or mythical heroes.<sup>1</sup> We still read with pleasure the two great Hellenic epics, the *Iliad* and the *Od'ys-sey*. They are simple, graceful, and interesting; in that department of poetry they are unrivalled. Tradition declares the author to have been Homer, a blind old poet, who wandered about from city to city chanting his beautiful verses to eager listeners. So great was his reputation that seven cities boasted of being his birthplace. The *Iliad* tells a story connected with the Greek war against Troy. The *Odyssey* narrates the wanderings of the hero O-dys'seus on his return from the Trojan war. These stories will be found among the myths in the following chapter.

96. **Historical Value of Homer's Poems.** — The descriptions of palaces, of their furniture and decorations, and of the fine gold work, given in these poems, so accord with the actual remains of the Mycenaean age that we must believe that Homer was a guest in some of the palaces while they were still occupied and in all their glory. Then, too, many Mycenaean objects of art must have survived as heirlooms in great families long after the age had passed away. But other features of Homeric life prove it to have been in advance of the Mycenaean. For instance, Homer is well acquainted with the use of iron, whereas the Mycenaean period lay in the Bronze Age, which preceded that of iron. The country, too, is different. Homer lived in Ionia and composed in an old Ionic dialect. His period, therefore, followed the Ionic colonization. Although his stories are myths, probably containing a few real traditions of great achievements of the past, the manners and customs he describes are those of his own time and country. Ionic life in this period was a growth from the Mycenaean, freshened by new blood and by the stimulus of new surroundings.

97. **Social Life of the Ionians (1000-700 B.C.).** — Among the Ionians of Homer's time, family and kin were sacred, and under the

<sup>1</sup> The Babylonians had preceded the Greeks in composing epics (§ 42).

care of "household" Zeus, whose altar was the hearth. Parent and child, brothers and cousins, united by the twofold bond of blood and religion, stood by one another in danger, for the state had not yet begun to protect the lives of the citizens. Zeus commanded men to be kind to wayfarers. A common form of welcome was: "Hail, stranger, with us thou shalt be kindly entertained, and thereafter, when thou hast tasted meat, thou shalt tell us that whereof thou hast need."<sup>1</sup> Hospitality, love of kindred, freedom of women, and the gentle manners of home and of social life were the most admirable features of an age whose darker side appears in time of war. For then men sacked and burned cities, killed the warriors whom they captured, and enslaved the women and children. Piracy was respectable; the weak and homeless had no protection.

**98. Property and Labor.** — In time of peace the lords of the land kept their servants busy in the country planting orchards and vineyards, raising barley, or tending the herds, from which they drew most of their living. As there were few skilled workmen, they had to make at home nearly everything they needed in their daily life. Kings and queens worked along with their slaves. Having as yet no money, they bartered their produce, and reckoned values in cattle or in pounds of bronze, iron, or other metal. Although Phoenician traders supplied the rich with costly wares from the East, the Ionians were themselves building ships and beginning a trade which was soon to drive the vessels of Phoenicia from Greek waters.

**99. Government.** — While the common people were working in the fields or were building walls, houses, and ships, the nobles lived in the city in the enjoyment of wealth and authority. The greater lords met in a council to advise and assist the king in all public business, and to provide for the interests of their class. The king, who was merely the first among the nobles, was general, priest, and judge. He led the army, prayed to the gods for the city's safety, and settled cases of private law. He did not try, however, to keep the peace or prevent murder, but allowed the families of his state to fight one another as much as they pleased. His power was by no means absolute, for not only did he respect the wishes of the

<sup>1</sup> *Odyssey*, i. 123 f.

council, but he brought all his important plans before the gathering of freemen. This assembly did not vote; the people merely shouted assent or showed disapproval by silence. They exercised far less influence on the king than did his noble advisers.<sup>1</sup>

### Suggestive Questions

1. Why did the earliest Greek colonists go east rather than west? 2. Draw from memory a map of the Aegean coasts and islands, and place on it the Aeolians, the Ionians, and the Dorians. 3. How was the Ionian civilization related to the Mycenaean? In what respects was the newer civilization an improvement on the older? 4. If the government under which we live should cease to protect our lives, who would undertake the duty? Why did not the Greek government of the Epic Age protect the lives of the citizens? 5. Describe the dress and equipments of the men in the "warrior vase" (p. 78). What changes had taken place in these matters during the decline of the Mycenaean Age?

### Note-book Topics

I. **Family Life.** — Fling, *Source Book of Greek History*, 1-13 (extracts from Homer).

II. **Government.** — Fling, 13-16.

III. **Games.** — *Iliad*, xxii. 257-897.

<sup>1</sup> Religion, including that of the Homeric age, will be considered in the following chapter.

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