

CHAPTER 19

THE ARYAN-SPEAKING PEOPLES IN PRE-HISTORIC TIMES

§ 1. *The Spreading of the Aryan-Speakers.*

§ 2. *About the Original Life of the Aryans.*

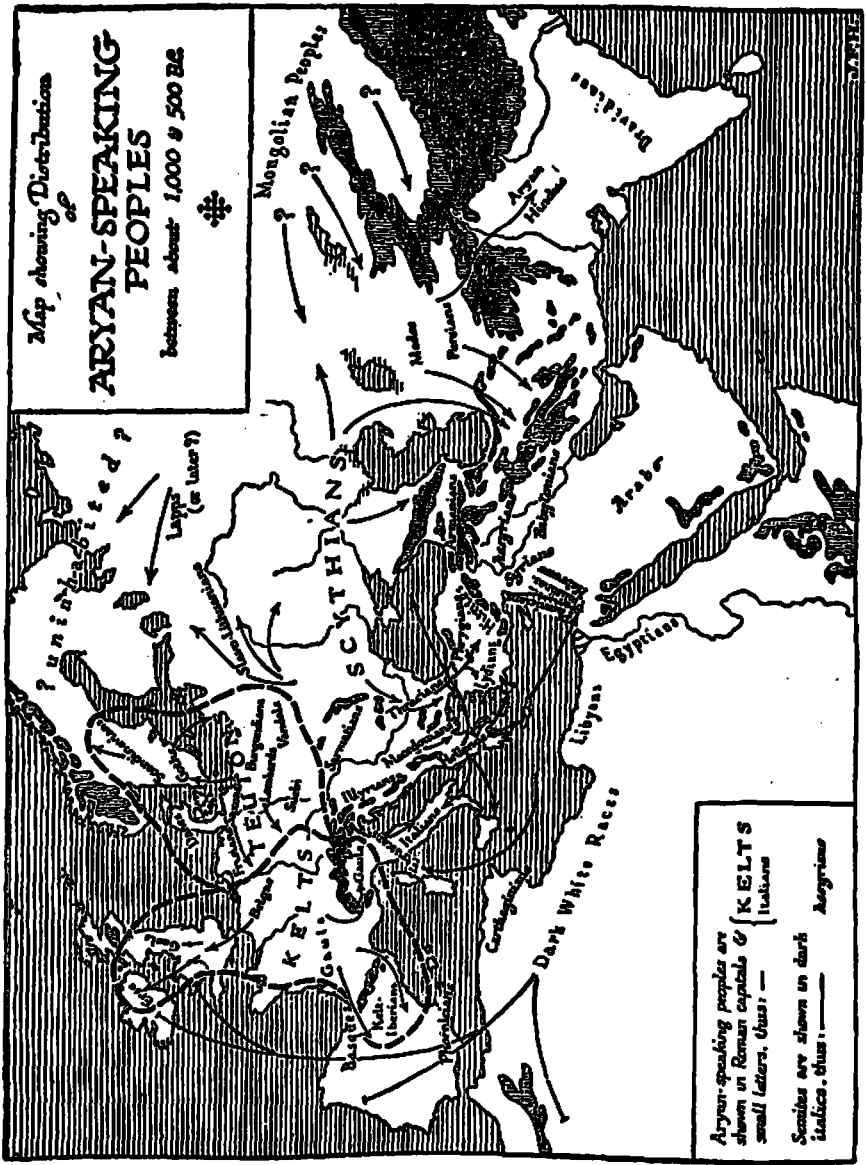
§ 3. *The Aryan Family.*

§ 1

WE have spoken of the Aryan language as probably arising in the region of the Danube and South Russia and spreading from that region of origin. We say "probably," because it is by no means certainly proved that that was the centre; there have been vast discussions upon this point and wide divergences of opinion. We give the prevalent view. It was originally the language of a group of peoples of the Nordic race. As it spread widely, Aryan began to differentiate into a number of subordinate languages. To the west and south it encountered the Basque language, which prevailed in Spain, and also possibly various other Mediterranean languages.

Before the expansion of the Aryans from their lands of origin southward and westward, the Iberian race was distributed over Great Britain, Ireland, France, Spain, North Africa, South Italy, and in a more civilized state, Greece and Asia Minor. It was closely related to the Egyptian. To judge by its European vestiges it was a rather small human type, generally with an oval face and a long head. It buried its chiefs and important people in megalithic chambers—i.e. made of big stones—covered over by great mounds of earth; and these mounds of earth, being much longer than they are broad, are spoken of as the long barrows. These people sheltered at times in caves, and also buried some of their dead therein; and from the traces of charred, broken, and cut human bones, including the bones of children, it is inferred that they were cannibals.

These short dark Iberian tribes (and the Basques also if they were a different race) were thrust back westward, and conquered and enslaved by slowly advancing waves of the



Map showing Distribution
of
**ARYAN-SPEAKING
PEOPLES**
Between about 1,000 & 500 B.C.

Aryan-speaking peoples are shown in Roman capitals & italics. thus: —
 Semites are shown in dark italics. thus: —
 Aryans

taller and fairer Aryan-speaking peoples coming southward and westward through Central Europe, who are spoken of as the Kelts. Only the Basque resisted the conquering Aryan speech. Gradually these Keltic-speakers made their way to the Atlantic, and all that now remains of the Iberians is mixed into the Keltic population. How far the Keltic invasion affected the Irish population is a matter of debate at the present time; in that island the Kelts may have been a mere caste of conquerors who imposed their language on a larger subject population. The same may be true of Spain. It is even doubtful if the north of England is more Nordic than pre-Keltic in blood. There is a sort of short dark Welshman, and certain types of Irishmen, who are Iberians by race. The modern Portuguese are also largely of Iberian blood.

The Kelts spoke a language, Keltic, of which it has been said that it combined an Aryan vocabulary with a Berber (or Iberian) grammar, which was in its turn to differentiate into the language of Gaul, Welsh, Breton, Scotch and Irish Gaelic, and other tongues. The Kelts buried the ashes of their chiefs and important people in round barrows. While these Nordic Kelts were spreading westward, other Nordic Aryan peoples were pressing down upon the dark white Mediterranean race in the Italian and Greek peninsulas, and developing the Latin and Greek groups of tongues. Certain other Aryan tribes were drifting towards the Baltic and across into Scandinavia, speaking varieties of Aryan which became ancient Norse—the parent of Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, and Icelandic—Gothic, and Low and High German.

While the primitive Aryan speech was thus spreading and breaking up into daughter languages to the west, it was also spreading and breaking up to the east. North of the Carpathians and the Black Sea, Aryan-speaking tribes were using a distinctive dialect called Slavonian, from which came Russian, Serbian, Polish, Czech, and other tongues; other variations of Aryan distributed over Asia Minor and Persia were also being individualized as Armenian and Indo-Iranian, the parent of Sanscrit and Persian. In this book we have used the word Aryan for all this family of languages, but the term Indo-European is sometimes used for the entire family, and "Aryan" itself restricted in a narrower sense to the Indo-Iranian speech. This Indo-Iranian speech was destined to split later into a number of languages, including Persian and Sanscrit, the latter being the language of certain tribes of fair-complexioned Aryan speakers who pushed eastward into India some time between

3,000 and 1,000 B.C. and conquered dark Dravidian peoples who were then in possession of that land.

From their original range of wandering, other Aryan tribes spread to the north as well as to the south of the Black Sea, and ultimately, as these seas shrank and made way for them, to the north and east of the Caspian, and so began to come into conflict with and mix also with Mongolian peoples of the Ural-Altai linguistic group, the horse-keeping people of the grassy steppes of Central Asia. From these Mongolian races the Aryans seem to have acquired the use of the horse for riding and warfare. There were three or four prehistoric varieties or subspecies of horse in Europe and Asia, but it was the steppe or semi-desert lands that first gave horses of a build adapted to other than food uses.

All these peoples of the Russian and Asiatic steppes, it must be understood, shifted their ground rapidly; a succession of bad seasons might drive them many hundreds of miles, and it is only in a very rough and provisional manner that their "beats" can now be indicated. Every summer they went north, every winter they swung south again. This annual swing covered sometimes hundreds of miles. On our maps, for the sake of simplicity, we represent the shifting of nomadic peoples by a straight line; but really they moved in annual swings, as the broom of a servant who is sweeping out a passage swishes from side to side as she advances. Spreading round the north of the Black Sea, and probably to the north of the Caspian from the range of the original Teutonic tribes of Central and North-Central Europe to the Iranian peoples who became the Medes and Persians and (Aryan) Hindus, were the grazing lands of a confusion of tribes, about whom it is truer to be vague than precise, such as the Cimmerians, the Sarmatians, and those Scythians who, together with the Medes and Persians, came into effective contact with the Assyrian Empire by 1,000 B.C. or earlier.

East and south of the Black Sea, between the Danube and the Medes and Persians, and to the north of the Semitic and Mediterranean peoples of the sea coasts and peninsulas, ranged another series of equally ill-defined Aryan tribes, moving easily from place to place and intermixing freely—to the great confusion of historians. They seem, for instance, to have broken up and assimilated the Hittite civilization, which was probably pre-Aryan in its origin. These latter Aryans were, perhaps, not so far advanced along the nomadic line as the Scythians of the great plains.

§ 2

About the Original Life of the Aryans.

What sort of life did these prehistoric Aryans lead, these Nordic Aryans who were the chief ancestors of most Europeans and most white Americans and European colonists of to-day, as well as of the Persians and high-caste Hindus? They may also have been the ancestors of the Armenians, but these were more probably a non-Aryan, it may be a Hittite, people who learnt an Aryan speech.

In answering that question, we have a new source of knowledge, in addition to the dug-up remains and vestiges upon which we have had to rely in the case of the predecessors of the Aryans. We have language. By a careful study of the Aryan languages it has been found possible to deduce a number of conclusions about the life of these peoples 5,000 or 4,000 years ago.

All these languages have a common resemblance; each, as we have already explained, rings the changes upon a number of common roots. When we find the same root word running through all or most of these tongues, it seems reasonable to conclude that the thing that root word signifies must have been known to the common ancestors. Of course, if they have *exactly the same word* in their languages, this may not be the case; it may be the new name of a new thing or of a new idea that has spread over the world quite recently. "Gas," for instance, is a word that was made by Van Helmont, a Dutch chemist, about 1625, and has spread into most civilized tongues; and "tobacco" again is an American-Indian word which followed the introduction of smoking almost everywhere. But if the same word turns up in a number of languages, and *if it follows the characteristic modifications of each language*, we may feel sure that it has been in that language, and a part of that language, since the beginning, suffering the same changes with the rest of it. We know, for example, that the words for waggon and wheel run in this fashion through the Aryan tongues, and so we are able to conclude that the primitive Aryans, the more purely Nordic Aryans, had waggons, though it would seem from the absence of any common roots for spokes, rim, or axle that their wheels were not wheelwright's wheels with spokes, but made of the trunks of trees shaped out with an axe between the ends.

These primitive waggons were drawn by oxen. The early Aryans did not ride or drive horses; they had very little to do with horses. The Neolithic Mongols were a horse-people, but the Neolithic Aryans were a cow-people. They ate beef, not

horse; and after many ages they began this use of draught cattle. They reckoned wealth by cows. They wandered, following pasture, and "trekking" their goods, as the South African Boers do, in ox-waggons, though of course their waggons were much clumsier than any to be found in the world to-day. They probably ranged over very wide areas. They were migratory, but not in the strict sense of the word "nomadic"; they moved in a slower, clumsier fashion than did the later, more specialized nomadic peoples. They were forest and parkland people without horses. They were developing a migratory life out of the more settled "forest clearing" life of the earlier Neolithic period. Changes of climate which were replacing forest by pasture, and the accidental burning of forests by fire, may have assisted this development.

We have already described the sort of home the primitive Aryan occupied and his household life, so far as the remains of the Swiss pile-dwellings enable us to describe these things. Mostly his houses were of too flimsy a sort, probably of wattle and mud, to have survived, and possibly he left them and trekked on for very slight reasons. The Aryan peoples burnt their dead, a custom they still preserve in India, but their predecessors, the long-barrow people, the Iberians, buried their dead lying on the side in a sitting position. In some ancient Aryan burial mounds (round barrows) the urns containing the ashes of the departed are shaped like houses, and these represent rounded huts with thatched roofs.

The grazing of the primitive Aryan was far more important to him than his agriculture. At first he cultivated with a rough wooden hoe; then, after he had found out the use of cattle for draught purposes, he began real ploughing with oxen, using at first a suitably bent tree bough as his plough. His first cultivation before that came about must have been rather in the form of garden patches near the house buildings than of fields. Most of the land his tribe occupied was common land on which the cattle grazed together.

He never used stone for building house walls until upon the very verge of history. He used stone for hearths (e.g. at Glastonbury), and sometimes stone sub-structures. He did, however, make a sort of stone house in the centre of the great mounds in which he buried the ashes of his illustrious dead. He may have learnt this custom from his Iberian neighbours and predecessors. It was these dark whites of the megalithic culture, and not the primitive Aryans, who were responsible for such temples as Stonehenge in Wiltshire or Carnac in Brittany.

These Aryans were congregated not in cities but in districts of pasturage, as clans and tribal communities. They formed loose leagues of mutual help under chosen leaders, they had centres where they could come, together with their cattle, in times of danger, and they made camps with walls of earth and palisades, many of which are still to be traced in the history-worn contours of the European scenery. The leaders under whom men fought in war were often the same men as the sacrificial purifiers who were their early priests.

The knowledge of bronze spread late in Europe. The Nordic European had been making his slow advances age by age for 7,000 or 8,000 years before the metals came. By that time his social life had developed so that there were men of various occupations and men and women of different ranks in the community. There were men who worked wood and leather, potters and carvers. The women span and wove and embroidered. There were chiefs and families that were distinguished as leaderly and noble.

The Aryan tribesman varied the monotony of his herding and wandering; he consecrated undertakings and celebrated triumphs, held funeral assemblies, and distinguished the traditional seasons of the year, by *feasts*. His meats we have already glanced at; he was an eager user of intoxicating drinks. He made these of honey, of barley, and, as the Aryan-speaking tribes spread southward, of the grape. And he got merry and drunken. Whether he first used yeast to make his bread light or to ferment his drink we do not know.

At his feasts there were individuals with a gift for "playing the fool," who did so no doubt to win the laughter of their friends, but there was also another sort of men, of great importance in their time and still more important to the historian, certain singers of songs and stories, the bards or rhapsodists. These *bards* existed among all the Aryan-speaking peoples; they were a consequence of and a further factor in that development of spoken language which was the chief of all the human advances made in Neolithic times. They chanted or recited stories of the past, or stories of the living chief and his people; they told other stories that they invented; they memorized jokes and catches. They found and seized upon and improved the rhythms, rhymes, alliterations, and such-like possibilities latent in language; they probably did much to elaborate and fix grammatical forms. They were perhaps the first great artists of the ear, as the later Aurignacian rock painters were the first great artists of the eye and hand. No doubt they used much gesture; probably they

learnt appropriate gestures when they learnt their songs; but the order and sweetness and power of language was their primary concern.

These bards mark a new step forward in the power and range of the human mind. They sustained and developed in men's minds a sense of a greater something than themselves, the tribe, and of a life that extended back into the past. They not only recalled old hatreds and battles, they recalled old alliances and a common inheritance. The feats of dead heroes lived again. The Aryans began to live in thought before they were born and after they were dead.

Like most human things, this bardic tradition grew first slowly and then more rapidly. By the time bronze was coming into Europe there was not an Aryan people that had not a profession and training of bards. In their hands language became as beautiful as it is ever likely to be. These bards were living books, man-histories, guardians and makers of a new and more powerful tradition in human life. Every Aryan people had its long poetical records thus handed down, its sagas (Teutonic), its epics (Greek), its vedantic narrative poems (Old Sanscrit). The earliest Aryan people were essentially a people of the voice. The recitation seems to have predominated even in those ceremonial and dramatic dances and that "dressing up" which among most human races have also served for the transmission of tradition.

At that time there was no writing, and when first the art of writing crept into Europe, as we shall tell later, it must have seemed far too slow, clumsy, and lifeless a method of record for men to trouble very much about writing down these glowing and beautiful treasures of the memory. Writing was at first kept for accounts and matters of fact. The bards and rhapsodists flourished for long after the introduction of writing. They survived, indeed, in Europe as the minstrels into the Middle Ages.

Unhappily their tradition had not the fixity of a written record. They amended and reconstructed, they had their fashions and their phases of negligence. Accordingly we have now only the very much altered and revised vestiges of that spoken literature of prehistoric times. One of the most interesting and informing of these prehistoric compositions of the Aryans survives in the Greek *Iliad*. An early form of *Iliad* was probably recited by 1,000 B.C., but it was not written down until perhaps 700 or 600 B.C. Many men must have had to do with it as authors and improvers, but later Greek tradition attributed it

to a blind bard named Homer, to whom also is ascribed the *Odyssey*, a composition of a very different spirit and outlook. It is possible that many of the Aryan bards were blind men. According to Professor J. L. Myres, the bards were blinded to prevent their straying from the tribe. Mr. L. Lloyd has seen in Rhodesia the musician of a troupe of native dancers who had been blinded by his chief for this very reason. The Slavs called all bards *sliepak*, which was also their word for a blind man.

The original recited version of the *Iliad* was older than that of the *Odyssey*. "The *Iliad* as a complete poem is older than the *Odyssey*," says Professor Gilbert Murray, "though the material of the *Odyssey*, being largely undatable folk-lore, is older than any of the historical material in the *Iliad*." Both epics were probably written over and rewritten at a later date, in much the same manner that Lord Tennyson, the poet laureate of Queen Victoria, in his *Idylls of the King*, wrote over the *Morte d'Arthur* (which was itself a writing over by Sir Thomas Malory, circ. 1450, of pre-existing legends), making the speeches and sentiments and the characters more in accordance with those of his own time. But the events of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the way of living they describe, the spirit of the acts recorded, belong to the closing centuries of the prehistoric age. These sagas, epics, and vedas do supply, in addition to archæology and philology, a third source of information about those vanished times. Here, for example, is the concluding passage of the *Iliad*, describing very exactly the making of a prehistoric barrow. (We have taken here Chapman's rhymed translation, correcting certain words with the help of the prose version of Lang, Leaf, and Myers.)

" . . . Thus oxen, mules, in waggons straight they put,
 Went forth, and an unmeasur'd pile of sylvan matter cut;
 Nine days employ'd in carriage, but when the tenth morn shin'd
 On wretched mortals, then they brought the bravest of his kind
 Forth to be burned. Troy swam in tears. Upon the pile's most
 height
 They laid the body, and gave fire. All day it burn'd, all night.
 But when th' elev'nth morn let on earth her rosy fingers shine,
 The people flocked about the pile, and first with gleaming wine
 Quench'd all the flames. His brothers then, and friends, the
 snowy bones
 Gather'd into an urn of gold, still pouring out their moans.
 Then wrapt they in soft purple veils the rich urn, digg'd a pit,
 Grav'd it, built up the grave with stones, and quickly piled on it
 A barrow. . . .

. . . The barrow heap'd once, all the town
 In Jove-nurs'd Priam's court partook a sumptuous fun'ral feast,
 And so horse-taming Hector's rites gave up his soul to rest."

There remains also an old English saga, *Beowulf*, made long before the English had crossed from Germany into England, which winds up with a similar burial. The preparation of a pyre is first described. It is hung round with shields and coats



Combat between Menelaus & Hector (in the Iliad)

From a platter ascribed to the end of the seventh century in the British Museum. This is probably the earliest known vase bearing a Greek inscription. Greek writing was just beginning. Note the Swastika.

of mail. The body is brought and the pyre fired, and then for ten days the warriors built a mighty mound to be seen afar by the traveller on sea or land.

Beowulf, which is at least a thousand years later than the *Iliad*, is also interesting because one of the main adventures in it is the looting of the treasures of a barrow already ancient in those days.

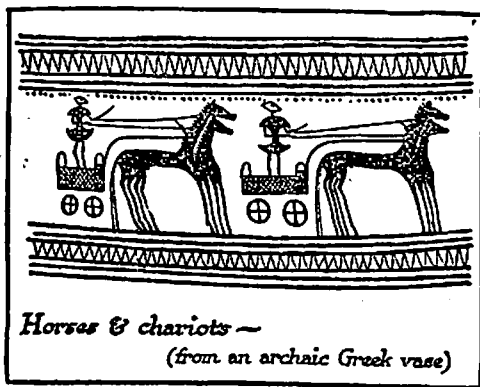
§ 3

The Aryan Family.

The Greek epics reveal the early Greeks with no knowledge of iron, without writing, and before any Greek-founded cities existed in the land into which they had evidently come quite recently as conquerors. They were spreading southward from the Aryan region of origin. They seem to have been a fair people, newcomers in Greece, newcomers to a land that had been held hitherto by the Mediterranean or Iberian peoples.

Let us, at the risk of a slight repetition, be perfectly clear upon one point. The *Iliad* does not give us the primitive neolithic life of that Aryan region of origin; it gives us that life already well on the move towards a new state of affairs. Between 15,000 and 6,000 B.C. the Neolithic way of living had spread with the forests and abundant vegetation of the Pluvial Period, over the greater part of the old world, from the Niger to the Hwangho and from Ireland to the south of India. Now, as the climate of great portions of the earth was swinging towards drier and more open conditions again, the earlier simpler Neolithic life was developing along two divergent directions. One was leading to a more wandering life, towards at last a constantly migra-

tory life between summer and winter pasture, which is called **NOMADISM**; the other, in certain sunlit river valleys, was towards a water-treasuring life of irrigation, in which men gathered into the first towns and made the first **CIVILIZATION**. We have already described the first civilizations and their liability to



Horses & chariots —
(from an archaic Greek vase)

recurrent conquests by nomadic peoples. We have already noted that for many thousands of years there has been an almost rhythmic recurrence of conquests of the civilizations by the nomads. Here, we have to note that the Greeks, as the *Iliad* presents them, are neither simple Neolithic nomads, innocent of civilization, nor are they civilized men. They are nomads in an excited state, because they have just come upon civilization, and regard it as an opportunity for war and loot.

These early Greeks of the *Iliad* are sturdy fighters, but without discipline—their battles are a confusion of single combats. They have horses, but no cavalry; they use the horse, which is a comparatively recent addition to Aryan resources, to drag a rude fighting chariot into battle. The horse is still novel enough to be something of a terror in itself. For ordinary draught purposes, as in the quotation from the *Iliad* we have just made, oxen were employed.

The only priests of these Aryans are the keepers of shrines and sacred places. There are chiefs, who are heads of families and who also perform sacrifices, but there does not seem to be much mystery or sacramental feeling in their religion. When the Greeks go to war, these heads and elders meet in council and appoint a king, whose powers are very loosely defined. There are no laws, but only customs; and no exact standards to conduct.

The social life of the early Greeks centred about the households of these leading men. There were, no doubt, huts for herds and the like, and outlying farm buildings; but the hall of the chief was a comprehensive centre, to which everyone went to feast, to hear the bards, to take part in games and exercises. The primitive craftsmen were gathered there. About it were cowsheds and stabling and such-like offices. Unimportant people slept about anywhere as retainers did in the mediæval castles and as people still do in Indian households. Except for quite personal possessions, there was still an air of patriarchal communism about the tribe. The tribe, or the chief as the head of the tribe, owned the grazing lands; forest and rivers were the wild.

The Aryan social organization seems, and indeed all early communities seem, to have been without the little separate households that make up the mass of the population in Western Europe or America to-day. The tribe was a big family; the nation a group of tribal families; a household often contained hundreds of people. Human society began, just as herds and droves begin among animals by the family delaying its breaking up. Nowadays the lions in East Africa are apparently becoming social animals in this way, by the young keeping with the mother after they are fully grown, and hunting in a group. Hitherto the lion has been much more of a solitary beast. If men and woman do not cling to their families nowadays as much as they did, it is because the state and the community supply now safety and help and facilities that were once only possible in the family group.

In the Hindu community of to-day these great households of the earlier stages of human society are still to be found. Mr. Bhupendranath Basu has recently described a typical Hindu household. It is an Aryan household refined and made gentle by thousands of years of civilization, but its social structure is the same as that of the households of which the Aryan epics tell.

"The joint family system," he said, "has descended to us from time immemorial, the Aryan patriarchal system of old still holding sway in India. The structure, though ancient, remains

full of life. The joint family is a co-operative corporation, in which men and women have a well-defined place. At the head of the corporation is the senior member of the family, generally the eldest male member, but in his absence the senior female member often assumes control." (Cp. Penelope in the *Odyssey*.)

"All able-bodied members must contribute their labour and earnings, whether of personal skill or agriculture and trade, to the common stock; weaker members, widows, orphans, and destitute relations, all must be maintained and supported; sons, nephews, brothers, cousins, all must be treated equally, for any undue preference is apt to break up the family. We have no word for cousins—they are either brothers or sisters, and we do not know what are cousins two degrees removed. The children of a first cousin are your nephews and nieces, just the same as the children of your brothers and sisters. A man can no more marry a cousin, however removed, than he can marry his own sister, except in certain parts of Madras, where a man may marry his maternal uncle's daughter. The family affections, the family ties, are always very strong, and therefore the maintenance of an equal standard among so many members is not so difficult as it may appear at first sight. Moreover, life is very simple. Until recently shoes were not in general use at home, but sandals without any leather fastenings. I have known of a well-to-do middle-class family of several brothers and cousins who had two or three pairs of leather shoes between them, these shoes being only used when they had occasion to go out, and the same practice is still followed in the case of the more expensive garments, like shawls, which last for generations, and with their age are treated with loving care, as having been used by ancestors of revered memory.

"The joint family remains together sometimes for several generations, until it becomes too unwieldy, when it breaks up into smaller families, and you thus see whole villages peopled by members of the same clan. I have said that the family is a co-operative society, and it may be likened to a small state, and is kept in its place by strong discipline based on love and obedience. You see nearly every day the younger members coming to the head of the family and taking the dust of his feet as a token of benediction; whenever they go on an enterprise, they take his leave and carry his blessing. . . . There are many bonds which bind the family together—the bonds of sympathy, of common pleasures, of common sorrows; when a death occurs, all the members go into mourning; when there is a birth or a

wedding, the whole family rejoices. Then above all is the family deity, some image of Vishnu, the preserver; his place is in a separate room, generally known as the room of God, or in well-to-do families in a temple attached to the house, where the family performs its daily worship. There is a sense of personal attachment between this image of the deity and the family, for the image generally comes down from past generations, often miraculously acquired by a pious ancestor at some remote time. . . . With the household gods is intimately associated the family priest. . . . The Hindu priest is a part of the family life of his flock, between whom and himself the tie has existed for many generations. The priest is not generally a man of much learning; he knows, however, the traditions of his faith. . . . He is not a very heavy burden, for he is satisfied with little—a few handfuls of rice, a few home-grown bananas or vegetables, a little unrefined sugar made in the village, and sometimes a few pieces of copper, are all that is needed. . . .

“A picture of our family life would be incomplete without the household servants. A female servant is known as the ‘jhi,’ or daughter, in Bengal—she is like the daughter of the house; she calls the master and the mistress father and mother, and the young men and women of the family brothers and sisters. She participates in the life of the family; she goes to the holy places along with her mistress, for she could not go alone, and generally she spends her life with the family of her adoption; her children are looked after by the family. The treatment of men servants is very similar. These servants, men and women, are generally people of the humbler castes, but a sense of personal attachment grows up between them and the members of the family, and as they get on in years they are affectionately called by the younger members elder brothers, uncles, aunts, etc. . . .

“In a well-to-do house there is always a resident teacher, who instructs the children of the family as well as other boys of the village; there is no expensive school building, but room is found in some veranda or shed in the courtyard for the children and their teacher, and into this school low-caste boys are freely admitted. These indigenous schools were not of a very high order, but they supplied an agency of instruction for the masses which was probably not available in many other countries. . . .

“With Hindu life is bound up its traditional duty of hospitality. It is the duty of a householder to offer a meal to any stranger who may come before midday and ask for one; the mistress of the house does not sit down to her meal until every member is fed, and, as sometimes her food is all that is left, she

does not take her meal until well after midday lest a hungry stranger should come and claim one." . . .

We have been tempted to quote Mr. Basu at some length, because here we do get to something like a living understanding of the type of household which has prevailed in human communities since Neolithic days, which still prevails to-day in India, China, and the Far East, but which in the West is rapidly giving ground before a state and municipal organization of education and a large-scale industrialism within which an amount of individual detachment and freedom is possible, such as these great households never knew. . . .

But let us return now to the history preserved for us in the Aryan epics.

The Sanscrit epics tell a very similar story to that underlying the *Iliad*, the story of a fair, beef-eating people—only later did they become vegetarians—coming down from Persia into the plain of North India and conquering their way slowly towards the Indus. From the Indus they spread over India, but as they spread they acquired much from the dark Dravidians they conquered, and they seem to have lost their bardic tradition. The ancient verses, says Mr. Basu, were transmitted chiefly in the households by the women. . . .

The oral literature of the Keltic peoples who pressed westward has not been preserved so completely as that of the Greeks or Indians; it was written down many centuries later, and so, like the barbaric, primitive English *Beowulf*, has lost any clear evidence of a period of migration into the lands of an antecedent people. If the pre-Aryans figure in it at all, it is as the fairy folk of the Irish stories.

Ireland, most cut off of all the Keltic-speaking communities, retained to the latest date its primitive life; and the *Táin*, the Irish *Iliad*, describes a cattle-keeping life in which war chariots are still used, and war dogs also, and the heads of the slain are carried off slung round the horses' necks. The *Táin* is the story of a cattle raid. Here, too, the same social order appears as in the *Iliad*; the chiefs sit and feast in great halls, they build halls for themselves, there is singing and story-telling by the bards, and drinking and intoxication. Priests are not very much in evidence, but there is a sort of medicine man who deals in spells and prophecy.

THE GREEKS AND THE PERSIANS

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| | § 9. <i>Thermopylæ and Salamis.</i> |
| | § 10. <i>Platœa and Mycale.</i> |

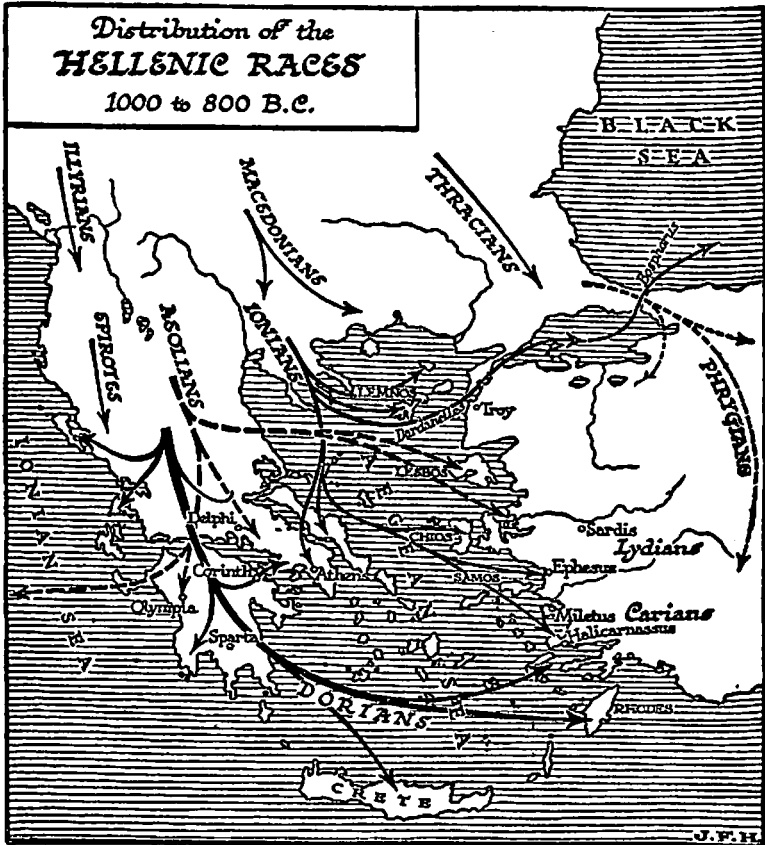
§ 1

THE Greeks appear in the dim light before the dawn of history (say 1,500 B.C.) as one of the wandering imperfectly nomadic Aryan peoples who were gradually extending the range of their pasturage southward into the Balkan peninsula and coming into conflict and mixing with that preceding Ægean civilization of which Cnossos was the crown.

In the Homeric poems these Greek tribes speak one common language, and a common tradition upheld by the epic poems keeps them together in a loose unity; they call their various tribes by a common name, *Hellenes*. They probably came in successive waves. Three main variations of the ancient Greek speech are distinguished: the Ionic, the Æolic, and the Doric. There was a great variety of dialects. The Ionians seem to have preceded the other Greeks and to have mixed very intimately with the civilized peoples they overwhelmed. Racially the people of such cities as Athens and Miletus may have been less Nordic than Mediterranean. The Doric apparently constituted the last, most powerful and least civilized wave of the migration. These Hellenic tribes conquered and largely destroyed the Ægean civilization that had preceded their arrival; upon its ashes they built up a civilization of their own. They took to the sea and crossed by way of the islands to Asia Minor; and, sailing through the Dardanelles and Bosphorus, spread their settlements along the south, and presently along the north borders of the Black Sea. They spread also over the south of Italy, which was called at last *Magna Græcia*, and round the northern coast of the

Mediterranean. They founded the town of Marseilles on the site of an earlier Phœnician colony. They began settlements in Sicily in rivalry with the Carthaginians as early as 735 B.C.

In the rear of the Greeks proper came the kindred Mace-



donians and Thracians; on their left wing the Phrygians crossed by the Bosphorus into Asia Minor.

We find all this distribution of the Greeks effected before the beginnings of written history. By the seventh century B.C.—that is to say, by the time of the Babylonian captivity of the Jews—the landmarks of the ancient world of the pre-Hellenic civilization in Europe have been obliterated. Tiryns and Cnossos are unimportant sites; Mycenæ and Troy survive in legend; the

great cities of this new Greek world are Athens, Sparta (the capital of Lacedemon), Corinth, Thebes, Samos, Miletus. The world our grandfathers called "Ancient Greece" had arisen on the forgotten ruins of a still more Ancient Greece, in many ways as civilized and artistic, of which to-day we are only beginning to learn through the labours of the excavator.

But the newer Ancient Greece, of which we are now telling, still lives vividly in the imaginations and institutions of men because it spoke a beautiful and most expressive Aryan tongue akin to our own, and because it had taken over the Mediterranean alphabet and perfected it by the addition of vowels, so that reading and writing were now easy arts to learn and practise, and great numbers of people could master them and make a record for later ages.

§ 2

Distinctive Features of Hellenic Civilization.

Now this Greek civilization that we find growing up in South Italy and Greece and Asia Minor in the seventh century B.C. is a civilization differing in many important respects from the two great civilized systems whose growths we have already traced, that of the Nile and that of the Two Rivers of Mesopotamia. These civilizations grew through long ages where they are found; they grew slowly about a temple life out of a primitive agriculture; priest kings and god kings consolidated such early city states into empires. But the barbaric Greek herdsmen raiders came southward into a world whose civilization was already an old story. Shipping and agriculture, walled cities and writing were already there. The Greeks did not grow a civilization of their own; they wrecked one, and put another together upon and out of the ruins.

To this we must ascribe the fact that there is no temple-state stage, no stage of priest kings, in the Greek record. The Greeks got at once to the city organization that in the east had grown round the temple. They took over the association of temple and city; the idea was ready-made for them. What impressed them most about the city was probably its wall. It is doubtful if they took to city life and citizenship straight away. At first they lived in open villages outside the ruins of the cities they had destroyed, but there stood the model for them, a continual suggestion. They thought first of a city as a safe place in a time of strife, and of the temple uncritically as a proper feature of the city. They came into this inheritance of a previous

civilization with the ideas and traditions of the woodlands still strong in their minds. The heroic social system of the *Iliad* took possession of the land, and adapted itself to the new conditions. As history goes on the Greeks became more religious and superstitious as the faiths of the conquered welled up from below.

We have already said that the social structure of the primitive Aryans was a two-class system of nobles and commoners, the classes not very sharply marked off from each other, and led in warfare by a king who was simply the head of one of the noble families, *primus inter pares*, a leader among his equals. With the conquest of the aboriginal population, and with the building of towns, there was added to this simple social arrangement of two classes a lower stratum of farm-workers and skilled and unskilled workers, who were for the most part slaves. But all the Greek communities were not of this "conquest" type. Some were "refugee" cities representing smashed communities, and in these the aboriginal substratum would be missing.

In many of the former cases the survivors of the earlier population formed a subject class, slaves of the state as a whole, as, for instance, the Helots in Sparta. The nobles and com-

moners became landlords and gentlemen farmers; it was they who directed the shipbuilding and engaged in trade. But some of the poorer free citizens followed mechanic arts, and, as we have already noted, would even pull an oar in a galley for pay. Such priests



J.F.H.
From a painted vase, about 550 B.C.

An early Greek sea-fight.

as there were in this Greek world were either the guardians of shrines and temples or sacrificial functionaries; Aristotle, in his *Politics*, makes them a mere subdivision of his official class. The citizen served as warrior in youth, ruler in his maturity, priest in his old age. The priestly class, in comparison with the equivalent class in Egypt and Babylonia, was small and insignificant.

The gods of the Greeks proper, the gods of the heroic Greeks, were, as we have already noted, glorified human beings, and they were treated without very much fear or awe; but beneath these gods of the conquering freemen lurked other gods of the subjugated peoples, who found their furtive followers among slaves and women. The original Aryan gods were not expected to work miracles or control men's lives. But Greece, like most of the Eastern world in the thousand years B.C., was much addicted to consulting *oracles* or soothsayers. Delphi was particularly famous for its oracle. "When the Oldest Men in the tribe could not tell you the right thing to do," says Gilbert Murray, "you went to the blessed dead. All oracles were at the tombs of Heroes. They told you what was 'Themis,' what was the right thing to do; or, as religious people would put it now, what was the Will of the God."

The priests and priestesses of these temples were not united into one class, nor did they exercise any power as a class. It was the nobles and free commoners, two classes which, in some cases, merged into one common body of citizens, who constituted the Greek state. In many cases, especially in great city states, the population of slaves and unenfranchised strangers greatly outnumbered the citizens. But for them the state existed only by courtesy; it existed legally for the select body of citizens alone. It might or might not tolerate the outsider and the slave, but they had no legal voice in their treatment—any more than if it had been a despotism.

This is a social structure differing widely from that of the Eastern monarchies. The exclusive importance of the Greek citizen reminds one a little of the exclusive importance of the children of Israel in the later Jewish state, but there is no equivalent on the Greek side to the prophets and priests, nor to the idea of an overruling Jehovah.

Another contrast between the Greek states and any of the human communities to which we have hitherto given attention is their continuous and incurable division. The civilizations of Egypt, Sumer, China, and no doubt North India, all began in a number of independent city states, each one a city with a few miles of dependent agricultural villages and cultivation around