Art in Primitive Greece.*

The two volumes on the Art of Primitive Greece are the beginning of the end of what must be considered the most complete and thorough history of ancient art ever written. Many years ago Georges Perrot (aided by Charles Chipiez) began the monumental task of gathering up and sifting all the material of ancient art and putting it together in sequential and chronological form. It was in 1882 that the first volumes, treating of Egyptian art, appeared; and since then we have followed M. Perrot, trusting to his knowledge, sagacity, and judgment, through the arts of the Chaldæans, Assyrians, Persians, and all the coast people of Asia Minor. At last he has brought us to Greece — his objective point from the start. For he told us in his first book that "beyond the obelisks and pyramids of Egypt, beyond the towers of Chaldæa and the domes of Nineveh, the lofty colonnades of Persepolis, the fortresses and rock-cut tombs of Phrygia and Lycia, beyond the huge ramparts of the cities of Syria, we shall never cease to perceive on the horizon the sacred rock of the Athenian Acropolis." Greece, to M. Perrot, furnished the climax of all ancient art; but it must not be inferred that the preceding volumes on Egyptian and Oriental art are merely introductory to this climax. On the contrary, each volume is in itself a complete statement of its subject — an exhaustive array of all the facts and a careful considering of all the theories.

The series begins with the beginning in Egypt, and is designed to end with the Roman art of Marcus Aurelius. The complete work is to cover fifteen or sixteen volumes. Twelve of them are now published, and, judging from these, the statement that they form the best history of ancient art ever written is not a rash one. No historian of art has ever covered so much ground in so scholarly a manner as Georges Perrot. Winckelmann, Schnaase, Woltmann and Woermann, Reber, never had adequate knowledge to start with, never had breadth of view to carry with, never had æsthetic taste to judge with. M. Perrot possesses all of these qualities, and — what must be somewhat humiliating to those who hug the idea that only Germany can produce historians — he is a Frenchman. It seems to be thought in some quarters that however clumsy and dull a plodder the German may be he is wonderfully thorough and accurate; and that the easy style of the Frenchman argues a superficial view of questionable facts. However well-founded that idea may be as regards theology and philosophy, it is not well-founded as regards science, letters, archæology, and art. In taste, judgment, accuracy, and perspicacity, the Frenchman is to be trusted; and these books by Georges Perrot are warrant for saying so. They are the most modern, but not the first, instance of French scholarship. We shall wait a long time before any German or Italian or Englishman equals them.

Nevertheless, the reading of these last volumes on Mycenian art causes a shade of disappointment. When a writer would do something "very fine," he is likely to overshoot the mark; and M. Perrot evidently intended his treatment of Greek art to be convincing to the last degree. He begins and ends with a theory, and one wonders at times whether he is not straining facts to make them square with the theory. In brief, notwithstanding great caution and a putting of all the *pros* and *cons*, M. Perrot believes with Schliemann in Troy and Mycenæ, in the ancestors of the Greeks starting there 2000 years B.C., in the growth of Greek art from this Mycenian art; he believes in the time-honored and somewhat fallacious theory of evolution. It cannot be said that his theory is impossible or even improbable. Indeed, it is made quite plausible; and yet one may question whether it is the archæologist's or historian's business to theorize to such an extent. Groping in the dark of the past, perhaps the best that one could do would be to emphasize the facts so that they may be used as guide-posts hereafter. These hypotheses may be only card-houses to be knocked over. The mound upon which Troy is supposed to have rested contains three strata, each one reflective of a different stage of civilization. From that we have the theory that the stone-age man of the first stratum was the lineal ancestor of the bronze-age Trojan of the third stratum. Let us see how it might have been. The city of St. Louis is destroyed by earthquake, buried, forgotten. Two thousand years hence it is dug up by archæologists. They find three strata, showing remains of three different peoples. They first dig out the remains of a thirteen-story building, then a log hut, and under all they find mound-builders' pottery. *Ergo*, the present people of St. Louis must have evolved from their ancestors the Mound Builders!

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M. Perrot, of course, draws no such absurd conclusion; but one feels at times as though he had not given enough weight to the possibilities of invading and conquering hosts, and of the Greek people being formed not from any one race but from many races mingled. The Ægean swarmed with all sorts of adventurers in Mycenian days. Tribes came and went; settlements were made, conquered, and re-made; and who were the ancestors of the Greeks, we do not yet know. There is no corroborative evidence that the buildings, ornaments, vases, and other remains that have been found at Troy and elsewhere, are Greek, except in some passages from the epic of Homer — a record itself to be proven. There is not a line or scratch of writing, on clay or wall or stone, to indicate a Greek people. The only evidence lies in the remains themselves. It is true, these differ from all relics we now know of as being found on the shores of the eastern Mediterranean; yet they have an affinity with oriental art that suggests the possibility of their production by a now-forgotten race that was not Greek at all. Again, the Mycenian pottery might have been only a commercial ware hawked about the Mediterranean by traders. It is found elsewhere than at Troy and Mycenæ; and when the diggings in Phœnicia equal those at Mycenæ, it may be found in as large quantities. As for Schliemann and his discoveries, he rendered great service to archæology by his excavations, but his theory was formed before he began to dig. He started out to find Troy and Agamemnon's tomb, and—he found them. Had he been seeking Aladdin's lamp he would have found it in the first junk-shop of the Mouski.

But M. Perrot is not dogmatic in his theory. These volumes are really an elaborate and learned discussion of the question; and if, finally, the leaning is toward Schliemann's conclusions, it is not an arbitrary bias. If the value of the theory can be questioned, the manner in which it is put forth cannot. The critical and historical spirit pervades the discussion, and the truth is sought for. Aside from this theory, there is little to question or find fault with in the work. The opening chapter, on the country, is a close study of geography, soil, climate, and all that, by a man who knows his Greece almost as well as he does his Paris. Greek genius is not accounted for except by saying that it cannot be accounted for, and M. Perrot accepts the Aryan theory of the Greeks populating Greece by land and by sea from the East. At the same time he thinks that "until proof is shown to the contrary, we are bound to recognize in the folk who fashioned them [stone implements found in Greece] the direct ancestors of the Greeks of history." In other words, Greece had its stone age, and stumbled up through ages of bronze and iron to Periclean splendor, notwithstanding the forefathers of the race came from the East. Perhaps so; but it is not yet proven.

Once out of the land of speculation and evolution, and describing art-remains before him, M. Perrot becomes an archæologist again; and his accounts of Troy, Tiryns, and Mycenæ are as intelligent and painstaking as possible. He thinks the evidence is for Hissarlik being the ancient site of Troy; and that the tombs at Mycenæ are those described by Pausanias. The domed tombs of Attica and at Orchomenos, the wall construction of the Athenian Acropolis, the remains found on the Greek islands, are all brought in to prove the prevalence of primitive modes of construction during the Mycenian civilization. The chapters on the general characteristics of Mycenian architecture, materials, gates, columns, mouldings, are excellent; and here M. Perrot's collaborator, M. Charles Chipiez, comes in with restorations of the tombs and walls most ingeniously wrought out and undoubtedly correct.

In the second volume, M. Perrot decides against Schliemann's Homeric theory of temples and incineration as not proven; he does not give the origin of the architectural forms, thinks the Doric column did not come from Egypt but was evolved from the wooden structure of the last Mycenian civilization, deals sensibly with what is left of the sculpture, painting, and industrial arts including pottery, and ends with a chapter on the characteristics of the Mycenian period. Here at the last he returns to his theory, and finds a date for the heyday of Mycenian existence at 1500 B.C. The only outside evidence that supports the date comes from Egypt—a questionable record of Egyptian commerce with the Greeks in that early period. The finding of Egyptian scarabs, sherds, pastes, and glasses, on the Greek islands and the mainland, does not confirm the record, since they probably came from Phœnicia.

The translation of this work cannot be praised. Mr. I. Gonino, who has succeeded Mr. Walter Armstrong as translator of the series, has used the pruning knife "to slightly abridge the text in those portions that are somewhat tumid with padding," and judging from

his own "tumidity" he has not done it well. Moreover, though Mr. Gonino may understand French he does not know how to write flexible English. Such sentences as these are not infrequent: "Nobody knows and never will know," "Colored stones which pleasure the eye," "We should doubtless have been justified to infer," "So scanty a piece of information, however, cannot dispense us from devoting a special study," etc. Then the pedantry of "Hadriatic" and "Achylles," the angularity of "gracility" for slenderness, and the stupidity of "When the excavator tumbled about Grecian soil," etc., which might give one to understand that the excavator "tumbled" instead of the soil. But the book is welcome, and will live in spite of Mr. Gonino's English.

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