

## THE COINAGE OF THE GREEKS.



HIEF among all the educational agencies which the artist has at his command is now, as it has been for twenty-five centuries, the sculpture of the ancient Greeks. Etruria, Rome, Egypt, Asia, no less than Byzantium, Pisa, Florence, and every home of latter-day art, have submitted to the discoveries of the ideal, and wherever a revival of true art has taken place, the pale ghost of that first and most perfect form of it has appeared in the academy more winning in its shadowy and mutilated majesty than all we have besides. Its supreme power is only to be known in the British Museum, the Louvre, the Vatican, and in Berlin; but scarcely less potent as a school of art, nor less lucid as expression of all its best qualities, is the coinage of Greece during the four centuries prior to the complete subjection of the Greek nationality and the disappearance simultaneously of independence and individuality. There are certain coins which contain in a circle of an inch in diameter most of the finest qualities of sculpture, the subtlest record of the harmonies of line and form; and, taken collectively, this coinage gives a better demonstration of the beginning, the rise, the decay, and the death of art, and perhaps also a better explanation of the causes of that growth and decline, than can be found in all the records and remains besides. The numismatic chronicle is indeed one of the most important aids of history, whether political, commercial, or economical; and Prof. Percy Gardner, in a book which ought to be among the first in the hands of every student of numismatics ("The Types of Greek Coins"), has said of Sicily what may be applied in a less extent to all Greece:

"So much has been lost of the products of the Italic and Sicilian schools of the fifth century B. C., so little do we know of their familiar terms of fashion, that in spite of the later Selinuntine sculptures, we should not have known, but for the testimony of the coins, how advanced they were and how widely spread their influence, what originality there was in the types they introduced, and what mastery they showed in the execution of those types."

The fascination which lies about all Hellenic research has more of the magic of Proteus in it when we have to deal with the coinage than with any other branch of Hellenic studies; not only because of its intimate relation to what was the incomparable and distinguishing glory of Hellenism,—art,—but because one of the most fascinating of all studies is that of the relation of the beautiful to the actual life and to the intellectual activity of men, and because the coins of Greece are inextricably entangled in the web of history of individual, state, and race. If nothing survived of all the sculpture of the ancients, Greek coinage alone would demonstrate that the race to which it owed its existence was more conversant with the qualities of beauty and had a finer spiritual constitution than any other race of which we have any kind of record. We learn from it that when all surrounding nations were buried in the barbarism of wild, or sunk in the heaviness of sensual, life, the Greeks were showing the most intense vitality and the finest mental susceptibilities as well as the purest moral qualities that mankind have ever shown, and we do not need Plato and the poets to assure us that the typical Greek of 400 B. C., and of some generations before and after, was, in all demanded by the balance of the qualities belonging to man as the intellectual and spiritual being, such as no age before or since, of which we know, has been able to show. The complexus of art, as painting, sculpture, poetry, music, or any other form that may be devised, is the truest and most absolute expression of the essential character of man that can be made. Its existence as a dominant element of nationality or individuality implies a healthy and stirring intellect, a temperament open to all the influences of nature, and a more or less vivid susceptibility to those moral emotions which are the springs of all aspirations and of all ideals, the life of our life, the animus of our complex being. The subtlety, the infinite variety, the ineffable beauty, the exalted ideal, which pervade Greek art could never have had a beginning in men who were mere materialists, sensualists, or dullards. The keen sense of beauty it shows is proclamation of a nature gifted with the keenest and subtlest perceptions of visible things as well as of a sensibility to



PERSIAN DARIC.

the impressions which the mind receives from those variations of external form that point to the ideal; and, with all the progress of civilization and science, the technical knowledge to which we have attained, the development of Christianity, of philanthropy, and of general ethics, to say nothing of the laws of material existence, we have never in our modern history known a race which was so perfect in the balance of all the positive human qualities as that which gave us Greek art. This is perhaps a truism, but the evidence of it is in the art itself; and to any one who has so far mastered the correspondence of art as to read its message, perhaps the shortest path to this evidence lies through the coinage of the Greeks.

We are in the habit of talking of schools of art. Of consummate schools there have been but three, if we use the term art in the sense in which we distinguish it from mere technique on one side or record of fact on the other,—the art which has to deal with any ideal whatsoever; these three are the Greek, the Venetian, and the Dutch. Of one or the



THE SILPHIUM, CYRENE. FROM THE GORRINGE COLLECTION.



APHRODITE, CNIDUS. 700-480 B. C.

other or all of them are born all arts, modern forms, and phases; or rather from the spirit of which these are the consummate expressions all others are more or less distinct and perfect manifestations. I am aware that there are apparent chronological reasons for disputing this so compendious classification, but in a more appropriate place for the discussion I am prepared to meet them. The Greek school is that of form and its ideal, either alone or in combinations. In its prime, and its early stages of decay, it had nothing to do with the actual, or imitation of nature, and it fell when it came to realism in portraiture. The Venetian took certain themes from nature, having no subjective ideal of form like the Greek, and clothed them

in a color which was ideal and was never imitated from nature, but rather remembered in a musical\* way. It also fell in the decay of independence and national character. The Dutch school was nursed and nourished by the nature of



HEAD OF EAGLE, ELIS.

the sea-coasts and sea-level lands of Holland, strengthened by the sea winds and the freedom of the sea life. It died of commerce and materialism (not to be confounded with rationalism or the negation of the spiritual existence, but in its true sense of over-devotion to merely material objects of thought and aspiration); and, since that, we have had only fruitless efforts to establish and revive schools without any basis in national character or temperament. One thing is to be noted of these three schools:



APOLLO, KAULONIA. SIXTH CENTURY B. C.

they were the blossoming of the national lives of sea peoples, brave, imperial, passionately devoted to liberty, and they all died with the decline of national simplicity and heroic self-assertion. I do not believe that religion as such had ever anything to do with awakening art, but I do believe that, other things being equal, the more reverently and spiritually inclined a people, the more refined and exalted and the nobler will be its art. Superstitious or slavish beliefs, on the contrary, are absolutely hostile to the growth of any art whatever.

I have no intention to follow the lines of speculation which are offered by the relation of numismatics to archaeology, mythology, or his-



BULL, SYBARIS. 700-510 B. C.



tory, or even to treat numismatics as a science. There are many volumes on all these relations; and of manuals for scientific study, many. Lenormant's general manual, "Monnaies et Médailles," and Gardner's "Greek Coins," are accessible to all, as well as the invaluable cata-

\* The very derivation of the word musical is the key to the unity of all the arts, being that which the Muse sends; and for the Greek every form of art had its separate Muse, indicating that the work was approached subjectively, with invocation and prayer; mostly nowadays with beer and pipe.



POSEIDON, POSEIDONIA. 700-480 B. C.

logue of the British Museum coins; and, of special treatises, Head's "Coinage of Syracuse" will suggest the inexhaustible material contained in the subject, and will show as a secondary result the height which art reached in a colony of that motherland to which the world owes the most exalted art.

It is the purely artistic side of Greek coinage which, to me, furnishes the most attractive vein of study, from the clear and concise manner in which it shows the rise and decline of idealism, and the way in which the Greeks caught from other nations an idea adapted to their nature and carried it to a perfection of development of which the parent race never dreamed. The origin of coinage, *i. e.*, the stamping of ingots of gold and silver of definite weights with the seal of a sovereign to fit them



PALLAS-ATHENE, ATHENS. 700-480 B. C. OWL.

for general circulation and acceptance as a measure of value without going through the more ancient method of weighing the precious metals at each transfer, is pretty surely Asiatic. The idea of a coinage of this character giving the well-known and authoritative warrant of an official guarantee to the metal in circulation is now generally accorded to Lydia, although it was questioned in ancient times whether Pheidon, king of Argos, might not dispute the honor. The coinages of both are of the exceedingly primitive character which befits the beginning of such a manufacture, and from the money itself it would be difficult to decide. The work of Professor Gardner goes into this subject at some length and inclines to the Lydian origin on historical grounds, but there is one consideration which seems to me more decisive, *viz.*, that the early Lydian coins were made on a Babylonian standard; and as all know that the civilization of Babylonia was much earlier



ARETHUSA, SYRACUSE. 480-400 B. C.

than that of Greece, the adoption of its standard would indicate that money was first coined for Babylonian usage in a gold-producing country. This Babylonia was not, the nearest to Babylon being Lydia. That this is probable is shown by the fact that Lydian pieces were coined both by the Babylonian and later by Phœnician standards, as if for commerce with both nations; and by the analogical case of the staters of Cyzicus, which were impressed with



NIKE, SYRACUSE. DEMARETEION. ABOUT 480 B. C. RACING CHARIOT.

the types, besides that of the coining city, of the principal cities with which it was in commerce (Lenormant, p. 142); and as the earliest Lydian coins follow the Babylonian standard, we have a right to conclude that the coinage grew out of an early and large demand from that important center of commerce, at a time when Greek trade was comparatively unimportant, or completely non-existent.

But the adoption of coinage by Pheidon gave to Greece the germ of an art in what had been before only a symbol of value, and the versatile and beauty-loving Greek has shown an abundance of invention and warmth of idealization which nothing in his statuary surpasses. And we have the advantage, very rare in marble works,—rare even in bronze,—of examples quite unmutated and even undefaced by circulation. Nothing in archæology is more surprising than the harvest of coins brought to light by excavations, or often by chance. Some workmen in Rhodes found, several years ago, an earthen pot with seventy-five pounds weight of gold coin, all staters of Philip and Alexander, and for a time the market was flooded with them to such an extent that they were sold for little more than their weight in gold. I myself got one from a Greek who asked as a favor that I would give him a pound sterling for it. Some of these had evidently never been circulated, and I got one at Athens later which had never lost the luster of the die. At Missolonghi, thirty years or more ago, another pot of the same coinage was found



CRAB, AGRIGENTUM. 400-480 B. C.



NIKE, TERINA. 480-400 B. C.

in the same state, and from the numerous finds of these coins of Philip and Alexander, it is clear that their circulation in the time of those sovereigns must have been enormous, and though among the most beautiful, they remain the most reasonable of the gold coins in price. Yet I have seen but two from the same dies. Fortunately for us there were no banks in those days, and people who hoarded money generally hid it in the earth or in the walls of their houses, so that the removal of ruins or the chance digging of some old field below the layer of modern accumulation is continually bringing to light small hoards of coins of all epochs, and the piece that is unique to-day may find a hundred rivals to-morrow. This makes a continual fluctuation in the price of rare coins, which is however somewhat modified by the exceeding rarity of absolute duplicates, *i. e.*, pieces struck on both sides from the same dies. I have seen in one collection about three hundred different didrachms of Taren-

tum; and of this city, of Metapontum, Thurium, Neapolis, Terina, Agrigentum, Velia, Rhegium, the smaller coins of Syracuse and some other cities of Magna Grecia, of Corinth and its colonies of Macedon, all among the most attractive of the silver coinage, the abundance is so great that they may easily be obtained in excellent condition. On the other hand, the archaic coins, which, with few exceptions, are not specially prized for their beauty, are, in general, the most valuable to the numismatist. It is only when coinage begins to become a distinct



DIONYSOS, NAXOS. ABOUT 460 B. C.



SILENOS.

vehicle of types, that it becomes a branch of art-study; and in the best period of numismatic art and the prime of the great commercial communities of Greece the abundance of coinage, and the constant variation in the types employed as symbols, give us most instructive and copious lessons in Greek design.

The relations of sculpture to die-cutting and of die-cutting to seal-engraving are those which present the most salient considerations in what we may call comparative art. Sculpture in Greece was long anterior to coinage. We have the sculptures of the Lion gate at Mycenæ, which, from indisputable considerations that I have given in full elsewhere, cannot be considered as later than 1500 B. C.,\* or several centuries before any



HERA, ELIS. 480-400 B. C.



EAGLE.

\* There is a point in Greek art not yet cleared up, but of the highest interest in this relation of early Pelasgic art to later Greek. That the Lions of Mycenæ are not later than 1500 B. C. results from the method of execution, which is in every point in accordance with that of the city itself and the domed tombs as well as from their position in the ruins. All this architecture is of the polished stone age. The causes of the break in the development of Greek art, which we must assume, to account for the non-development of sculpture in this interval of 800 years, may be of two kinds,—political, in the destruction of the Pelasgic empire of Peloponnesus by conquest; and technical, in the want of tools which would cut stone with sufficient facility. The xoana or wooden statues probably existed long before the Lions of Mycenæ were cut, but the process by which the latter were executed, being mainly drilling and trituration with stone implements, was by far too laborious to be made use of generally or by others than the trained artisans of the Pelasgic epoch, who most probably disappeared with the conquest. To a



APOLLO, AMPHIPOLIS. 400-336 B. C.



certain extent this must remain mere hypothesis, but I am confident of the general correctness of the direction my conjectures have taken. The sudden advance Greek art took (I conceive between 1000 and 800 B. C., when the wooden statues were abandoned largely for stone) I consider to be due to the communication of new methods from the East as a consequence of the establishment of trade with Asia Minor and Phœnicia. The early Greeks were clearly stone workers, in the main probably possessing bronze but not of quality to cut stone. But wood was still largely employed for statues. I found, when excavations were being made on the Acropolis of Athens among the *débris* of the conflagration of Xerxes, fragments of their bronze draperies with the carbonized wood still in them, unmistakably of some statues burned in the destruction of the temples by the Persians.



LION, RHEGIUM. 400-387 B. C.



APOLLO.



APOLLO, CROTON.



400-336 B. C. YOUNG HERCULES.

coinage existed; and yet these lions are of a quality of art already superior, *as art*, to any work of that hypothetical date yet found in Egypt or Assyria. The affinities of coin design are not with sculpture, which in all its early stages appears in the round; the relief, high or low, being the product of a more advanced state of art education. It is quite impossible to accept the evidence of Greek chronology of the heroic and mythical ages; the attributions of affinity and descent also are continually interfered with by national vanity and that credulity which appears always to have been a ruling trait of Greek character. We must extend the chronology beyond the year 1000 B. C. indefinitely, and fortunate are we if we can establish sequence and relative position to events or monuments. We may suppose that, before the introduction of letters into Greece and the crystallization of tradition in writing, verbal tradition may have been transmitted with some degree of accuracy for, at the most, two or three hundred years; but for all beyond this the fabulous and supernatural intermingle with a rapidly increasing ratio, so that beyond 1200 to 1100 B. C. it is absurd to build on tradition, which has become pure mythology. For this reason the beginnings of art are absolutely undiscoverable. My own conviction is that the true artistic nature, as opposed to imitative or monumental, was the original appanage of the Pelasgic race, developed in the great Italian empire built up by it, and that art came into Greece with the Tyrrhenian Pelasgi from Italy (Thucydides IV., 109). The distinguishing element in the art thus derived is

the entire subordination in it of all other elements to beauty, the expression of an ideal which, in my philosophy, is born of a distinct though possibly half-blind spiritual aspiration, the fine union of the intellectual and moral yearnings which have always distinguished the Greek art and life from that of Eastern nations. The arts of Egypt were distinctly monumental—canonical; those of Asia (other than Greek) merely decorative,\* if anything more than monumental (*vid.* Professor Gardner's "Types of Greek Coins," p. 97), and each became in the least degree ideal only when invaded by the genius of Greece. I believe also that to a survival in this Pelasgic stock, the vein coming to light in an unexpected and inexplicable way, was due the revival of art in Tuscany, the ancient home of the Tyrrhene Pelasgi, to whom Thucydides alludes in the above noted passage.

But the origin of coinage was not due to art, although when the Greek took it up it became a favored vehicle for artistic expression, as did all articles of use with a people to whom beauty was the main motive of intellectual activity. It came as the proper offspring of commerce, its immediate progenitor being the personal seals and symbols, the *arms*, as we may say, of monarchs and communities. The impression of a seal on an object, or on a disk of clay attached to it, would naturally lead to the employment of the same symbols on the coin when the idea of a medium of exchange was put into practice, as the guarantee of value of the sovereign who adopted it; but while in the object whose value was in the manufacture, as an earthen pot, the name or mark of the maker was the important item, in the piece of bullion, whose value was in the certainty of the quantity of

SATRAP, COLOPHON.  
400-336 B. C.

\* The essential element of all pure art is in one sense decorative (if we use that word in its general sense of opposed to *useful*), and it is at bottom the love of decoration, as opposed to utility, which is the basis of all fine art, and, to a certain degree, its peculiar motive, because, if we regard any work of art in reference to its *raison d'être*, we shall see that while art has various sentiments as stimulating agencies, such as rever-

ence, record, etc., it takes the direction of pure art, *i. e.*, the embodiment of an ideal, only when the desire of embellishment or expression of beauty is dominant. The distinction of decorative and fine arts is therefore one of degree, not of kind, and we use the former when we would indicate that the art is applied to some object or purpose whose prime cause is utility, the latter when it serves no use.



APOLLO, CATANIA.



APOLLO, CHALCIS.



FEMALE HEAD, CARTHAGE. 400-336 B. C.



LION AND PALM-TREE.



PALLAS, THURIUM.



BULL, THURIUM.



PALLAS, THURIUM.



TARAS ON A DOLPHIN, TARENTUM.

metal in it, the mark of the guarantor was the only satisfactory one. When the Greek cities were the coiners, of course the symbol of the city was the appropriate mark of coinage, and here the fine sense of the race found its opportunity to embody, in the purest form of decoration the world has ever seen, all the various objects of veneration or preference of all its communities; and under the conditions which determined the nature of Greek art, it, in the later days, became ideal, as in the Syracusan coins, where the cutter of the dies signed his work, and in the head of the nymph Arethusa, of that later period when Kimon, Eukleides and Evainetos put their names on their dies—not for the glory of the nymph, but for their own. To say that this marks the decline of art would be, in reference to motive, true; but it is not the decline of absolute deterioration, but that which follows the severe schools of ideal art, and which may be called that of perfect ripeness rather than of decay. This is the relation in which the art of Scopas and Praxiteles stood to that of Phidias, and in the sense of artistic vitality there is no doubt that the former shows decline of the ideal creative powers. But art is not alone conception—it is also expression. Not alone in the vaulting imagination is the gift of the poet shown, but in the rhythmic ear, the musical sense; and the analogy holds good in graphic art, so that, with an admiration of the severe and intellectual art of Phidias second to none, I am heretic enough to admit that of the full circle of art Scopas and Praxiteles had more than Phidias, just as Titian had more than Gian-Bellini. The element of the sensuous is as determinate a part of perfect art as any other, but the distinction is in the due subordination of it to what we must consider the higher, because the more vital, element of intellectual conception. The art that begins with the sensuous becomes sensual and dies there, but that which never becomes sensuous dries up, unfruitful stock; and the art which has nearest attained perfection is that which unites all the elements in the highest degree.

But the art of the coin-maker has never the highest attainment of the intellectual side of

art—it belongs by its very purpose to the form which succeeds that, and by the analogies of its composition to Scopas rather than to Phidias. The fine taste of the Greek is shown here, for it is most interestingly demonstrated by Professor Gardner that in the better epochs of coin designing there was no copying of statues—this was reserved for the decline of art, when taste had decayed, and the poverty of invention, which follows, had come on the artists. The coin designer felt his limitation and his advantages, and his art came to perfection concurrently with that form of sculpture which most nearly corresponds with it in its element, about 350 B. C. It began later, and, so far as we can determine, began to decay earlier, than sculpture. An additional reason for this decline in



EAGLES. AGRIGENTUM.—QUADRIGA.

numismatic art would be the general acceptance of coins of commercial standard and the decline of local mints, whose rivalry in excellence we must suppose to have been an element in the art development.

But each epoch in the evolution of design has its peculiar interest, and the most archaic coins have even a certain charm of naïveté of design which is widely remote from childishness or dullness. The coins of Kaulonia, Poseidonia (Pæstum), and Tarentum, of the earliest date of which we have examples, present characteristics of design and of mintage which make them invaluable data in the history of art. They date from about 500 B. C., and are from that Magna Grecia whose greater wealth developed a higher civilization than obtained contemporaneously in Greece. They demonstrate that art is further advanced; the quaint qualities of archaic design begin already to yield to a



PALLAS.



HERACLEA.

HERCULES.



PERSEPHONE.



LOCRI OPUNTII.

AJAX.

motive of action; the Apollo of Kaulonia and the Poseidon of Poseidonia are interesting figures and show clearly the purely subjective beginnings of Greek art—that quality which made it what it became, and finally deserted it when it fell into objectivity in the attempt to copy nature. The artist who had the power of design either of those coins shows, the “go,” to use a common but expressive term, had he been set to copy nature, could not possibly have given his figure the impossible action it has on the coin. One sees clearly that he worked from an idea of power and dignity which he must express without regard to the limitations of human anatomy. Apollo strikes, and Poseidon launches his trident, with the fury which no purely natural attitude could have expressed, but which belong to the idea rather than to nature. The head of Athena, which for centuries was the type of Athens, shows still more clearly how entirely the artist embodied an incorrectly but sharply defined idea. The absolute profile which was alone possible to the incomplete art of the time is united with the full eye which the artist was accustomed to see in the human face, and which alone had to him the value of expression. A momentary comparison with nature would have shown the impossibility of such a combination, but that momentary comparison was never made. The whole development of Greek art, to the day in which, leaning



PALLAS, COLONY OF CORINTH.

on nature, it began to grow feeble and walk lame, is simply the history of the education of this ideal vision, the perfection of the subjective image which, so long as it was born of the Muse, was immortal, and began to fall into decay with the appeal

to nature for its sustenance.

The mintage of Greece proper is perhaps behind that of Italy, and still more behind that of Sicily, in the development of its best art, and in the early stages all are, so far as we know, behind sculpture. In fact, the art of relief always requires, to be of equal merit, a more complete education than the sculpture of the round; but the enormous amount of designing required to supply with coin reliefs all the mints of Greece and her colonies, and the

freedom and facility thus acquired, no doubt helped materially all the arts of design in the days of their highest glory. The complete independence of the Greek cities and communities, which had doubtless much to do with the progress of the entire race as with its fatal dissensions and subjection in later times, was one of the most powerful stimulants of the arts, and especially that of coinage. There was no supreme coinage: all stood on their merits and good reputations. The mental characteristic of the race, which we may fail to explain but cannot question,—its intense love of beauty,—made it necessary to make the coinage beautiful: the “he touched nothing that he did not adorn” was never so true as of the Greek of the centuries from 600 to 200 B. C., and the amount of industry expended on the coins may be faintly conceived from the enormous number of types existing of the leading and most familiar coins, and from the number of mints known to have existed. Says Professor Gardner:

“Lapse of time has doubtless deprived us of the coins of hundreds of independent cities, yet enough remains to show us to what extent subdivision of independence was carried in Greece. We have money of more than fifty Greek cities of Sicily: the little island of Coos, not ten miles across, had three active mints. At least fifteen cities of the remote district of Acarnania have left us coinages, some of them of great extent and variety. The number of towns of which coins are mentioned in Mionnet is nearly fifteen hundred; and since the publication of that work we have scores of new cities to add to the list. Little hill-fortresses, the inhabitants of which must have been numbered not by thousands but by hundreds, had their own types and their own mint, jealously guarding their right of coinage with the aid of two of the strongest sentiments of the Hellenic race, the love of autonomy and commercial jealousy.” (“Types of Greek Coins,” p. 26.)

To their emulation and intense mental and social activity, to the rivalry of cities and jealousy of communities, one element of the intellectual life of Greece, the love of art, owed probably a great part of its pabulum. The political problems to which the coinage furnishes a clew are for the historian and the political economist; to our purpose, the trivial fact that the die was cut in soft metal, probably bronze, and necessarily with great rapidity and freedom, had probably more importance in the development of the taste of the Greeks and



HERA.



CROTON.

HERCULES.



PALLAS.

SYRACUSE.



PEGASUS.

the education in decorative art than any other simple item. From the very beginning there is a dominant love of decoration; the field of the coin is always filled with tastefully arranged material—in the earlier coins where the incuse square is employed, as in the coins of Athens, the square itself is made to play a part in the composition, yet it was originally only a device to drive the metal well into the recesses of the die underneath. The owl is arranged as the main line of the diagonal composition, and the corners then left vacant are filled with the olive leaf and the signature of the city, abbreviated to the space. And in the coin of Amphipolis, centuries later, the same motive crops out, again accentuated and insisted on by the inner square, which probably typifies the city wall and the inscription following its form. In the whole duration of Greek artistic vitality this decorative sense is predominant: the composition, the balance or rhythm of parts, is invariably kept in view in all the arrangement of symbols. The reverse of the archaic Demareteion or decadrachm of Gelon is a superb example of the coin design of epoch 480 B. C., and is superior to anything we know of Greek contemporary coinage. The way in which the whole field is filled up—the lion in the exergue, the victory floating above, the pose of the driver, the arrangement of the horses' heads, all disposed rhythmically, and yet without violence—makes this noble coin one of the most valuable we possess, though not one of the rarest. Its history, too, is interesting beyond the interest of mere Greek money.

In 480 Gelon defeated the Carthaginians at Himera, and, through the influence of his wife, Demarete, accorded them such favorable terms that they in gratitude gave her a hundred talents of gold, which were employed in a coinage of decadrachms, the earliest known of

this denomination, and were called, after the name of the queen, Demarateia. The obverse, with its border of dolphins, the olive wreath and inscription, is decorative throughout. Of the same period the reverse of the coin of Naxos, the coins of Selinous and Thurium generally, are charming examples of pure decoration. The manner in which the artist has filled up the field of the Naxian coin is very skillful.

In the later coinages we have the motive carried out with still finer art in the didrachm of Heraclea, a colony of Magna Grecia, which is to my mind one of the most exquisite pieces of decorative design in the whole of Greek numismatics, both reverse and obverse being of the most charming character. The Hercules on the obverse of the didrachm of Croton; the Thurian bull with its obverse of Pallas, whose helmet is ornamented with the sea monster Scylla; the little Hercules strangling the serpents, of Croton; the coins of Tarentum continually, and of Sicily in general at this epoch, are most instructive in their lovely decorative feeling.

But in Sicily at this period came in those types of beauty which mingle with the purely decorative work of the coin designer something of the ideal beauty which Athenian art showed in the time of Praxiteles and Scopas. The decadrachm of Syracuse, which is, when all is weighed in our comparison, the most glorious survival of Greek numismatics, exhausts the refinement of profile relief. (See cut below.) It has three profile types of the Arethusa head, varying slightly in development of the purely sensuous beauty of the nymph. As it has been the most admired, it probably has been the most counterfeited, of all the Greek coins.

But with all this beauty and perfection of



KIMON, ARETHUSA.



DECADRACHM, SYRACUSE.

405-345 B. C.



ARETHUSA.





ARETHUSA, SYRACUSE. KIMON, ABOUT 388 B. C. PALLAS.

technical achievement we can never confound the art of coinage even with that which it best coincides with in its perfection, the sculpture of Scopas: the severer and loftier, certainly more ascetic, art of the Phidian stage is rarely presented in coins. The die-cutter does not seem ever to have been accepted as an artist of the higher class, and we know from Plutarch that even the greatest artists were looked upon only as a superior class of artisans; and it is only after coinage had almost ceased to be regarded as an art vehicle, *i. e.*, in Roman imperial times, that the coin or gem engraver becomes known to the world as an object of respect. This came to the sculptor and painter alike, mainly by the vanity of rulers, Alexander leading the public of antiquity into what was before his time regarded as the desecration of art,—portraiture,—and into a compensating higher esteem of the artist. As art became a minister to the pleasure and personal exaltation of man, so the artist became a higher dignitary in the worship which was becoming the worship of self. Phidias was imprisoned because he dared to put his portrait among the decorations of the Athena; Apelles was enriched because he painted that of Alexander.

But there is another consideration which must not be lost sight of in this reckoning: the art of Phidias and the pure ideal which attains, through the highest culture, a power over the taste of the highly cultured, is in its general effect enormously outweighed in its

influence over the public of moderate cultivation by the art which, without becoming degraded, finds its expression more in the sensuous types that suggest the possibility of human embodiment. The Arethusa of the best coinage of Syracuse, the Ceres of Opus, the types of Metapontum, Catania, the young Hercules of Camarina, the fascinating full-face heads of Amphipolis, Syracuse, etc., have a beauty of a peculiar type, and which, I must say, without irreverence for the Phidian type and the severe art of the more heroic type, does possess certain elements of human beauty not found in the Elgin marbles. I admit, that while my admiration for the Theseus and Ilissus has no weakening, I believe that the Melian Victory\* comes nearer to the perfection of the beauty which is nearest us—the purely physical—than anything in the earlier phase. The highest stages of cultivation alone can honestly accept the severer types as most delectable, and their



PORTRAIT OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT, COIN OF LYSIMACHUS, KING OF THRACE. 324-282 B. C. PALLAS.

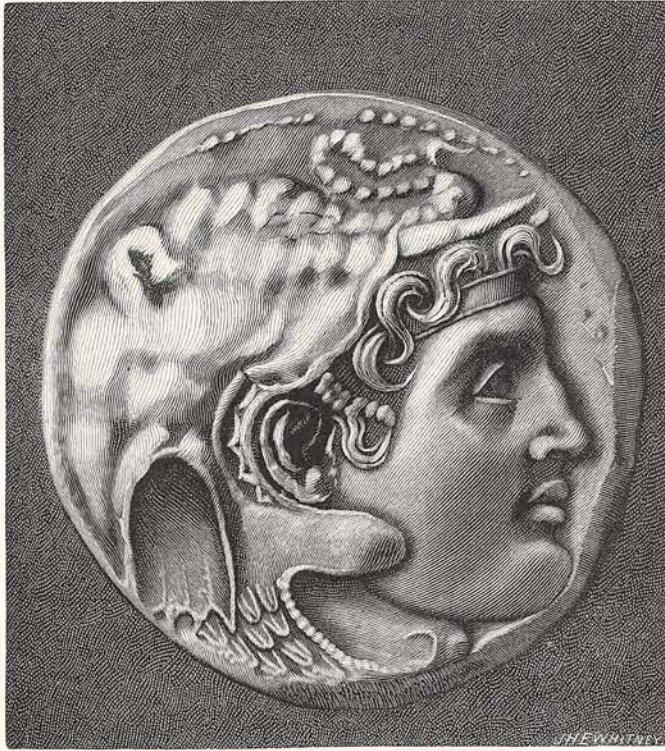
authoritative character is imposed upon the less educated. There is an affectation of superior admiration of the severe type which in the real feeling of the amateur is often not accompanied by the corresponding appreciation. Let us at least be honest with our tastes, and even the people who do really admire Bouguereau rather than Watts will rise to better things; but admiration by authority has just the value of love through sense of duty.

\* The theory proposed by me in a former paper in THE CENTURY—of the Victorian character of the so-called Venus of Melos—has been accepted by many students of ancient art as sufficiently established for acceptance as the most probable attribution. It ventured much, but on grounds which bring us continually slight confirmations. In coinage I find an indication in the staters of Cyzicus, coined about 431 B. C. Nike is draped as the Victory of Melos, and here

there is no kind of uncertainty as to the type, as she has her wings. It appears also repeated in a coin of Agathocles (317-310 B. C.), and Gardner here notices the resemblance to the Melian statue, although, with a conservatism which is as a general rule a prudent and praiseworthy tendency in serious archaeologists, he hesitates about proposing any connection. The theory, utterly unsupported by any evidence in fact or analogy, that this statue was a Venus has paralyzed the conjecture of archaeologists—they have never dared go out of the relation of Aphrodite to find her place. Gardner says of the Agathocles coin: "In artistic motive there certainly is a likeness between her and the Aphrodite of Melos; but the likeness is probably one of those which spring from proximity of period rather than one which denotes similar meaning." But what likeness is there, or what analogy, to determine the Melian statue an Aphrodite? Not the slightest. No similar, authoritatively determined, Aphrodite exists, while the type as Nike occurs continually.



ZEUS, COIN OF PHILIP II. OF MACEDONIA. 359-336 B. C.



PORTRAIT OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT, COIN OF ALEXANDER ÆGUS. 323-311 B. C. ENLARGED.

The introduction of portraiture in coinage was the result of two potent influences coöperating from opposing directions,—the decline of art and degradation of all ideal types (I believe owing to moral debasement), with consequent loss of the inspirational element in art, and the change in the form of national sovereignty from popular to personal. The old coins carried the legend of the people, Athenaiōn, Syracusaiōn, the Ethnic in the genitive plural. After the reign of despots—Philip, Alexander, Hiero, etc.—had made the people accustomed to the extinction of all popular rights, the coins were inscribed with the name of the despot. But the head which the beautiful stater of Philip wears is still that of the young Hercules, and Alexander never put his own head on his money. Later the gods gave

way, and the coinage became the record of the pride of mere humanity. The apotheosis of Alexander took place only under Ptolemy and Lysimachus, whose coins bear the portrait of Alexander with the attributes of Hercules; but under their successors the coinage becomes a gallery of portraiture, a compensation for us which atones for many artistic failings. But as portraiture what a history we have! Art had not yet lost its power, only its best motives. The old gods had passed with the slow revolution of ages, and the new ones were of other types; art caught at the human, grateful to be relieved from straining after the divine it no longer loved or believed in. That it had not lost its cunning is seen in the archaistic Athene of the coins of Alexander Ægus, that unfortunate prototype of the Duke of Reichstadt and Prince Imperial of France. And the head on the tetradrachm of Lysimachus merits the rank of first among portrait medallions. Then came Mithridates IV., Prusias of Bithynia, Philetærus of Pergamus, and a line of kings, who later yield to the Roman consul, imperator, etc., etc. But what the art of design had become by this, we may see in the reverse of Mithridates Eupator.

Here and there we catch through this personal side of numismatics a glimpse of romance



AS ABOVE, NATURAL SIZE.



PALLAS.



NIKE, AGATHOKLES. 317-289 B. C.



PALLAS-ATHENE, ATHENS.

of which an instance, altogether delightful, is that connected with one of the loveliest of that portrait series of Syracusan coins, the Philistis, wife of Hiero II., King of Syracuse, a Syracusan officer who, after the departure of Pyrrhus from Sicily, became, by popular choice, supreme in the government. His reign was long, just, and prosperous. His coinage is mainly a commemoration of his wife (whose head is thus one of the earliest female portraits, if not the first, borne by coins), and of his son who died before him. The head of Philistis has a charm of individuality inexpressibly touching in the best

PHILISTIS, WIFE OF HIERO II. 269-215 B. C.  
STILLMAN COLLECTION.

BRITISH MUSEUM.

examples,\* but there are many coins which appear, by their variation from the likeness and type, to have been coined after her death, and to have merely a traditional and fading resemblance. Philistis was a woman of Syracuse, daughter of a wealthy citizen, and there is a singular interest thrown about this lovely head by the knowledge that in the fifty years of Hiero's reign he struck only one type of money with his own head, and that in all the rest of his reign, with the exception of the very early is-

\* The illustration is from a coin I purchased at Athens some years ago and is taken from a cast. The later and deteriorated work is shown in the British Museum type, and will show the difference I allude to.



PHILETÆRUS. 241-197 B. C.



PALLAS.

sues, he showed his devotion to his wife and child by perpetuating their images in his coinage. The head of Gelon, his son, bears a resemblance to Philistis. Of his life or theirs we know but little; Syracuse was happy enough in his reign of half a century to leave almost no history, no record of conquest, disaster, or rebellion; but to me this mute witness, by a coin nearly twenty-two centuries old, of the happiness and devotion of a king dominates all the glories of Sicilian history — that little taper of domestic bliss, a spark for the



ANTIOCHUS IV., EPIPHANES. 176-164 B. C. ZEUS.



imagination alone to deal with, shines beyond the conflagration of conquest and the glitter of military glory. If Dante had known their story he would have put Hiero and Philistis among the good who lived before Christ, blest if not redeemed.

Counterfeiters are the especial enemy of numismatists. The electrotypes of the British Museum, while offering to the student enormous facilities, also fall into the way of the counterfeiter, whose success now is such that I have no doubt that many coins pass unchallenged even by the best connoisseurs. The keeper of one of the Italian museums told me that the manufacture of counterfeit gold coins of Sicily had been carried to such perfection that he no longer ventured to buy them unless he knew where they were found.

MITHRADATES IV., KING OF PONTUS.  
240-190 B. C.

A friend, who is one of the principal private collectors in Europe and whose cabinet contains 10,000 varieties of antique coins, called me in one day to give him an opinion on some decadrachms of Syracuse which he had purchased as part of a large collection. One was clearly a counterfeit, and caused no hesitation, but another was so admirably done that we were both inclined to accept it as genuine. I noticed at length that the reins of the horses in the quadriga of the reverse were arranged so that all the four off reins passed around the outer side of the off horse's neck, which struck



PRUSIAS I., KING OF BITHYNIA. 226-160.



ZEUS.



MITHRADATES VI., EUPATOR. 123-64 B. C.



STAG.

me as singular for a Greek, who must have seen the quadriga habitually and known that a pair of reins went direct to each horse. This led me to compare it with a series, and I at length found a genuine coin which had the same design and differed only in having the reins properly disposed, one going to the off side of each horse's neck. The suspected coin was in all other respects an absolute copy of the genuine, even to the least detail of the obverse, only showing in the locks of the Arethusa slightly greater heaviness of forms, as might be expected from a laborious copy. Now a Greek might have been unobservant enough to make the reins wrong in his haste, but not at the same time careful enough to copy in every other detail another pair of dies. No two dies have ever been found, probably never have been made, which agreed in all the details — the character of Greek art forbids it; but to find two dies agreeing in design with those of another coin, except in this slight but important detail, is beyond the theory of possibilities.

I have seen coins which have long lain undisturbed in the cabinet as originals suddenly thrown into doubt by the appearance of numbers of an identical coinage, and I once purchased at Athens a didrachm of Elis, for which I was offered by one of the oldest and most

experienced numismatists there a large advance on the price I paid, and which passed the examination of several important collectors, but was finally, and only after being at first accepted as original, thrown out by the authorities of the Bibliothèque Nationale of Paris. When we consider that \$100 to \$500 is often paid, for very rare coins, it will be seen that the inducements to counterfeiting are very great and the danger to the collectors corresponding. I do not believe that any judgment is infallible in this matter, but when we cannot determine if a coin be genuine or a copy, we who love it for its beauty alone may leave the numismatists their joys and perils alike and be content where we cannot be mistaken.

It will remain probably a dream that in our new republic, where, in some respects, the conditions of political existence so resemble those of old Greece, we shall employ our coinage as the Greeks did; though, if we cannot rival Kimon and Evainetos, we might at least from afar and at our best emulate Greek beauty. As it is, even the coins of the least Central American States are examples to us; for, of all civilized nations, our mint mothers the most barbarous products.

*William J. Stillman.*

[The illustrations in this article are from coins in the collection of Dr. Charles E. West, Alexander Balmano, R. H. Lawrence, Gaston L. Feuarent, Robert Hobart Smith, Canon Greenwell, and the British Museum.—EDITOR.]

JEWISH SHEKEL.  
SIMON MACCAB-EUS. 140-137 B. C.