

THE OLDER CIVILISATION OF GREECE:
A PREHISTORIC SEA-POWER.¹

READERS of the articles on the "Older Civilisation of Greece" which have from time to time appeared in the columns of NATURE will remember that the archæological labours of Mr. Arthur J. Evans, F.R.S., Prof. Ludovico Halbherr, Mr. D. G. Hogarth, and Mr. R. C. Bosanquet (not to mention their assistants, of whom Dr. Duncan Mackenzie and Prof. Luigi Pernier are the most distinguished) in the island of Crete have succeeded in disinterring for modern science the remains of an ancient civilisation as highly developed as the contemporary cultures of Egypt and Babylonia, and possibly as old; in any case a thousand years older than the civilisation of Greece which we have learnt to know at our schools and academies—the Greek civilisation of the schoolmasters and the sculptors. Of this prehistoric civilisation (for prehistoric it still remains, since we cannot yet read its written records) the first remains were found by the famous Schliemann at Mycenæ and Tiryns, hence the use of the term "Mycenæan" to describe it. The excavations in Crete have of late years very considerably modified our conceptions of its character; we see now that the chief seat of its development was not the continent of Greece, but the great island of Crete, and that the two most important remains of its Cretan phase were the great stone palaces of Knossos and Phaistos, which have been excavated by Dr. Evans and Prof. Halbherr respectively.

Now it is evident that the whole Mycenæan civilisation did not pass away without leaving some trace of its greatness and power upon the minds of the semi-barbarous tribes from the north who overthrew it, and afterwards built up the renescent "classical" culture of Greece upon its ruins, just as the English built up the modern renescent Roman civilisation of England on the ruins of the Romano-British culture which they destroyed. Just as traditions of the greatness of the Romans remained in the minds of the English, so, but to a much greater extent, traditions of their "Pelagian" forerunners remained in the minds of the later Greeks and combined with their own "Aryan" tales to form the legendary history of early Greece. A considerable proportion of the Greek legends—the Wars of Troy and of the Seven against Thebes, the stories of the Atridæ and of the Minyæ, &c.—are undoubtedly altered reminiscences of the prehistoric period of high civilisation to which the remains discovered at Mycenæ, at Orchomenos, at Knossos, and at Phaistos belong. Among these

legends, which certainly contain a substratum of historical truth, those of the Thalassocracy of the Cretans under the sway of the great and wise Minos are the most important. It is certain that the palace discovered by Mr. Evans at Knossos is the veritable Labyrinth of the Minotaur; one may believe in the Labyrinth without being accused of also believing in the Minotaur, and if one believes in the Labyrinth one also believes in the magnificence and power of its builders, whether their names be Minos and Dædalus or not. Probably their names were not really in the least like Minos or Dædalus, but it is evident that these appellations signify, the one the powerful prehistoric dynasty of Knossos, the other the skilled craftsmen who made for them the beautiful works of art which we can admire in the Museum of Candia, and which are photographically reproduced in the pages of the "Annual of the British School at Athens."

The most characteristic feature of the Knossian or "Minoan" power in legend is the fact that it was a



FIG. 1.—Shrine of snake-goddess with marble cross as central cult object. Conjectural arrangement. (From "The Annual of the British School at Athens.")

sea-power. This is always insisted upon. Cretans raid the Attic coast, found colonies in Sicily and at Miletus, and so on. A power of the calibre of that which is revealed to us by the Cretan excavations can never have confined its operations to the isle of Crete alone. And the evidence of over-sea connections, with Egypt and with the continent of Greece, is so strong that there can be little doubt that the legends are right, and that Minoan Crete held a thalassocracy, was a great sea-power. Sea-power means the foundation of colonies, and apparently Minoan Crete was no exception to this rule. It may be that the coast settlement of Paláikastro, beyond Sitía at the extreme eastern end of the island, was a Minoan colony established on the non-Minoan, possibly hostile, shore of the Eteokretans, though it is only fair to say that Mr. Bosanquet is not in favour of the theory of the predominantly non-Minoan character of the Sitía country in Minoan days. At Phylakopi, in the island of Melos, the nearest of the Cyclades to Crete, has been

¹ "The Annual of the British School at Athens," No. ix., 1903-4. Pp. x+422, and Plates. (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd.) Price 17s. net.
"Excavations at Phylakopi in Melos." Hellenic Society Supplementary Paper, No. 4. Pp. xv+280, and Plates. (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd.) Price 30s. net.

discovered a strongly walled settlement of indubitably "Minoan" character, superimposed upon the ruins of earlier, no doubt native, towns; that this was a Cretan over-sea colony there can be little doubt.

The excavations which have revealed to us these striking confirmations of the Greek legend of the

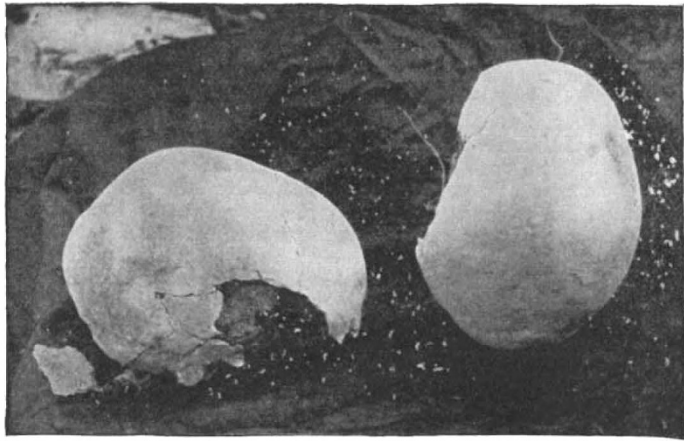


FIG. 2.—Two of the ancient crania exhumed at Hagios Nikolaos. (From "The Annual of the British School at Athens.")

Minoan thalassocracy have been carried out by the British School at Athens during the last eight years under the control of its successive directors, Mr. Cecil Smith, the present keeper of Greek and Roman antiquities in the British Museum, Mr. D. G. Hogarth, and Mr. R. C. Bosanquet. The energy of the British School at Phylakopi and Paláikastro, combined with the remarkable results achieved by Dr. Arthur Evans at Knossos, has largely helped to win for England that foremost position in practical Greek archæology which she holds at present. For not even our friendly rivals in Germany can for a moment dispute the fact that England and Italy are *facile principes* in Greek archæology at the present day. Germany is only tardily following in our footsteps with the excavations at Orchomenos, and has not even yet secured for herself a site for exploration in Crete, while France seems hopelessly wedded to classical traditions, and has no thought for the extraordinary prehistoric civilisation, twin-sister it would almost seem to that of Egypt, which is revealing itself in Crete.

The chief publication of the year dealing with these English discoveries is, as usual, the "Annual of the British School at Athens." The volume for 1904 contains Dr. A. J. Evans's annual report on Knossos, and Mr. Bosanquet's report on Paláikastro. Dr. Evans tells us how his work in the Labyrinth still goes on, and seems to be no nearer completion. Discoveries of the highest historical importance still continue to be made. An extraordinary light has been thrown upon the religion of Pelasgian Greece by the discovery of the images of a snake-goddess by Miss Boyd (American excavations) at Gournià, half-way between Knossos and Paláikastro, and by Dr. Evans at Knossos, in the latter case in conjunction with a *cross* as central cult-object. What is to be made of this? Any day's work, any turn of the spade, may turn up something extraordinary. And these same snake-goddesses of Knossos are made of a fine varicoloured glazed faïence, like that of Egypt. That the Minoans derived this idea from Egypt is certain. Other objects of the same glaze were found, shells especially; the colour of the glaze of many of these shells is

that of the rare Egyptian glazed faïence of the dynasties of the Old Empire, between B.C. 4000 and B.C. 2000. This typical colour is a light blue, radically different from the shining dark blue of the twelfth dynasty or the beautiful colours of the blue glazed pottery of the eighteenth. It is not, however, very different from the light blue of the twenty-sixth dynasty. The reason is not far to seek; the twenty-sixth dynasty artists archaïsed here as in greater matters; they imitated the colour of the earliest faïence. The date of the Minoan palace of Knossos is between the epoch of the twelfth dynasty and that of the eighteenth; the date of the old light blue faïence is earlier, between B.C. 4000 and the twelfth dynasty. It was this faïence that the Minoan potters imitated. The conclusion as to the date at which Greek civilisation first began to borrow ideas from that of Egypt may seem extraordinary; but Mr. Evans's diggings at Knossos have already produced so many extraordinary things that we are prepared for more.

We do not expect the same remarkable discoveries from Mr. Bosanquet's diggings at Paláikastro. It is a poorer site, and it is not the Labyrinth of Minos. Enough has, however, been found more than to maintain the interest of former years of excavation, and there is little doubt that here was a Minoan settlement like that of Phylakopi. Two new features at Paláikastro are the remains of primitive burials from the cave of Hagios Nikólaos and the remarkable ossuaries at the sites of Roussolakkos and Patema, and the great hoard of votive terracottas found by Messrs. Myres and Currelly on the hill of



FIG. 3.—External face of great wall, showing revetment on the right and bastion in the distance. (From "Excavations at Phylakopi in Melos.")

Petsofà or Tsofàs, south of Paláikastro. The skeletons are usually in the contracted position characteristic of the Neolithic race of the Mediterranean; they show small stature (average 1.625 m.) and dolichocephalic head-form. Mr. Duckworth, who describes them, says "it seems that the early Cretans anticipated in head-

form and stature the proportions assigned to the 'Mediterranean race' [of Sergi], and thus can be described as the earliest known representatives of that race" (p. 354). It is, however, confusing to speak of the Paláikastro people as "anticipating" the Mediterraneans in any way; the Paláikastro skulls, though no doubt a few hundred years older than "those discovered at Zakro [on the coast south of Paláikastro] and described by Boyd Dawkins, and those from Erganos [a Mycenæan site in a valley running up from the Pediada plain into the Lasithí mountain-system near the Aphendis Sarakinós] described by Sergi" (p. 353), are of Bronze age date, while the Neolithic Mediterraneans belong to Sergi's race as much as the Mycenæans; the Paláikastro people were "Mediterraneans" (as Mr. Duckworth says on p. 349)—they did not anticipate them.

The Petsofá find of votive terracottas is paralleled by the very similar pocket of votive female figures and models of female breasts, &c., phalli, and figures of cows, of red pottery and blue glazed faience, found by Prof. Naville and myself during the past season in the eighteenth dynasty dust-heap of Queen Hatshepsu's temple at Deir-el-Bahari, in Egypt; a number of these votive figures were exhibited at the annual show of the Egypt Exploration Fund at University College, Gower Street, in July.

The pottery from Paláikastro is discussed by Mr. R. M. Dawkins, who publishes a very fine "filler-vase" (p. 311) of the well known Mycenæan type. For a parallel Mr. Dawkins refers to a representation of a vase in the tomb of Rekhmara, at Thebes in Egypt, published by Mr. W. M. Müller in his "Asien und Europa," p. 340, and by me in "The Oldest Civilization of Greece," frontispiece. This representation of the vase in question, for which not Mr. Müller, but the great Champollion is responsible, is, however, inaccurate. Mr. Dawkins would have found a better parallel from the tomb of Rekhmara in last year's "Annual of the British School," p. 171. Mr. Dawkins also contributes a most interesting account of a visit to the rather remote island of Karpathos, between Crete and Rhodes, which should be of interest to geographers and anthropologists. To anybody who has seen them from the Eteokretan heights above Sitía, or from the shores of Grandes Bay by which Paláikastro lies, the islands of Kasos and Karpathos offer a most alluring invitation; but it is not everybody who can spare the time to accept it. Mr. Dawkins has been able to do so, and is lucky.

The excavations at Phylakopi, in Melos, were conducted by the School before those at Paláikastro, in Crete, were begun. They are not yet completed, the work at Paláikastro having been taken up with the idea of returning to Phylakopi at some future date. It is to be hoped that this aspiration will be fulfilled, for Phylakopi is among the most interesting of "Mycenæan" sites. The excavations were carried out from 1896 to 1899, Mr. Cecil Smith being in command during the first two years, Mr. Hogarth in the third, and Mr. Mackenzie, now Mr. Evans's assistant at Knossos, in the fourth. Mr. Mackenzie was present during the whole four seasons, thus supplying the "element of continuity" in the excavations. Each of these gentlemen has contributed his quatum to the combined work which has been issued for the school by the Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies under the direction of an editorial committee, composed of Mr. Bosanquet, Mr. E. A. Gardner, and Mr.

G. F. Hill, of the British Museum. Messrs. Arthur Evans, Bosanquet, G. C. Edgar, F. D. Atkinson, and F. B. Welch have also contributed to the volume.

The result is a remarkably valuable and well got-up book, with an extremely good series of illustrations. Among articles which are all of equal value and interest it is invidious to direct special attention to any in particular, but while Mr. Bosanquet's on the wall-paintings and Mr. Edgar's on the pottery are of special interest to "Mycenæologists," those of Mr. Bosanquet on the early Ægean trade in obsidian, which seems to have radiated from Melos, and of Mr. Mackenzie on the general historical relations of the successive settlements, especially in connection with the Minoan culture, which Mr. Mackenzie has had such unequalled opportunities of observing in the course of



FIG. 4.—The site from north-east. Beach of boulders in the foreground. (From "Excavations at Phylakopi in Melos.")

his work with Mr. Evans at Knossos, will be of more general interest, and should be carefully noted by all students of early culture-development. The famous fresco of the flying-fish, the most remarkable example of Mycenæan art found at Phylakopi, is published in colour on Plate iii.; as a delineation of the animal it is remarkably accurate, and as a design most admirable.

Enough has been said to show that this year's record of the annual progress of the discovery of the older civilisation of Greece has in no way fallen behind its predecessors in interest. H. R. HALL.

NOTES.

ON Saturday last, September 10, the *Discovery* arrived at Portsmouth with the members of the British Antarctic Expedition. On Sunday Captain Scott received a telegram from the King offering His Majesty's congratulations on the success and safe return of the explorers. The King has directed that a new medal for service in the Polar regions shall be struck and granted to the officers and crew of the *Discovery* in recognition of the successful accomplishment of their enterprise. Commander Scott has been promoted to the rank of captain in the Royal Navy; and the nation's thanks are due to him, the officers, scientific staff, and crew of the *Discovery* for the successful way in which they have maintained the credit of our country in the records of geographical discovery. The first news of the expedition after the departure of the *Discovery* from New Zealand in