

A SIDE LIGHT ON GREEK ART.

SOME OF THE NEWLY DISCOVERED TERRA COTTAS.



VOLUMINOUS Pliny caught in the drag-net of his natural history the legend of the maid of Corinth who drew a line along the shadow on the wall made by her lover's profile, so that she might have something to remember him by when he was sailing the Ægean. She was the daughter of an early potter, and found her father sympathetic. Availing himself of his skill in modeling the decorations of pots, the kind man fashioned the features of the absent lover on the outline in relief, and placed the clay in his kiln to bake. Down to the time that Mummius took Corinth whosoever doubted the story was taken to the Nymphæum and shown the terra cotta itself.

The pretty tale recurs to memory while examining groups and single figurines of terra cotta which have been appearing in Paris one by one since 1878 after a somewhat mysterious fashion. The point that strikes one first on turning over a specimen is the unfinished state of the back, which argues that these fragile creations were meant to be seen from one side only. A hole that is commonly found in the roughly finished rear suggests that they were hung against a wall on a peg, like many pieces of Japanese earthenware. The portrait modeled by Dibutades for his daughter offers a sufficiently appropriate beginning for the art. It savors of home and happy loves, while the terra cottas that are now coming into favor belong to the same department.

They are often cracked, and sometimes the mending has hurt them further, because attempts have been made to conceal the breaks. They are also, when untampered with, covered with the finely powdered remains of a suit of paint, so that we may place them with those gaudy figurines that are sold in Europe to-day at country fairs. They were meant to stand on shelf or in niche, if not to be suspended on a peg; sometimes they are arranged for both. In fine we have in them examples of the objects that Greeks of all ages saw about them in their small houses, placed in their shrines, gave to one another as presents, and offered to the ashes of their loved ones in the tomb.

Humble as the purposes of these statuettes may have been, they occupy a very serious of-

vice now, if we desire to embrace the general view of Greek art. Their beauty, variety, and archaeological interest make them indispensable to any one who wishes to understand how intimate in the populace was the blending of a taste for lovely forms with the legends that offered chances for the expression of shapes in a plastic way. They throw a side light on Greek art that was much needed, notwithstanding the engravings on mirrors for women, the paintings on vases, the bas-reliefs of tombs, and all the other works that may be classed among the minor productions of Greek artists. Within the twelvemonth a pediment has been unearthed at Athens which offers an example of what we may consider the first step in the evolution of these charming pieces of popular sculpture. It is decorated with painting alone, and that without human figures. The groups in terra cotta, which have been appearing from Greece during the last ten years, seem to attach themselves to statuary for the pediments of temples by their general outline, their one-sidedness, and the nature of the subjects they commonly represent. Suppose we regard them as popular editions of works by masters, suited, by the material in which they are fashioned and the methods used to fashion them, to the slender purses of the people.

Southern Italy and Sicily yielded terra cottas that did somewhat to hint the existence in other parts of the Greek world of a popular decorative art taking rank below the restful creations of the old masters. But at Tanagra figures of baked clay have been found which were plainly the embellishment of the two triangular spaces over the two entrances to a small temple, representing Pluto and Theseus seizing each his bride. They were cast in a mold, not modeled on a core, and resembled the figurines in having the backs rude. Some were in comparatively low relief; but others, like the horses of Theseus and Pluto, were boldly projected from the centers of the pediments. The male and female figures appear to have been fastened by their flat backs to the wall, and are so arrangeable that the largest hold the middle and the stooping or smaller figures occupy the narrowing angles. In them we have the connecting link between the painted decoration of pediments and the sculptures in marble occupying the same place in the highest state of Greek art.



ÆSCULAPIUS AND HYGEIA WITH A DYING WOMAN.

The terra cottas shown in illustration belong to the Tanagran connecting link. They deal oftenest with stories of gods who were not, strictly speaking, the aristocratic deities of Olympus. The most popular of all is Pan, who does not visit Olympus at all, but dwells on the quadrilateral of hills that encircles Arcadia; also in a cave in the rock of the Acropolis at Athens, and on certain mountains of Thessaly. Pan has every attribute of a god of the under-folk whose idol, clad in hides

and smeared with the blood of sacrifice, gave the design which the Greeks refined into a hairy-legged satyr with the pipes. Bacchus is hardly less the object of this popular form of art. He too is a god who springs from the lower stratum of the people, and has traits hard to reconcile with Aryans. In truth he is another form of Pan, and the latter is associated for good reasons with the infant Bacchus. But there are other subjects for these ancient image-makers — scenes from the *Odyssey* in which



NYMPH WITH WINE-JAR AND GARLAND.

Odysseus wears a close-fitting sailor's cap and jersey. Or it is a genre scene without relation to mythology or legend, such as a Greek lady and gentleman fondling a foal. Many of the groups plainly refer to death. Again we come upon a plastic pun, a representation in clay of the adage *amor vincit omnia*—"all things" being of course *pan* in Greek, and identical in letters with Pan the god.

In this most exquisite group a youthful cupid with wide wings that fill the background leans down and helps to his feet a shaggy Pan; with his left he seizes the left wrist of the god and is in the act of lifting him from his disgraceful

position. Wings, fine floating cloak, beard and goatish legs of Pan are modeled in the rude clay with a truth, a breadth, an absence of worry over unimportant points which are indeed great art. Yet the composition itself is still greater. It is enough to make modern sculptors pale with envy to see the Asiatic Greek, or that sculptor of the Peloponnesus from whose creation this exquisite idea has been adapted, strike negligently and with a laugh, as if he were hardly conscious of its purport, the heart of a given subject.

Whence come these lovely creations? No one who knows will tell. It is fairly certain

that the dealers in Athens import some of them from Smyrna and others from Bœotia, but exactly whence is a secret which everybody concerned has the utmost interest in preserving. Nor is it likely that anything short of a quarrel among the finders will indicate the spot until the treasure-trove is entirely rifled. Those who have been in the Levant need not be told that the ordinary impulse of men to keep for themselves a good speculation is quadrupled in lands where arbitrary power is lodged in the hands of subordinate officials. Greece watches carefully the exports and seizes all antiquities at the Piræus. In Asia Minor, even, the old system of getting a firman and taking what the excavator may is no longer possible. The objects are the property of the Sultan, and are supposed to revert to the museum at Constantinople.

Whatever may be the land from which we get the statuettes, it is from internal evidence certain that they are Greek. To the archæologists who say that they are fabricated by clever forgers, it may be retorted, that if a forger exists who can do such work, nothing could stop his triumphant progress through the world as the greatest genius in sculpture who lives.

Lucian lived several centuries later than the date which may be safely fitted to these groups, but the gay incredulity that marks his writings, the wit of his best pieces, the liveliness and sparkle of his mind, suit wonderfully statuettes of this kind. His birthplace, Samosata, is far over on the upper reaches of the Euphrates; but though a Syrian he was more like an Asiatic Greek. He gives humorous account of the hopes built upon him by his father because as a school-boy he modeled cows, horses, and men in wax; but when he was placed to learn the trade with his uncle, a statuary, he earned by his frivolity such a beating that he went home in tears. It appears that not only his uncles but his maternal grandfather followed this very respectable trade. It would be interesting to know whether the heads and arms of the terra cottas were first modeled in wax and then a model made from which any number could be taken, or whether each was modeled directly in the clay for fixing on the molded body.

What Æsculapius, the god of healing, can be under the touch of statuaries in an age of skepticism is seen from the group here given. Perhaps this group was sold in that famous sanctuary at Pergamus to which Caligula made pilgrimage in search of health. The pyramidal outline is here. The central figure is naturally the object of interest, but being from the circumstances of her state unable to stand, the back of her couch is carried up in a central pilaster, terminating in a finial above the heads of the assistants. The finial seems to repeat a conventional gravestone. Æscula-

pius stands before the dying girl and clutching his beard in the agony of thought; not indeed with a violent unGreek movement, but calmly. He leans on the high back of the couch with his left hand and puts his left foot backwards in front of the right. The attendant Hygeia has given up hope and bends her head forward at the angle human beings naturally assume when they weep, so that the tears will not flood the cheeks but fall direct. The central post recalls the stiff deity of superhuman size who stands in the exact middle of the pediments in classic periods, and divides the fighting, running, or couchant figures into two somewhat symmetrical halves.

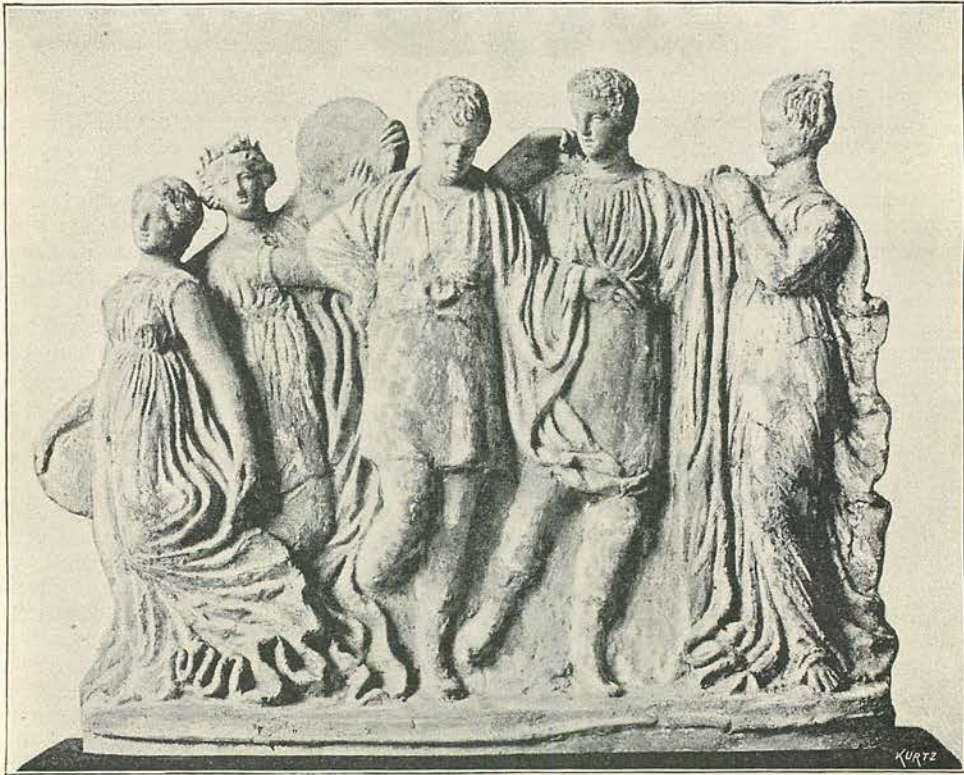
Such outlines in a great number of the groups enable us to reconstruct the history of Greek art in its effort to give suitable clothing to the hard, bare, angular space of the pediment. The smaller terra cottas appear to have been fixed in the gables of sarcophagi which imitated the temple form; also on the tombs themselves, which in Asia Minor particularly are prone to assume the appearance of a small temple partly emerging from the rock, and have gables of a large size. But there were other places for those which were destined for the decoration of tombs; namely, within the sarcophagus itself, as well as on shelves and in niches of the tomb. To this quantity of terra cottas of different size and great variety of subject, in which we may suppose the religious genre predominated, add the statuettes which adorned the home of the deceased, and, being beloved by him, were placed near his corpse or his ashes. Hence the great quantity of figurines with no special attribute signifying either a divinity or a trade. They were the *bibelots* of the deceased, a man's minor art collections, a woman's favorite bric-à-brac, the artistic puppets of a young girl, the dolls of a child. Hence the countless pretty ladies in *himation* and walking cloak with their heads coquettishly hid, or a spruce hat high above well-combed, natty hair. In the house, suspended on wooden pegs or ranged on shelves that corresponded to our mantels, these were the familiars of the family without attaining to the dignity of household gods or portraits of ancestors—neither icons nor the images of Lares and Penates.

The figures in the two pediments of the Parthenon are to be thought of as the outcome of the custom rather than the pattern from which this custom derived. Yet the statuettes seem much later in date than the grand statues of the Parthenon. Doubtless works of the highest style, made during the great epochs and now utterly gone, live again in such humble forms, because the clay-bakers imitated or adapted them freely for common use.

Yet it must be remembered that long before the Parthenon was decorated the fashion of filling pediments of temple and tomb with statuary of some sort and some degree of excellence was in existence; not, of course, with pieces as exquisite as the terra cottas: these had the benefit of their example.

If we consider, then, the cheapness of these wares and the multitude of uses to which they could be put, we may be able to understand why great masses of them are found in one

jecting arms that most breaks are found. The predominance of the shallow triangle as the outline of the place where many of the groups were to stand—namely, the different pediments of tomb and sarcophagus—may account for the continuance in a large number of groups of a more or less pyramidal outline, which has already been traced ultimately to the temple pediment. Working with this common destination of his group in view, the modeler of puppets who rose to the level needed to fashion



BEGINNING THE BACCHIC DANCE.

grave or in one tomb or thrown together into an urn, and also why they are usually discovered fractured, sometimes into bits. Always fragile, they must have been often broken by chance or malice when affixed to the exterior of tombs, and hardly less often when the tomb was entered for good or evil purpose by friend or thief. Hence those who had the cemetery in charge would be constantly collecting broken statuettes and throwing them into an empty tomb or pit or urn. The heads, being usually solid, and made originally separate from the body or groups, became easily detached and yet were least fragile; they are found in countless numbers. The group statuettes are thinnest where the clay was thinnest when pushed into the mold; namely, between the figures. It is there and across pro-

jecting arms that most breaks are found. The finer sort would naturally slope the figures somewhat from the center towards the sides.

In estimating the age of terra cottas, taken from what part of Greece or Asia Minor cannot be discovered, one is thrown back on the internal evidence of style. But that is a weak reed, too, for among the people a style may persist for ages after the great artists cease to practice it. The nymph kneeling beside a two-handled wine-jar, with a garland in the right hand and ivy-leaves in her hair, suggests an age when nobler ideals existed among the artists of Greece than later, when Philip of Macedon changed the situation at home completely and Alexander the Great widened the borders of Greece to India. Yet taking them all in all they seem to belong to the age after Alexander the Great.



THE BOVHOOD OF BACCHUS.

From the art side, however, it is a minor consideration where, when, and by whom such things were fashioned, though useful beyond measure to those who seek by the aid of history and ethnology to explain the fine arts and thus show the way for humanity to reach again the plane of the Greeks. The great world of artists and lovers of art is far more interested in the intrinsic loveliness of the articles. Take, for instance, such a group as this, of five young people beginning to dance. The artist has not merely indicated draperies with charming ease, or disposed of the limbs with grace, or kept a reminiscence of the pyramidal outline of the whole; he has given each head a character and gesture of its own absolutely in keeping with the action of the figure. For each figure is at a different point of movement. The young girl on the left has begun the slow dance, perhaps to Bacchus, perhaps to Apollo. She has thumped her tambourine and lowered it, while from the swing of her skirt we see that she is dancing in earnest with lowered hands. The maiden next to her, crowned, to make her head vary from the others, has also begun, but her movement is not yet great, as she holds up her tambourine and keeps the time. The smiling youth has begun too, and with a gesture of the left hand seems to say archly, "Behold, I am off!" The serious young fellow

next him turns to catch the time and raises his right foot—he too is moving. Finally, the smiling girl on the extreme right waits a moment before she falls into step and the whole five are in motion. The wave of dance, a slow, beautiful, seemingly dance, which undulates through this little cheap statuette, is one of the most exquisite things in ancient art.

Movement less subtle, but a composition beyond praise, is the group of one animal and three human figures, an ivy-crowned Bacchante with shallow goblet and wine-jug raised high in air, walking in a teasing way before a she-goat on which a child Bacchus balances himself. The youthful god has a large two-handled wine-jar on the back of his shaggy steed and laughs to see the eagerness of the beast when tempted with wine by the nymph. The rear is brought up by a satyr with human extremities, heavy beard, and flat, broad features. The period chosen is the bringing up of Dionysus by the nymphs of Nysa, a place in the classic land whence these terra cottas are said to hail. The pyramidal shape is not present, as if it were the square lower end of a sarcophagus, or a square niche in house or tomb for which the group was intended. The grace of Dionysus, the turn of the nymph's head and body, the swing of her draperies, the eager, natural appearance of the goat as she lifts her

muzzle and opens her lips in a bleat, are points which no one will fail to admire. The satyr carries in his left hand some object, possibly a symbol of nature-worship; with his right he steadies his young charge on the goat.

Shelley's translation of the hymn to Mercury is the proper commentary to the fifth statuette, which, like three others, belongs to M.M. Rollin

of the kneeling figure makes one think of Mercury rather than Apollo. But why should he be kneeling in the attitude of one who peers under the cow at the child hidden away in the shadow?

The cow and calf in this group, the lion in another, the bull carrying off Europa in a third, make one change opinion regarding the power



APOLLO DISCOVERING IN THE BABY MERCURY THE STEALER OF HIS COWS.

et Feuardent of Paris. Apollo, having charge of the famous kine of Admetus, has tracked them to Mount Cyllene in Arcadia, and to his amazement discovered that they were stolen by his baby half-brother, the infant son of Maia. In order to bring in the cows the sculptor has made Mercury hide himself among them, instead of in the cradle, as the hymn has it. Apollo gazes astounded at the spectacle of a thief less than a year old, and demands his herds. Hermes answers:

An ox-stealer should be both tall and strong,
And I am but a little new-born thing,
Who yet at least can think of nothing wrong.

In this group it is open to argument whether the title should not be "Mercury bringing the baby Bacchus to Ino to save him from the wrath of Juno." Certainly the hat slung over the back

of the Greeks to treat animals in sculpture. They are worthy to rank with Antoine Louis Barye's statuettes of animals in the present century. That wide chasm between the greatest sculpture the world has ever known and rude reliefs for tombs has now been partly filled. We can see by these groups, and the charming little single figures from tombs near Tanagra and Bœotia and Tarsus in Asia Minor, that there was a reason for such wonderful sculpture as Greece showed. Sculpture of great beauty existed in the homes of the people and surrounded them in their graves.

These terra cottas are object lessons in art which we cannot afford to be without. Whether by purchase from dealers, or by the way of excavations conducted through the American School at Athens, they should be acquired for the art students of the United States.

Charles de Kay.