and punish anyone whose behaviour, public or private, was not according to custom. It thus had formidable power to *veto* drastic innovations. But, a matter all-important for the future of Athens, it lost the initiative.

A People's Council (so-called in an official document and therefore probably existing beside another Council which was not the people's) appears also in an early inscription from Chios; but the inscription is later than Solon, and whether the Council at Chios is earlier is therefore uncertain.

Solon had tried to do justice to all classes; naturally he satisfied no one. He was no democrat; he claimed to have given the people 'power *enough*', and his later poems, or verse pamphlets, show exasperation at their ingratitude. Badgered on all sides – 'like a wolf among many dogs', as he says – he declined to suppress criticism by force, as a tyrant; that, he says, would have meant bloodshed. Finally he laid down his office and went abroad again 'to trade and see the world', leaving the Athenians, still bound by powerful oaths to obey his enactments for ten years, to learn to administer his constitution without him. He allegedly visited Egypt, hearing tales from the priests about a lost kingdom of Atlantis (but on this, see the note on p. 304). In Cyprus he gave advice to a young king, Philokypros, who was modernising his city. The most famous of all the Solon-stories, that of his visit to Croesus, the rich king of Lydia, rests only on saga; indeed, unless there is something very wrong with the traditional chronology (which there probably is, but it would take too long to discuss it here), Croesus' name must have been substituted for that of his father. Croesus showed Solon all his treasures, and then asked him, who was the happiest man in all his experience? Solon named an old Athenian, whom Croesus had never heard of; a man, he explained, rich by Greek standards, who saw his sons' sons, and died gloriously, repelling a border raid. Croesus, still hoping to be placed second if not first, asked, who next? But Solon named two young Argives, whom Croesus had never heard of; brothers, both victors in the great games, who had died in their sleep after a mighty act of piety. They dragged their mother, who was

priestess of Hera, for five miles in a waggon to the temple on a festal day, when she had to ride, and 'their oxen had not arrived in time from the farm'. Solon explained that all these men had lived and *died* well; before pronouncing on Croesus' claim, one had better wait.

Statues in honour of the two young Argives, Kleobis and Biton, were set up at Delphoi, and are still there. Whether Solon told their story to Croesus, we may doubt; but the tale, told by Herodotos, embodies two pieces of Greek 'proverbial philosophy'; that *heaven is envious* of too great prosperity among men, and that one should *look to the end*. Croesus, as we shall see, did not end happily.

At home in Athens, Solon's constitution emphatically did not bring peace. Rather, by giving defined rights to the middle and poorer classes, he had introduced a new type of political struggle, in which old-fashioned rivalries between great families blended with class-struggles in factions partly, at least, local. Sometimes elections were so fierce that no archon could be elected at all. About 570 Megakles, head of the great family of the Alkmeonidai, whose grandfather, another Megakles, had massacred the supporters of Kylon, violating sanctuary, and was alleged to have incurred a family curse, was faced by a coalition of other nobles. Against them, he took the side of those who supported Solon's constitution, the liberals as it were; a 'Coast' party against the conservatives of the Plain. But there then appeared on the scene a third party, led by another ambitious nobleman, Peisistratos, a successful general in the wars with Megara, who took up the cause of the Hillmen: the crofters of the uplands, especially in northern Attica, whom Solon had left free, and with votes, but still miserably poor. After an attempt on his life – his enemies said that he had faked it, but this we may take leave to doubt – his supporters voted him a bodyguard, fifty men with cudgels; the nucleus of a private army, with which, in 561 traditionally, he seized the Acropolis. He was driven from Athens for a time; returned in coalition with Megakles; quarrelled with him, and was driven out again; and went off with a band of