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THE OLD OLYMPIC GAMES.

WITH PICTURES BY A. CASTAIGNE.

THE revival of the Olympic games at Athens by an international athletic meeting during the present month lends a timely interest to the consideration of the great historic contests which will thus be celebrated.

In the ancient district of Elis, in western Peloponnesus, about eight miles from the sea, the valley of the Alpheus widens into a well-protected plain, where the larger river is joined by a smaller, the Cladeus. Mount Cronion shuts off the cold winds from the north, and the Messenian hills temper the hot blasts from the south, while the open country to the west admits freely the gentle zephyrs from the sea. In this fertile valley, where flourished splendid specimens of trees, vines, flax, and flowers, praised by an Athenian orator as the most beautiful country of Greece, was situated Olympia. Such a spot naturally attracted the attention of wandering tribes in early days. Pelasgians, Phenicians, Ionians, Dorians, Ætoliens, Achæans, settled there, and established shrines for the worship of their protecting gods. In this secluded and sacred valley various cults flourished side by side, as did the Greek olive and the Egyptian palm.

Each tribe wished for itself the credit of having established the festival which drew to Olympia the strength, beauty, and intelligence of all Greece. Some claimed that Zeus established the festival to commemorate his

success in the contest with Cronus for the sovereignty of heaven—a myth which seems to point to a Pelasgic origin of the games. The Achæans coveted the honor for their hero Atreus, and Strabo for the Ætoliens. More widely credited was the belief that the games were established by the Cretan Hercules, who in play challenged his brothers to run a race, and to crown the victor with a branch of wild olive. To the interest of the Dorians was the myth of Apollo outrunning Hermes and Ares. But such myths do not necessarily imply a remote antiquity for the events to which they give a poetic coloring. It is more to the point that Homer describes several of the contests represented afterward in the great national games, and that some of them may even be found in Egyptian wall-paintings of the second and third millennium before Christ.

It was as revivals of ancient practice that the games were admitted at Olympia. As they were «remembered,» they were incorporated in the festival. Such a revival took place in the ninth century B. C., under the combined influence of Iphitus of Elis, Lycurgus of Sparta, and Cleosthenes of Pisa. Not long afterward the records of Olympic victories were cherished so carefully that the winning of the foot-race by Corebus, in 776 B. C., came to be considered by many ancient writers the

beginning of history; and the measurement of time by the quadrennial Olympiads, favored by Greek historians and officially sanctioned by Roman emperors, has survived in the writings of classical archæologists to the present day.

The time for the Olympic festival, like the Christian Easter, was dependent upon the moon. In accordance with an ancient tradition, the festival was held when the moon was nearest the summer solstice, at the end of June or the beginning of July. With the first appearance of the new moon began the Hieromenia, or sacred month, during which a sacred truce prevailed. Hostilities were suspended, and no armed soldier could enter the territory of Elis, and no assault could be made upon a pilgrim, under penalty of a heavy fine and excommunication from the temples, games, and sacrifices.

When the precise day for the beginning of the festival was determined, peace-heralds were despatched months in advance to all the cities of Greece. One went northward as far as the Propontis and the Black Sea; a second eastward to the islands, the coast of Asia Minor, to Egypt, and to Syria; and a third westward to the Greek colonies in Sicily, southern Italy, Gaul, and Spain. In order to accomplish this gigantic task it was neces-

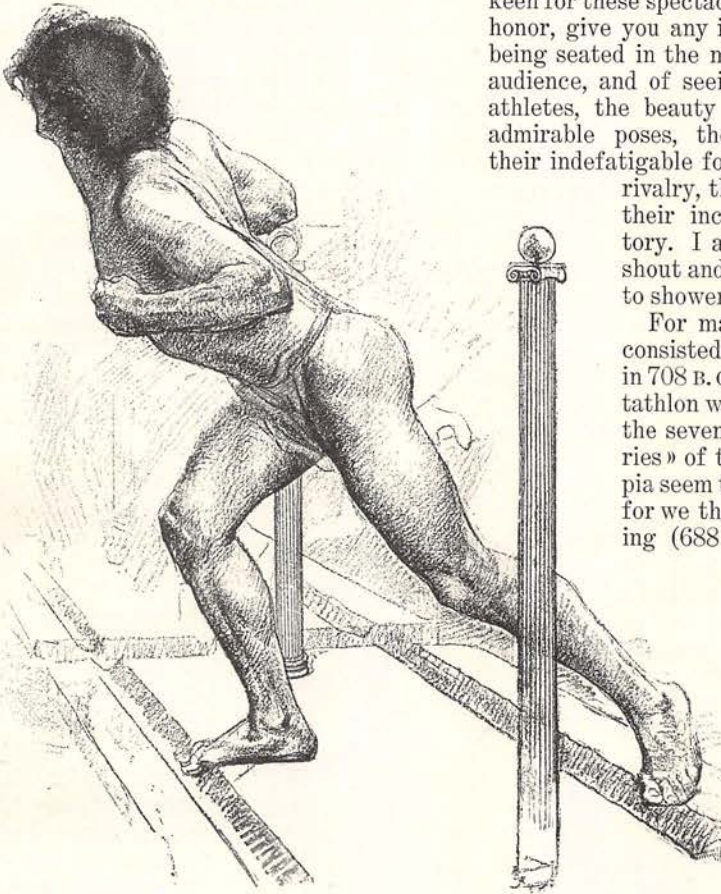
sary for them to appoint delegates to notify the smaller or more distant towns. It was important, however, that all Greek cities should receive an official announcement of the great festival. For the heralds themselves the journey was no unpleasant one: representatives of the Olympian Zeus everywhere awaited their coming, and were ready to entertain them. In turn wealthy or influential persons from various quarters of the Greek world were designated as public guests. When they came to Olympia they received important privileges, were lodged and feasted at public expense, and were given the seats of honor at the games. All classes, however, flocked to Olympia, some in vessels from across the sea, some in chariots or on horseback, while others, like Socrates, made the long journey on foot. Those who were not guests of honor spread their many-colored tents in the plain, while others slept under the open sky.

How many such pilgrims there were is, of course, difficult to estimate. The seats of the Stadium would have provided for some forty thousand, and, though only men were admitted, it was often difficult to find a place. It was natural that so large and varied an assemblage should have furnished some of the features of a great fair or exposition. Mer-



DRAWN BY A. CASTAIGNE.

THE VALLEY OF OLYMPIA.



DRAWN BY A. CASTAIGNE.

THE START.

chants found a ready sale for their wares, and there were side-shows for the amusement and instruction of the people. Poets recited their latest productions, historians read their chronicles, and philosophers discoursed upon nature and the unseen world. Such a gathering could not but have a powerful effect in strengthening the unity of a people scattered far and wide over the ancient world. Here they worshiped a common divinity, and recognized in one another members of the same race. But the chief, absorbing interest of the festival centered in the athletic games. Lucian, in his «Anacharsis,» well expresses the passion for these contests. The Scythian Anacharsis expresses his surprise that the best people of Greece could divert themselves in seeing men batter each other with blows, and throw each other to the ground, and even kill each other. To which Solon replies: «Were we present at the Olympic, Isthmian, or Panathenaic games, you would see in what took place that we are not wrong in being so

keen for these spectacles. I could not, on my honor, give you any idea of the pleasure of being seated in the midst of an enthusiastic audience, and of seeing the bravery of the athletes, the beauty of their bodies, their admirable poses, their marvelous agility, their indefatigable force, their daring, their rivalry, their invincible courage, their incessant efforts for victory. I am sure that you would shout and applaud, and not cease to shower them with praise.»

For many years the contests consisted only of foot-races, until in 708 B. C. wrestling and the pentathlon were introduced. During the seventh century the «memories» of the authorities at Olympia seem to have been quickened, for we then find introduced boxing (688 B. C.), the four-horse chariot-race (680 B. C.), the horse-races and the pancratium (648 B. C.); also the following contests for boys: foot-races and wrestling (632 B. C.), the pentathlon (628 B. C.), and boxing (616 B. C.). These heavy contests mark this century as one which set special value upon mus-

cular force and endurance.

In the sixth century were introduced the hoplitodromos, or warriors' race (520 B. C.), and the soon abandoned chariot-race with mules (500 B. C.); in the fifth, the races for mares (496 B. C.) and for two-horse chariots (408 B. C.); in the fourth, the contest for heralds and trumpeters (396 B. C.), and chariot-races with four colts (384 B. C.); later, the chariot-race for two colts (268 B. C.), the race with mounted colts (256 B. C.), and the pancratium for boys (200 B. C.). Musical contests were introduced by Nero A. D. 68. The Olympic festival was celebrated with great magnificence by the Romans until 394 A. D., when, under Theodosius, it was finally abolished.

The preparation for these games was in itself a laborious undertaking. The magistrates and priests at Olympia, an elaborate organization, had charge of the festival as a whole, the regulation of the crowd, the sacrifices, processions, and feasts. The contestants

were obliged to qualify a year in advance, and, unless already famed as victors, to present themselves in the gymnasium at Olympia thirty days before the festival. There were several conditions for qualification. The contestant must be a free-born Greek who had not committed sacrilege or murder. If he belonged to a state which had broken the Olympic truce, he could not enter the contests until the state had paid the fine. He had to swear before the statue of Zeus Horkios that he had undergone the required ten months of training and would obey the rules of the games. These regulations seem to imply that contestants were sometimes inclined to sell the contests, to take unfair advantage of their opponents, and to corrupt the judges.

The Hellanodicæ, or judges, were ten in number, selected by lot from the ten tribes of Elis. They entered upon their office ten months before the festival. They were first schooled in the traditions and regulations of the games, then studied the capacities of the athletes while they were still in training. They had to decide upon the qualifications of the contestants, make up the program of the games, supervise the preparation of the scene of contest, act as judges in the games, and distribute the prizes. It was a position of honor and distinction. They came to the contests clad in purple robes, and sat in a tribune opposite the finish of the races in the Stadium or Hippodrome. They seem to have subdivided the function of judging, but at least three were present to judge in every contest. Their decisions were usually final, but an appeal might be carried to the Olympic senate. They were assisted in the execution of their commands by a large and well-organized body of police.

The duration and order of the festival have not yet been definitely determined. In the earliest contests, when events were limited and contests few, the games took place in a single day. But as the festival assumed greater dimensions it extended over several days. It has been convenient to assume five days in all: the first occupied with a sacrifice to Zeus, the final classification of the contestants, and the administration of the oath to athletes, trainers, and judges; the second with

the events in which only boys took part; the third with the men's foot-races, wrestling, boxing, and the pancratium; the fourth with the horse- and chariot-races, followed by the pentathlon and the hoplitodromos; and the fifth with the distribution of prizes, processions, sacrifices, and banquets.

The contests for men and boys took place in the Stadium, the chariot- and horse-races in the adjoining Hippodrome. These structures were in immediate connection with the Altis, or sacred inclosure, which was peopled with statues and contained the temple and great altar of Zeus, the Heræum, the Metroum, the treasuries, and other buildings. As the athletes

and judges entered the vaulted tunnel leading to the long rectangular Stadium they passed a series of statues of Zeus, called Zanes, solemn counselors of good faith, for they were erected from the fines of those who had infringed the regulations.

From the first faint glimmer of early dawn the populace began to assemble, the first comers securing seats as near as possible to the section reserved for the judges and public guests. At sunrise all were in their places. The herald with a loud voice summoned the athletes, who had already laid aside their garments and appeared stripped



DRAWN BY A. CASTAIGNE.
THE FINISH.

for the race. The lots for places had been already cast. The public crier then announced the names and countries of the contestants, and the judges again warned unworthy candidates to retire.

The foot-races were three in number, called respectively the dromos or stadion, the diaulos, and the dolichos, according as the course was traversed once, twice, or a number of times. The dromos was a straightaway dash of about two hundred yards, or exactly 192.27 meters. A long line of flagstones, grooved so as to be firmly gripped by the feet, was laid at each end of the course. This permitted





DRAWN BY A. CASTAIGNE.

THE HOPLITODROMOS, OR WARRIORS' RACE.

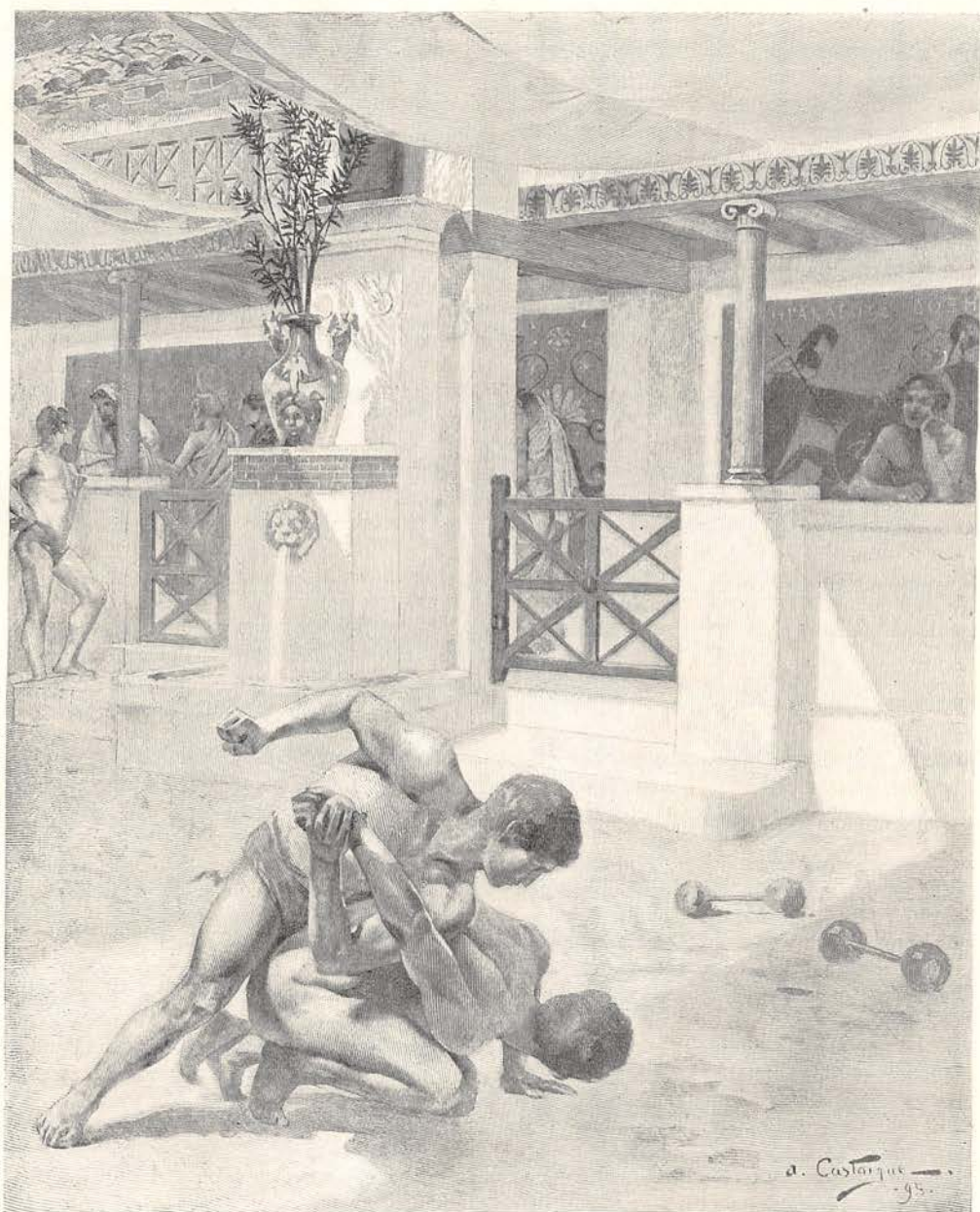
the finish for both long and short races to take place at the same end of the Stadium. Along these flagstones posts were erected, dividing the line so that twenty runners might start at once; for there seems to have been an all-comers' race, from which the victors were selected to contend on the following day in groups of four. Thus, as Pausanias says, the "person who is crowned with the race in the Stadion will go off with two victories." The vase-paintings show two, three, four, or more runners with swinging arms dashing toward the goal. The speed of these short-distance runners could not be made a matter of record. If they "ran so fast as to be invisible" to the spectators, the feat was marvelous indeed, for the track was laid with a heavy coating of sand. The *diaulos* was not a straightaway race, but involved a quick turn at the farther end of the course, and a return to the starting-point. The *dolichos* was a long race, the length of which is variously stated as six, seven, eight, twelve, twenty, and twenty-four stadia. At the longest this race did not reach three miles, but the quick turns and heavy sand made it a contest in endurance of quite different character from running the same distance on a modern cinder-track. Such physical endurance proved most useful at times, as when Phidippides, sent to notify the Spartans of the approach of the Persians, ran from Athens to Sparta and back (135 miles) in two days. But all the feats recorded of long-distance runners in Greece have been eclipsed by the six days' running- and walking-matches of modern times. The military value of speed was recognized in the Olympic festival by the *hoplitodromos*, or race for armed soldiers, who ran the length of the course and back in heavy armor. At first they seem to have carried the helmet, spear, shield, and greaves, but later the vase-paintings indicate that only helmets and shields were carried. Twenty-five brazen shields were preserved in the temple of Zeus for this purpose.

The races for boys were not a revival of ancient usage, but were instituted by the people of Elis "because the idea pleased them." These races were over a shorter course than that for the men, as were also the races for young girls. The races for girls were not a portion of the great Zeus festival, but took place under the auspices of the goddess Hera on another occasion. Pausanias thus describes them: "Every fourth year sixteen matrons weave a shawl for Hera, and the same number preside over the games. And the contest is a race for maidens of various ages. In the first race are the youngest, and next those

slightly older, and last of all the eldest. And they all run with their hair down their back, a short tunic below the knee, and their right shoulder bare to the breast. They use in this contest the regular race-course in Olympia, but make it a sixth part of a stade shorter. And the victors receive crowns of olive and part of the heifer sacrificed to Hera, and paintings of them are made for Hera. And the sixteen matrons who preside over the games have as many handmaids. They trace this contest of the maidens back to ancient times, saying that Hippodameia, in gratitude to Hera for her marriage with Pelops, selected sixteen matrons, and in concert with them inaugurated these games to Hera." This festival in a measure atoned to the women for their exclusion from the games of the men. In the Zeus festival the women from the other side of the Alpheus could hear the shouts of male voices, but could see nothing. Of their sex only the priestess of Demeter was present, seated in solitary grandeur on a white marble altar opposite the judges.

Severer and more dangerous, but more popular, were the contests in wrestling, boxing, and the *pancratium*. Wrestling, however, since the days of mythical Theseus, had ceased to be a contest of brute force, and had become a trial of skill. Pindar praised the victor Epharmostus as being "deft-handed, nimble-limbed, with the light of valor in his eyes"; and Plutarch regarded wrestling as the most scientific of all the games. Quickness of eye to detect a weakness in the stand of the opponent, activity in the use of arms and body and legs, and the timely application of muscular strength, brought into play a harmony of athletic qualities which made the contest an object of beauty to the plastic mind of the Greeks. Few were the restrictions, such as the rules against striking and biting; many were the stratagems which were permitted, such as choking, squeezing, tripping, clambering upon an opponent's back, or breaking his fingers. Thrice must an opponent throw his adversary so that both shoulders touched the ground before he could be declared victor; and if we may judge from the figured representations, the final overthrow was by no means a gentle act.

Boxing was a brutal contest, more dangerous and bloody than the modern prize-fight. Even in Homeric days the fists were bound about with heavy thongs of ox-hide, and to these in later times were added knobs and plates of metal. The skill with which the brutal blows were inflicted, parried, and dodged received general applause, but the



DRAWN BY A. CASTAIGNE.

THE PANCRATIUM.

consequences were disfigured ears, broken noses, and not infrequently death. Boxing was to the ancients an important military exercise, and in the Olympic festival should not be judged as if it were mere sport. Wrestling and boxing were combined in the event called the pancratium. This was a severer and more comprehensive test of agility and strength than wrestling alone, but less brutal than the boxing-match, since it was fought without the

gloves. In this contest the boxing seems to have been preliminary to the wrestling. It was a fight for a grip; hence the hands and wrists were free and the fists were not clenched. All the arts of the boxer were demanded except his vicious blows. As soon as the contestant could reach his adversary at close quarters the wrestling began. Then all the arts of the wrestler were called into play. Besides ordinary wrestling, the pancratiasts seem to

have continued the contest when both parties were lying on the ground. This introduced new elements of difficulty and new tests of endurance. The contest was not ended until one of the parties admitted himself vanquished. No wonder that such contests sometimes lasted until late in the night.

The mythopoetic fancy of the Greeks attributed many feats of strength to these heavy athletes. Milo of Croton had such strength in his hands and wrists that no one could move his little finger. He could hold a pomegranate uninjured in his hand while his antagonists endeavored to wrest it from his grasp. Theagenes of Thasos, the winner of fourteen hundred crowns for boxing and the pancratium, when only nine years of age carried on his shoulders from the market-place to his home the bronze statue of a god. Melancomas stood two days with outstretched limbs, and Polydamas with one hand stopped a chariot at full speed, held up the wildest steer by its hind leg, and overcame a lion. Polydamas is said to have sustained for some time a falling grotto, but finally succumbed, and was crushed to death.

If in the preceding events the specialists came off victorious, the general athlete found his opportunity in the pentathlon. This consisted of jumping, discus- and spear-throwing, running, and wrestling. It required agility, accuracy, speed, and strength in harmonious development, and produced, according to Aristotle, the «most beautiful» athletes. Jumping, of which various kinds were practised by the Greeks, appeared in the great games as the long jump. Figured representations show sometimes a standing long jump, but more frequently a running long jump. In both cases the athlete carries in his hands the halteres (stones shaped somewhat like the modern dumb-bell), with which assistance the length of the jump was materially increased. The distance was marked by a pickax and measured by a tape-line. The attainments of Greek athletes in this event—fifty-five feet jumped by Phayllus of Croton, and fifty-two feet by Chionis, recorded without dispute by several ancient authors—render it probable that more than a single jump was involved. As the world's record for the running long jump in modern times is only twenty-three feet seven inches, it has been suggested that the «hop, step, and jump» (still practised by Greek youth) may have been the kind of jump which occurred in the Olympic games. If this were the case, the record of Phayllus would not be incredible.

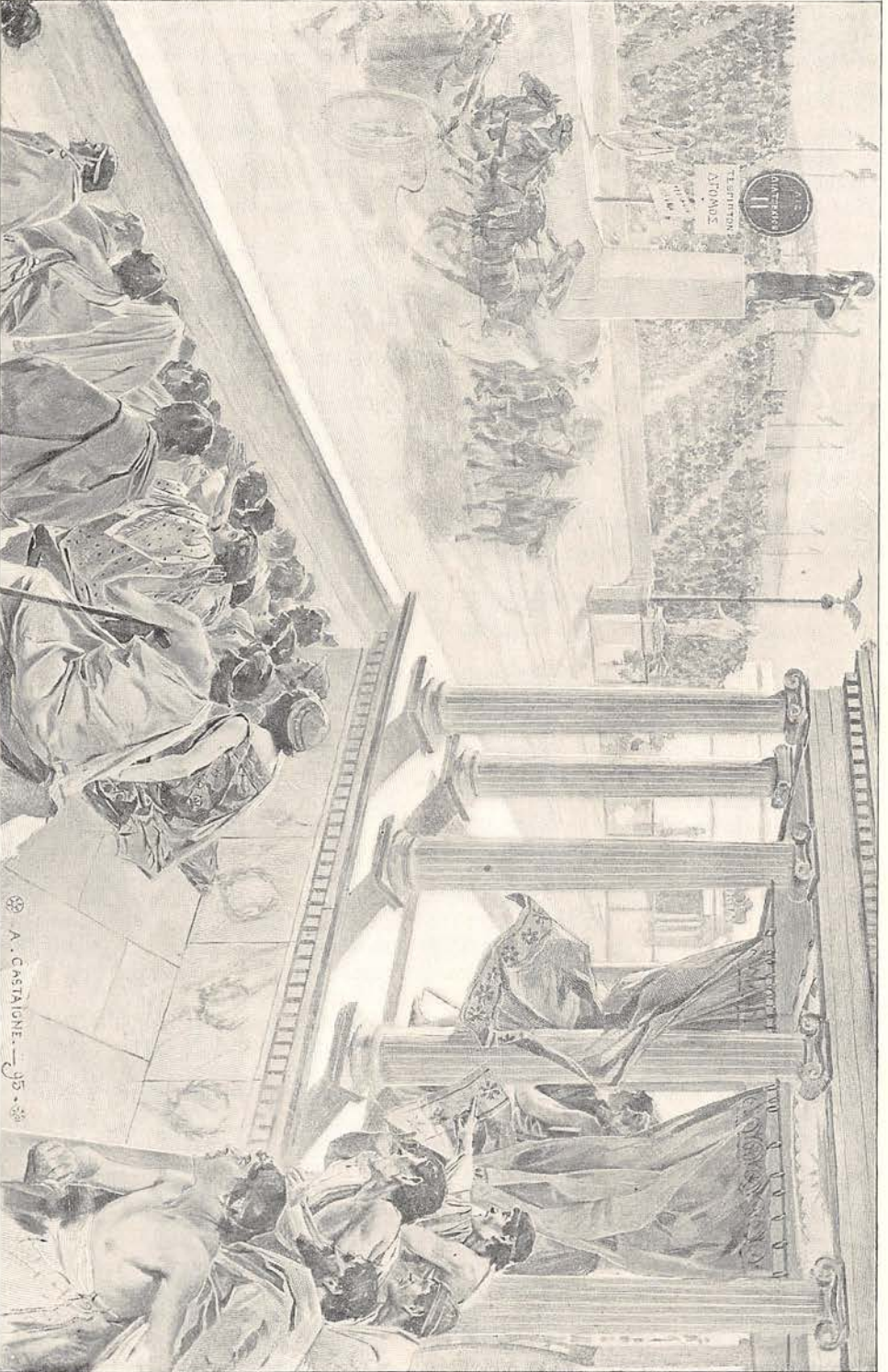
Discus-throwing was a later and more re-

finied form of hurling the stone. In Homeric times, and even at Olympia, a stone or mass of iron was first used for the purpose. This was held by a leathern thong, swung in a circle, and hurled as far as possible. A circular or lenticular disk of bronze was used at least as early as the beginning of the fifth century. A standard weight must, of course, be assumed for the great games. A discus now in the British Museum, which seems to have been used, weighs eleven pounds nine ounces; but whether this was the standard weight or not is not definitely known. The thrower took his stand upon a slight elevation of limited circumference, where he could have a secure foothold and was prevented from running; then, with a swing of the arm and a corresponding movement of the whole body, he hurled the discus as far as possible. The value of the body movement was recognized by the sculptor Myron in his famous statue «The Discobolus,» and is understood by the modern athlete when he swings the hammer, or even when he makes a drive at golf. As for records at discus-throwing, Phayllus, again, is said to have thrown the discus ninety-five feet.

In spear-throwing accuracy, and not distance, was the consideration. This is usually assumed by writers on this subject, though with some uncertainty. We may here recall Pindar's «Ode to Xenophon of Corinth,» a victor in the pentathlon at Olympia, in which he says: «But for me, who am to hurl straight the whirling javelin, it is not meet to spend beside the mark my store of darts.» Here is distinctly implied hurling the javelin at a mark; also the use of the ankyle, a device by means of which the javelin received a rotary motion.

Running and wrestling were occasionally unnecessary, since the prize was awarded to the winner of three of the five events.

The most brilliant and exciting contests of the festival were the chariot- and horse-races. They took place in the Hippodrome, adjoining the Stadium. The structure itself no longer exists, and we are dependent upon analogous buildings and upon literature for its reconstruction. The portion immediately adjoining the Altis was an artificial embankment, with seats backing against those of the Stadium. Farther on the rolling slope formed a natural stand for the spectators. The dimensions of the Hippodrome are not definitely known, but are put with some probability at two stadia in length and about six hundred feet in breadth. As with the races in the Stadium, the chariot- and horse-races also involved a sharp turn, so



DRAWN BY A. CASTAGNE.

THE CHARIOT-RACE.

A. CASTAGNE. 95.

that the course was traversed several times before the finish. Pindar, in his «Ode to Arcesilas,» speaks of the «twelve swift turns of the sacred course.» The relative positions of the chariots at the start were determined by lot; but as there was a natural difference between the inside and the outside track, this difference was neutralized by a device in the manner of starting, invented by Cleœtas. This is described by Pausanias as in shape like the prow of a ship, with partitioned stalls, in which the chariots and horses took their stand. In front of the chariots was extended a rope. First the ropes on the extremities were slackened, and when the horses stationed there advanced as far as the horses in the second stalls, then the ropes there were slackened, and so on until all started fair at the beak. This shows that a number of chariots started together; how many is uncertain. When Pindar speaks of the forty charioteers who fell in the Pythian contest in which Arcesilas conquered, he is not at variance with Sophocles, who relates that ten chariots then started together; for the races were doubtless run in heats. Alcibiades alone sent seven chariots to Olympia, winning the first, second, and fourth prizes.

In the chariot-race the skill of the driver told far more than the speed of the horses. After the trumpet had sounded and the bronze dolphin had been lowered and the bronze eagle raised as a signal for the start, his cool head in the first bolt for the lead, and amid the dust-clouds of the course and at the taraxippos,—that terror of horses, the turning-post,—often guided slower horses with success to the finish, where beside the judges stood a statue of Hippodameia holding a fillet for the victor. Long after the quadriga had ceased to be used in active warfare the chariot-race flourished in the great national games. It was the event in which the rich and powerful, princes and kings, took part, and sometimes themselves appeared as charioteers. There are many memorials of these victories in Greek vase-paintings, coins, and gems, varying in character from serious representations of an actual race to allegorical and symbolic scenes in which Cupids and winged Victories are the charioteers.

The horse-race, in its various forms, was later in making its appearance as an Olympic event. This seems to have been due to the fact that little use was made of cavalry in Greek armies before the Persian wars. But from time immemorial the horse had been an object of admiration, and that the horse should contend in the Olympic races seemed

in no way derogatory to the dignity of the festival. In this contest it was less the skill of the rider than the speed of the horse of which account was taken. The rider may have been dashed to the ground, as was the case with Phidolas, and yet his horse ran around and around the course to the finish, and stood before the judges and received the prize. Victorious horses had bronze statues raised to them within the sacred inclosure at Olympia, odes were sung in their honor, and costly monuments erected over their graves.

There is little to be said of the contests of heralds and trumpeters. Clear, far-reaching voices and strong lungs were required of those who announced to the thousands in the Stadium and Hippodrome the names of the contesting parties, and who gave the signals for the races. These men contested for a prize. It was not a musical contest, but a competition in strength of voice and lungs.

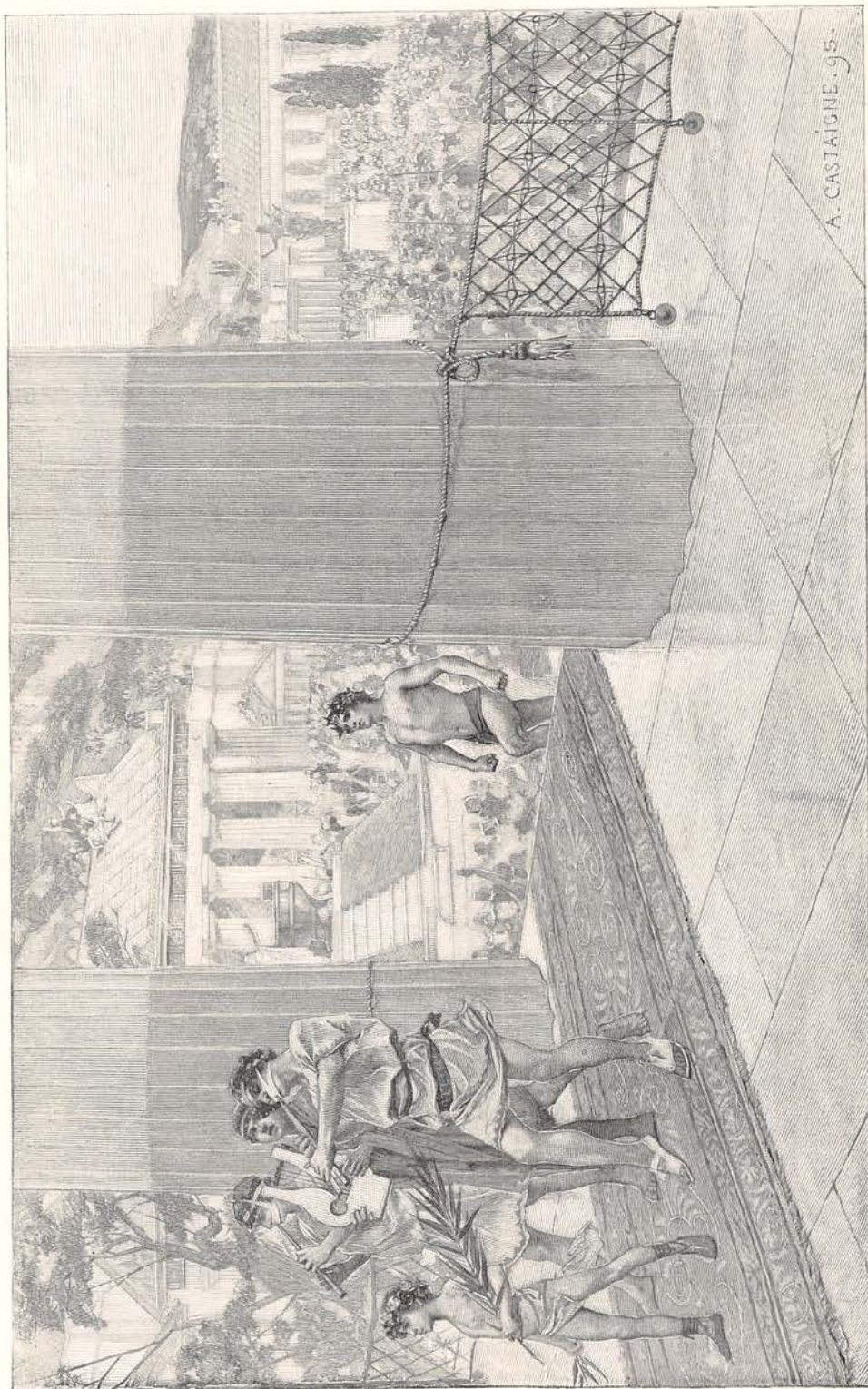
Immediately after each contest the successful athlete appeared before the judges and received a palm-branch, and his name was heralded before the assembled throng. But at the close of all the contests, on the final day of the festival, the much-coveted prizes were distributed. Into the Altis at early morning streamed the long, joyous procession, headed by the judges, the religious and civil authorities, and the public guests, escorting the now brilliantly clad athletes and the victorious horses bedecked with flowers. The song they sang was a psalm of victory by Archilochus, which began: «Hail to thee, powerful Hercules, conqueror in the games, and to thee also, Iolaus, both famed for the spear! Tenella, tenella! All hail to the victor!» A little boy from the priestly class had already cut with a golden knife some branches from the olive-tree planted by Hercules, and crowns made from these branches had been exposed in the temple of Hera upon a beautiful chryselephantine table made by Colotes. The crowns were then brought to the temple of Zeus, where before the representatives of all Greece the judges, clad in purple, crowned the heads of the victorious athletes. This Olympic crown, as the supreme reward of Greek ambition, is well expressed in the story of Diagoras. Himself a victor in the games, he returned in his old age to Olympia with his two sons. Both bore off a prize, then ran and caught their father on their shoulders as the crowd of pilgrims pelted them with flowers. «Die, Diagoras,» they cried; «for thou hast nothing more to live for!» With a sigh of joy the old man expired.

The crowning at Olympia did not end the



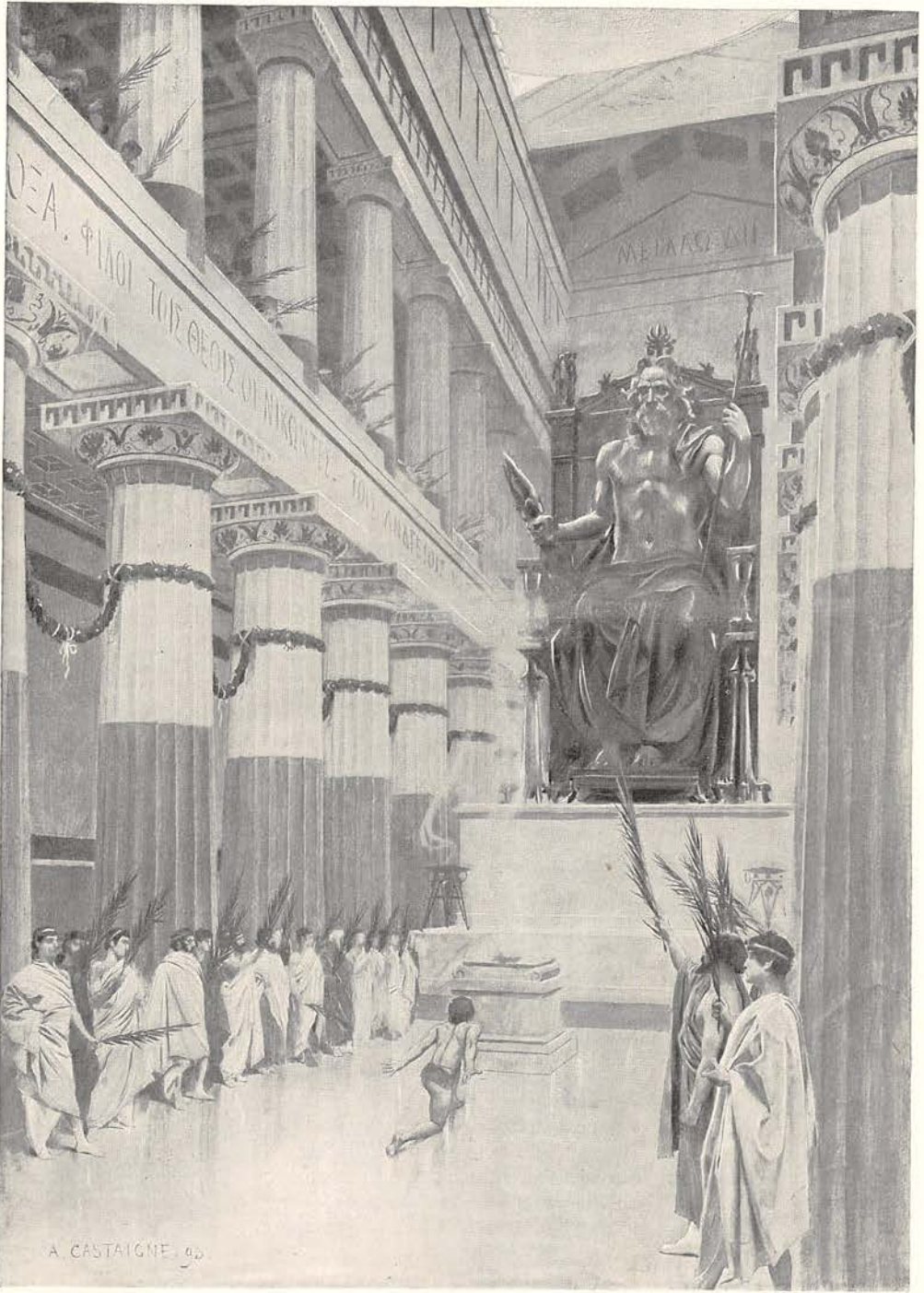
DRAWN BY A. CASTAIGNE.

THE VICTOR.



DRAWN BY A. CASTAIGNE.

THE VICTOR GOING TO THE TEMPLE OF ZEUS.

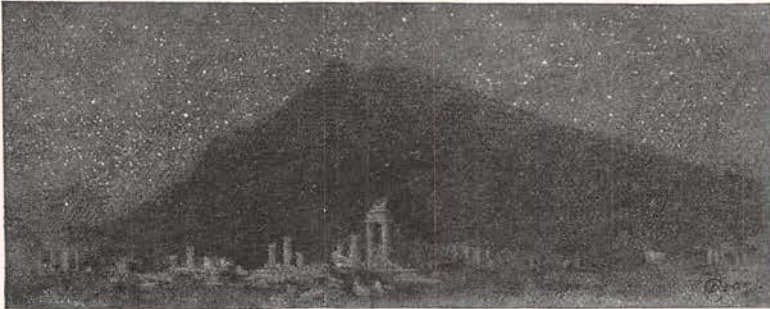


DRAWN BY A. CASTAIGNE.

THE VICTOR IN THE TEMPLE.

victors' glory. Their statues were made by the most famous sculptors, their portraits painted by the most skilful artists, their deeds glorified in verse. They were feasted and maintained at public expense, received seats of honor at the theater, and were cherished as gods in the hearts of their countrymen. As Pindar has well expressed it, «He that overcometh hath, because of the games, a sweet tranquillity throughout his life forevermore.»

Allan Marquand.



DRAWN BY A. CASTAIGNE.

OLYMPIA TO-DAY.

ARBORICIDE.

A WORD of grief to me erewhile:
We have cut the oak down in our isle.

And I said: «Ye have bereaven
The song-thrush and the bee,
And the fisher-boy at sea
Of his sea-mark in the even;
And gourds of cooling shade, to lie
Within the sickle's sound;
And the old sheep-dog's saffron eye
Of sleep on duty's ground;
And poets of their tent
And quiet tenement.
Ah, impious! who so paid
Such fatherhood, and made
Of murmurous immortality a cargo and a trade.»

For the hewn oak a century fair,
A wound in earth, an ache in air.

And I said: «No pillared height
With a summer dais over,
Where a dryad fled her lover
Through the long arcade of light;
Nor 'neath Arcturus rolleth more,
Since the loud leaves are gone,
Between the shorn cliff and the shore,
Pan's organ antiphon.
'T was nameless envy fed
This blow at grandeur's head:
Some green reproach o'erdue,
Degenerate men! ye drew,
That for his too plain heavenliness our Socrates ye slew.»

Louise Imogen Guiney.