

SOME ASPECTS OF DELPHI  
by  
LILLIAN SECORD GOUCHER, A.B.

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## SOME ASPECTS OF DELPHI.

The purpose of this paper is fourfold: 1, to present a few facts about the history of Delphi, especially in regard to the early history and up to the conquest of Delphi by Apollo, a brief sketch of the three sacred wars, the position of Delphi during the Persian and Peloponnesian wars; 2, to show some influence of Delphi's oracle on the Greek world; 3, to give examples of the visits to Delphi by the Romans, and 4, to give some idea of Delphi as it appears to us today with the light thrown on it by the excavations of the French School.

Probably the story (1) is known to everyone how Zeus, the father of Gods and king of men, from his home in Olympus sent out two eagles to locate the center of the earth. Flying at the same speed in opposite directions, after some days they met at Delphi. Here Zeus then placed the omphalus as the marker of earth's central shrine. By Hesiod (2) the story is told how Cronus, after swallowing the stone which Rhea had given him in lieu of the infant Zeus, disgorged it under Zeus's compulsion and "Zeus set it fast in the wide pathed earth at goodly Pytho under the glens of Parnassus to be a sign thenceforth and a marvel to mortal men".

The story of Cronus swallowing the stone is also told by Apollodorus. (3).

That Delphi was always considered the center of the earth is shown by Ovid (4), who says:

1. Pind. Pyth. IV 4-6; Eur. Ion 223-225 (Loeb); Strabo IX p.419.
2. Theog. 487, 495 (Loeb).
3. Bibl. I 6 (Loeb).
4. Met. X 167-168.

"Te meus ante omnes genitor dilexit, et orbe  
in medis positi caruerunt praeside Delphi",

Again he says:

"Auxilium caeleste petunt mediamque tenentis  
orbis humum Delphos adeunt, oracula Phoebi".

Euripides (6) in the Ion has Hermes say: "Now to this Delphian land I come, where Phoebus hath at earth's navel his prophetic seat." In the same play the chorus asks Ion (7): "Is it true that the walls of Phoebus rise there, where earth's mid-navel lies?"

The first holder of the oracle was Ge. Aeschylus (8) gives us the chronology of the presiding deities at Delphi.

"Old Earth, primeval prophetess, I first  
With these my prayers invoke; and Themis next,  
Who doth her mother's throne and temple both  
Inherit, as the legend runs; and third  
In lot's due course, another Earth-born maid  
The unforced homage of the land received,  
Titanian Phoebe; she in natal gift  
With her own name her hoary right bequeathed  
To Phoebus: he from rocky Delos' lake  
To Attica's ship-cruised bays was wafted, whence  
He in Parnassus fixed his sure abode.  
Hither with pious escort they attend him:  
The sons of Vulcan pioneer his path,  
Smoothing the rugged desert where he comes:  
The thronging people own him, and king Delphos,

5. Met. XV 630-631.

6. Ion 5-6 (Loeb).

7. Ion 225 (Loeb).

8. Eum. 1-19. (Blackie).

The land's high helmsman, flings his portals wide.  
 Jove with divinest skill his heart inspires,  
 And now the fourth on this dread seat enthroned  
 Sits Loxias, prophet of his father Jove."

Aeschylus is the only authority who mentions Phoebe in possession of the oracle.

Pausanias says: "For they say that in the most ancient times it was the oracle of Earth, and that Earth appointed as priestess of her oracle Daphnis, who was one of the Mountain Nymphs. And the Greeks have a poem called Eumolpia, the author of which was they say Musaeus the son of Antiophemus. In this poem Delphi is represented as a joint oracle of Poseidon and Earth, and we read that Earth delivered her own oracles, but Poseidon employed Pyrcon as his interpreter. These are the lines:

"Forthwith Earth uttered forth oracular wisdom,

And with her Pyrcon, famed Poseidon's priest;"

But afterwards they say Earth gave her share to Themis, and Apollo received it from Themis: and he they say gave Poseidon for his share in the oracle Calauria near Troezen;"

This tradition of peaceful succession to the great possession is not followed by the tragic poet Euripides. In his Iphigenia in Tauris (10) he says: "Apollo while yet a babe slew the earth-spawned monster, Pytho, and took for his own the oracle's lordship."

Pausanias (11) says that the town was called Pytho from the old Greek word to rot, for the dragon slain by Apollo

9. X, 5. (Shilleto).  
 10. I. in T. 12 45 (Loeb).  
 11. X, 6 (Shilleto).

rotted here.

Apollodorus (12) says: "Apollo learned the art of prophecy from Pan, son of Zeus and Hybris, and came to Delphi where Themis at that time used to deliver oracles; and when the snake Python, which guarded the oracle, would have hindered him from approaching the chasm, he killed it and took over the oracle".

Apollo's trip to Delphi is recorded thus:

"Or shall I sing how at first you went about the earth seeking a place of oracle for men, O far-shooting Apollo? To Pieria first you went down from Olympus and passed by sandu Lectus and Enienae and through the land of the Perrhaebi. Soon you came to Iolcus and set foot on Cenaeum in Euboea, famed for ships: You stood in the Lelantine plain, but it pleased not your heart to make a temple there and wooded groves. From there you crossed the Euripus, far-shooting Apollo, And went up the green, holy hills, going on to Mycalessus and grassy-bedded Teumessus, and so came to the wood-clad abode of Thebe; for as yet no man lived in holy Thebe, nor were there tracks or ways about Thebe's wheat-bearing plain as yet.

And further still you went, O farshooting Apollo, and came to Anchestus, Poseidon's bright grove: there the new broken colt distressed with drawing the trim chariot gets spirit again, and the skilled driver springs

12. Bibl. I 4 (Loeb).  
13. Homeric Hymn. To Pythian Apollo 214 ff. (Loeb).

From his car and goes on his way.

Further you went, O far-shooting Apollo, and reached next Cephissus' sweet stream which pours forth its sweet flowing water from Lilaea, and crossing over it, O worker from afar, you passed many towered Ocalea and reached grassy Haliartus".

At last he reached Telphusa where it pleased him to build a temple but he was deterred; for Telphusa was angry at his suggestion and told him that the noises of horses and chariots would not be pleasing to him. Then she lured him on by telling him of Crisa below the glades of Delphi where no noises should disturb him and where men should delight him with rich sacrifice. So, persuaded, Apollo went forth and passed Phlegyae and thence came to Crisa, where he decided to build his temple.

Here Apollo delivered a prophecy of Delphi's future greatness; for he said that it would be honored not only by dwellers in the rich Peloponnesus but even by men of Europe and all the islands. And he promised to them council that could not fail.

The Homeric Hymn (14) says that at a sweet flowing spring—probably Castalia—Apollo slew "with his bow the bloated, great she-dragon, a fierce monster wont to do great mischief to men upon earth, for she was a very bloody plague."

Farther on are these words:(15) "Whosoever met the dragoness, the day of doom would sweep him away, until the lord Apollo, who deals death from afar, shot a strong arrow at her. Then she, rent with bitter pangs, lay drawing great gasps for breath and rolling

14. In Pyth. Ap. 300 (Loeb).

15. Ibid. 356.

about that place. An awful noise swelled up unspeakable as she writhed continually this way and that amid the wood; and so she left her life, breathing it forth in blood:"

After the death of this great monster Apollo exults over his deed and says: (16) "Now rot here upon the soil that nurtures man!" "And the holy strength of Helius made her rot away there; wherefore the place is now called Pytho, because on that spot the power of piercing Helius made the monster rot away".

Here then Apollo had built his great temple "to be an oracle for men", and there is a story told by Diodorus (17) that there was a flock of goats grazing near Delphi's sacred spring. They wandered near a chasm from which rose a vapor, which overcame them and they began to caper about. Their shepherd, whose name was Coretas (18) noticed this. When he approached the spot he too was overcome and began to utter prophecies.

Naturally, as soon as the oracle was discovered by men, Apollo would have to provide priests, who should care for his temple and interpret the prophecies. What men he obtained for this position and in what manner we learn from the Homeric Hymn (19). While Apollo was considering what men to secure he noticed a ship from Cnossus of Crete sailing out upon the sea. Apollo transformed himself into a dolphin and got on the ship, which was bound for Pylus with a cargo of merchandise. On they sailed with the dolphin on board and wished to disembark at Taenarum but they were unable to manage the ship. On they went along the Peloponnesus, past Arena and Argyphaea and Thryon and Aepy and Pylus, past Cruni, Chalcis, Dyme, and Elis. Under the god's guidance they came to Crisa. Then Apollo leaped forth amid flashes of fire and went to

16. Ibid. 364.  
17. Sic. XVI 26.

18. Plut. De Def. Or. 42, 46 D.  
19. In Ap. Pyth. 388 ff. (Loeb).

his shrine. Upon his entrance a flame shot up to heaven and the brightness was over all Crisa so that the inhabitants were filled with awe. Then forth again to the ship he came in the shape of a young man. The Cretans recognized a divinity and he invited them to tend his shrine. They were dubious and asked him how they should live, since they had come from a far distant land against their will. The god again disclosed the future greatness of his oracle when he said he would care for them and that they should have more than enough from the great abundance that "all the glorious tribes of men bring here" for him.

The only responsibility placed upon them was that they must be honorable and true or their power would be taken from them. (20). "But guard ye my temple and receive the tribes of men that gather to this place, and especially show to mortal men my will, and do ye keep righteousness in your hearts. But if any shall be disobedient and pay no heed to my warning, or if there shall be any idle word or deed and outrage as is common among mortal men, then other men shall be your masters and with a strong hand shall make you subject forever. All has been told you; do ye keep it in your hearts."

In these words we see the early precedent for the pureness required in the priests and priestesses and some reason why the Delphic oracle should have helped its high fame so long.

From earliest times the one to be seated on the tripod, to become inspired by the God was a woman called the Pythia. In Euripides Ion says: (21).

"The seat of prophecy I leave and step across this temple

20: In Pyth. Ap. Homeric Hymn 537 ff (Loeb).  
21: Ion 1323 (Loeb).



cornice, Priestess of Phoebus, chosen of Delphi's daughters to guard his tripod's immemorial use".

The oracles from the beginning were given in hexameter verse. Pausanias tells us: (22). "But Boeo, a Phocian woman who composed a Hymn for Delphi, says that the oracle was set up to the God by Olen and some others that came from the Hyperboreans, and that Olen was the first who delivered oracles and in hexameters. Boeo has written the following lines:

"Here Pegasus and divine Agyieus, sons of the  
Hyperboreans, raised to thy memory an oracle."

And enumerating other Hyperboreans she mentions at the end of her Hymn Olen:

"And Olen who was Phoebus' first prophet,  
And first to put in verse the ancient oracles".

Pausanias also says that tradition made women the first utterers of the oracles.

In early times purity was a requisite of all who sought Apollo's temple. The Pythia says: (23)

"Stranger, if pure of soul, enter into the sanctuary of the  
God of purity, having but touched the sacred stream. For  
lustration is an easy matter for the good. As for the  
wicked man not the whole ocean with its waves could  
wash him pure."

This idea of purification was direct from Apollo himself who, after the slaughter of the Pytho, went off to be purified. There are several versions as to where he went. Most authorities have Crete

22. X 5 (Shilleto).

23. Anth. Pal. 14, 71 (Loeb).

as the place of his purification. Pausanias says: (24).

"And the Cretans say that Eubulus was the son of that Carmanor who purged Apollo of the murder of Python."

In another place he says: (25) "And the first victor was Chrysothemis the Cretan, whose father Carmanor is said to have purified Apollo".

Other authorities have made Tempe the place of Apollo's purification. A paean of Aristion says: (26) "Apollo was said to have been purified in Tempe by the plans of Zeus that excelleth".

Another reference has it: (27) "Apollo went to Tempe to be purified by the cleansing laurel".

These two versions, Crete and Tempe are combined by one authority: (28) "Apollo was purified in Crete at the house of Chrysothemis, thence came to Thessalian Tempe, whence he brought the laurel".

The acceptance of Tempe as the place of the purification seems most popular, for in the celebration of the festival Stepterion (29) we find a representation of the events after Apollo slew the Python. The Stepterion was a festival held at Delphi every nine years. It was a play in which a company of Delphian youths, one of whom represented Apollo, with some sacred women, the Oleae, who carried torches, went forth to a building which was supposed to be the abode of the Python. This was burned and then was portrayed the flight to Tempe and the rites of

24. II, 30 (Shilleto).

25. X, 7, "

26. B.C. H. XVIII 1894 pp 561 ff.

27. Ael. Var. Hist. III 1.

28. Hypoth. Pind. P. (Mommsen Delph. p. 294. N. 3).

29. Plut. De Def. Or. XV.

purification. After this a great sacrifice was offered and the company gathered laurel branches and returned in triumph to Delphi.

In Euripides (30) we find a different version, that Apollo was in service to king Admetus. Apollo as the first speaker opens the play: "For blood atonement, the All-father made me serf to a mortal man. To this land came I, tended mine host's kine, and warded still his house unto this day".

Thus we see the oracle of Delphi won by Apollo, and after his purification he reigns supreme there. Of the early high repute of the oracle and the reverence it inspired we have a striking example in Croesus. Herodotus (31) tells us how Croesus sent to Delphi, to Abae in Phocis, to Dodona, to Amphiaraus, to Trophonius, to the Branchidae in the Milesian country, and to Ammon in Lybia to test the oracles and find out if any knew the truth. Then he was to send to the one speaking the truth to find out if he should fight against the Persians. Each messenger sent was to wait for the hundredth day and then ask what Croesus, king of Lydia, son of Alyattes, was doing at that time. The answers of the oracles were to be written down and returned to him. No answer is recorded save the one from Delphi which was given by the Pythian priestess in hexameter verse:

"Grains of sand I reckon and measure the spaces of ocean  
Hear when dumb men speak, and mark the speech of the silent,  
What is it now that I smell? 'Tis a tortoise mightily armoured  
Sodden in vessel of bronze, with a lamb's flesh mingled together:  
Bronze thereon is laid and a mantle of bronze is upon it".

Croesus returned  
30. Alc. 6-9. (Loeb).  
31. Herodt. II 46, 47 (R.A. Wilinon).

When this answer was brought back, Croesus was much pleased and decided that Delphi was the only place of true divination. After he had sent away the envoys he had devised a secret deed. He had "cut up a tortoise and a lamb, and then himself boiled them in a caldron of bronze covered with a lid of the same."

Croesus returned his thanks to Delphi in a most generous manner. He ordered sacrifices throughout his kingdom and he made one hundred and seventeen ingots of gold, also a figure of a lion of refined gold, weighing ten talents. He sent moreover two great bowls, one of gold and one of silver. The silver bowl held six hundred nine gallon measures. He sent also four silver casks and two sprinkling vessels. (32). "Along with these Croesus sent, besides many other offerings of no great mark, certain round basins of silver, and a golden female figure three cubits high, which the Delphians assert to be the statue of the woman who was Croesus's baker. Moreover he dedicated his own wife's necklace and girdles."

Along with these gifts to Delphi he sent inquiries as to the advisability of a war against Persia. He received the answer that if he went against the Persians he would destroy a great empire. Pleased with this answer he again sent presents for Delphi for which he was granted "the right of consulting the oracle, freedom from all charges, the chief seat at festivals, and perpetual right of Delphian citizenship to whomever should wish."

Yet Croesus was not satisfied and sent a third time to the oracle to inquire whether or not he should reign a long time. To this he got another ambiguous answer: (33)

32. Herodt. I 51 (R.A. Wilinon).

33. " L 55 " "

"Lydian, beware of the day when a mule is lord of the Medians: Then with thy delicate feet by the stone strewn channel of Hermus Flee for thy life, nor abide, nor blush for the name of a craven".

In Croesus we see how a man believes what he wants to believe. He interpreted all the oracles to suit himself. The rest of the story tells of his war with the Persians and the overthrow of his kingdom by Cyrus.

Even though Apollo had priests and priestesses to oversee his oracle, he himself watched it and in times of stress he himself protected it. Pausanias tells us: (34).

"So Brennus and the Greeks gathered together at Delphi drew up against one another in battle array. And the God showed in the plainest possible way his enmity to the barbarians. For the whole ground occupied by the army of the Galati violently rocked most of the day, and there was continuous thunder and lightning, which astounded the Celts and prevented their hearing the orders of their officers, and the lightning struck not only some particular individual here and there, but set on fire all round him and their arms. And appearances of heroes, as Hyperochus and Laodocus and Pyrrhus and Phylacus- a local hero at Delphi - were seen on the battlefield. And many Phocians fell in the action and among other Aleximachus, who slew more barbarians with his own hand than any other of the Greeks. Such was the condition and terror of the barbarians all the day, and during the night things were still worse with them, for it was bitterly cold and snowed hard, and great stones came tumbling down from Parnassus, and whole crags broke off and seemed to make the barbarians their mark, and not one or two but thirty and even more,

as they stood on guard or rested, were killed at once by the fall of one of these crags.

The God defended his sacred shrine at the invasion of Xerxes also. Herodotus tells us: (35) "Now when the Delphians heard what danger they were in, great fear fell on them."

In their terror they consulted the oracle concerning the holy treasures. The God, in reply, bade them leave the treasures untouched - "He was able", he said, "without help to protect his own". Most of the Delphians climbed up into the tops of Parnassus, and placed their goods for safety in the Corycian cave; while some effected their escape to Amphissa in Locris. In this way all the Delphians quitted the city except sixty men, and the Prophet.

"When the barbarian assailants drew near and were in sight of the place, the Prophet, who was named Aceratus, beheld, in front of the temple, a portion of the sacred armour, lying upon the ground, removed from the inner shrine where it was wont to hang. Then went he and told the prodigy to the Delphians who had remained behind. Meanwhile the enemy pressed forward briskly, and had reached the shrine of Athena Pronaia, where they were overtaken by other prodigies still more wonderful than the first. Truly it was marvel enough when warlike harness was seen lying outside the temple, removed there by no power but its own. What followed, however, exceeded in strangeness all prodigies that had ever before been seen. The barbarians had just reached in their advance the chapel of Athena Pronaia, when a storm of thunder burst suddenly over their heads - at the same time two crags split off from Mt. Parnassus, and rolled down upon them with a loud noise,

crushing vast numbers beneath their weight.

"These sights struck terror into the barbarians who fled. When the Delphians saw this they came out from concealment and gave chase. Then again came supernatural sights for "two armed warriors", they said, "of a stature more than human, pursued after their flying ranks, pressing them close and slaying them".

Let us now glance briefly at Delphi during the three Sacred Wars. Since these wars so particularly concern Delphi let us have a brief summary of each. The first Sacred War was begun about 590 B.C. against the men of Crisa, the town just below Delphi. From the words of Pausanias (36) we get the whole story. "The people of Cirrha committed various acts of impiety against Apollo and ravaged the territory sacred to the God. The Amphictyones resolved to war against the people of Cirrha and chose for their leader Clisthenes king of Sicyon and invited Solon the Athenian to assist them by his counsel. They also consulted the oracle, and this was the response of the Pythian priestess. "Ye will not capture the tower and demolish the town, till the wave of blue-eyed Amphitrite, dashing over the dark sea, shall break into my grove."

"Solon persuaded them, therefore, to consecrate to the God the land about Cirrha, that the grove of Apollo might extend as far as the sea. He invented also another ingenious contrivance against the people of Cirrha: he turned the course of the river Plistus which flowed through the town. And when the besieged still held out by drinking rain-water and the water from the wells, he threw out some roots of hellebore into the Plistus, and when he thought the water of the river sufficiently impregnated with this, he turned it back into its ordinary channel, and the people of

Cirsha, drinking freely of the water, were attacked with an incessant diarrhoea and unable to man the walls: so the Amphictyones captured the town and took vengeance on the inhabitants for their conduct to the god, and Cirsha became the seaport of Delphi".

Herodotus (37) gives an account of this first sacred war. He says it began about 600 B.C., and while his narrative is not so detailed as that of Pausanias, they agree in the main facts.

Plutarch tells us:(38) "But Solon was even more admired and celebrated among the Greeks for what he said in behalf of the temple at Delphi, namely, that the Greeks must come to its relief and not suffer the people of Cirsha to outrage the oracle but aid the Delphians in maintaining the honor of the god. For it was by his persuasion that the Amphictyones undertook the war, as Aristotle, among others, testifies in his list of the victors at the Pythian games, where he ascribes the measure to Solon."

Another authority (39) tells us that in 590 B.C. Crisa was captured. Eurclieus celebrated the victory and dedicated the booty at the Pythian games.

Thus we see a city pay the penalty for its sins against earth's central shrine.

The second Sacred War is well described by Pausanias.(40) It was waged because of outrages committed against the very temple of the god.

"When the army of the Persians passed into Europe, it is said that the Phocians were obliged to join Xerxes, but they deserted the Medes and fought on the Greek side at Plataa.

37. V, 23.

38. Sol. III (Loeb).

39. Parian Marble Ex. 37.

40. X 2, 3. (Shilleto).



Sometime afterwards a fine was imposed on them by the Amphictyonic Council. I cannot ascertain why, whether it was imposed upon them because they had acted unjustly in some way, or whether it was their old enemies, the Thessalians, who got this fine imposed. And as they were in a state of despondency about the largeness of the fine, Philomelus, the son of Philatinus, second in merit to none of the Phocians, whose native place was Ledon, one of the Phocians cities, addressed them and showed them how impossible it was to pay the money and urged them to seize the temple at Delphi, alleging among other persuasive arguments that the condition of Athens and Lacedaemon was favorable to this plan, and that if the Thebans or any other nation warred against them they would come off victorious through their courage and expenditure of money. The majority of the Phocians were pleased with the arguments, whether the deity perverted their judgment, or whether they put gain before piety. So the Phocians seized the temple at Delphi, when Heraclides was President at Delphi, and Agathocles Archon at Athens, in the fourth year of the one hundred and fifth Olympiad, when Prorus of Cyrene was victorious in the footrace. And after seizing the temple they got together the strongest army of mercenaries in Greece, and the Thebans, who had previously been at variance with them, openly declared war against them. The war lasted ten continuous years, and during that long time frequently the Phocians and their mercenaries prevailed; frequently the Thebans had the best of it. But in an engagement near the town of Neon the Phocians were routed, and Philomelus in his flight threw himself down a steep and precipitous crag and so perished; and the Amphictyonic Council imposed the same end on all those who had plundered the temple at Delphi. And after the death of

Philomelus the Phocians gave the command to Onomarchus, and Philip was victorious in the battle, and Onomarchus fled in the direction of the sea and was there shot by the arrows of his own soldiers, for they thought their defeat had come about through his cowardice and inexperience in military matters. Thus Onomarchus ended his life by the will of the deity, and the Phocians chose his brother Phayllus as commander - in - chief with unlimited power. And he had hardly been invested with this power when he saw the following apparition in a dream. Among the votive offerings of Apollo was an imitation in bronze of an old man, with his flesh already wasted away and his bones only left. Phayllus dreamt that he was like this old man, and forthwith a wasting disease came upon him and fulfilled the dream. And after the death of Phayllus the chief power at Phocis devolved upon his son Phalaecus, but he was deposed because he helped himself privately to the sacred money. And he sailed over to Crete with those Phocians who joined his party, and with a portion of the mercenaries, and besieged Cydonia, because the inhabitants would not give him the money he demanded, and in the siege lost most of his army and his own life".

In the next chapter we see the out come of the war.

"And Philip put an end to the war, called the Phocian or Sacred War, in the tenth year after the plunder of the temple, when Theophilus was Archon at Athens, in the first year of the one hundred and eight Olympiad, in which Polycles of Cyrene won the prize in the footrace. And the following Phocian towns were taken and razed to the ground: Lilaea, Hyampolis, Anticyra, Parapotamii, Panopeus, and Daulis. These towns were renowned in ancient times, and not least in consequence in the lines of Homer. But those which the army of Xerxes burnt were rendered thereby more famous

in Greece, as Erochus, Charadra, Amphiclea, Neon, Tithronium, and Drymaea. All the others except Elatea were obscure prior to this war, as Trachis, Medeon, Echedamia, Ambrosus, Ledon, Polygonium, and Stiris. And now all these towns which I have mentioned were razed to the ground, and except Abae turned into villages. Abae had had no hand in the impiety of the other towns, and had had no share either in the siezing of the temple or in the Sacred War. The Phocians were also deprived of participation in the temple at Delphi and in the general Greek Council, and the Amphictyonic Council gave their votes to the Macedonians. As time went on, however, the Phocian towns were rebuilt and their former inhabitants returned to them from the villages, except to such as had always been weak and suffered at this time for want of money. And the Athenians and Thebans forwarded this restoration, before the fatal defeat of the Greeks at Chaeronea, in which the Phocians took part, as afterwards they took part against Antipater and the Macedonians at Lamia and Crannon. They fought also against the Galati and the Celtic army with greater bravery than any of the other Greeks, to avenge the god at Delphi and to atone, I think, for their former guilt. Such are most memorable public transactions of the Phocians."

Diodorus (41), too, gives a very detailed account of this second Sacred War.

After the second Sacred War the influence of Delphi was very low. Plutarch (42) tells us that at the end of this war the Pythia was forced by Alexander to give utterance to the words: "My son, thou art invincible".

Alexander had forced the priestess to take her seat upon the

41. XVI 23-38.

42. Alex.

tripod and she had said these words. Therefore he declared it was an oracular utterance since they were said when the priestess was in her right place to give out the word of Apollo. So Alexander used these words to the full extent of their power.

There is not much told of the third Sacred War; for Delphi's power was then at its lowest ebb. Thucydides speaks of it in these words: (43) "After this the Lacedaemonians waged what is called the Sacred War and, having taken possession of the temple, gave it up to the Delphians, and the Athenians again afterwards, on their retiring marched and took possession of it and restored it to the Phocians".

Let us now look at the status of Delphi during two of Greece's greatest wars, the Persian and Peloponnesian. At this time Delphi seems to have been cowardly enough to have counselled inactivity. We see this plainly in the case of the Persian war from the account of Herodotus: (44) "The Cnidians, who occupied most of their region of country, were bounded on the North by the Ceramic Gulf, and on the south by the channel toward the islands of Symé and Rhodes. While Harpagus was engaged in the conquest of Ionia, the Cnidians, wishing to make their country an island, attempted to cut through this narrow neck of land, which was no more than five furlongs across from sea to sea". They began the work but were stopped because of the number of wounds the workmen received. So they sent up to Delphi for advice and got the following answer: 'Fence not the isthmus off, nor dig it through - Zeus would have made an island, had he willed'.

So the Cnidians ceased digging, and when Harpagus advanced with his army, they gave themselves up to him without striking a blow".

To the Athenians who sent up to Delphi to see what they should

43. III 112. (Loeb).  
44. I 174 (R.A. Willinson).

do in regard to the Persian Wars this was the answer given: (45)

"Hated of all thy neighbors, beloved of the blessed Immortals,  
Sit thou still, with thy lance drawn inward, patiently watching;  
Warily guard thine head, and the head will take care of the body".

Another time this advice was given to Athens: (46)

"Wretches, why sit ye here? Fly, fly to the ends of creation,  
Quitting your homes, and the crags which your city crowns with her  
circlet.

Neither the head nor the body is firm in its place, nor at bottom  
Firm the feet, nor the hands; nor resteth the middle uninjured.  
All-all ruined and lost. Since fire and impetuous Ares,  
Speeding along in a Syrian chariot, hastes to destroy her.  
Not alone thou shalt suffer; full many the tower he will level,  
Many the shrines of the gods he will give to a fiery destruction.  
Even now they stand with dark sweat horribly dripping.  
Trembling and quaking for fear; and lo! from the high roofs trickleth  
Black blood, sign prophetic of hard distresses impending.  
Get ye away from the temple; and brood on the ills that await ye!"

Such a prophecy was enough to quench the spirits of the stoutest  
hearted. Yet "Timon, the son of Androbulus, one of the men of most  
mark among the Delphians" advised them to enter the temple with an  
olive branch and as suppliants consult the oracle again. This time  
the Pythian priestess made answer:

"Pallas has not been able to soften the lord of Olympus,  
Though she has often prayed him, and urged him with excellent counsel.

45. Hdt. VII 148.

46. Hdt. VII 140-144.

Yet I address thee in words than adamant firmer.

When the foe shall have taken whatever the limits of Cecrops,

Holds within it, and all which divine Cithaeron shelters,

Then far-seeing Zeus grants this to the prayers of Athene;

Safe shall the wooden wall continue for thee and thy children.

Wait not the tramps of the horse, nor the footman mightily moving.

Over the land, but turn your back to the foe and retire ye.

Yet shall a day arrive when ye shall meet him in battle.

Holy Salamis, thou shalt destroy the offspring of women,

When men scatter the seed, or when they gather the harvest."

Many interpretations were given but the one finally accepted was that of Themistocles, son of Neocles, who decided that the oracle threatened the enemy as much as the Athenians and that the wooden walls meant the ships. The real interpreters, those who were undoubtedly trained to interpret the oracle, advised against a sea-fight. "All the Athenians could do", they said, "was, without lifting a hand in their defence, to quit Attica and make a settlement in some other country".

In the Peloponnesian war (47) we see Delphi consulted and giving answers but with no real authority over those concerned. The Spartans themselves decided that the Athenians were guilty and had broken the treaty. Yet they sent up to Delphi and got this answer to their questions: "If they carried on the war with all their might, they would gain the victory; and Apollo himself would take part with them, whether called upon or not."

Thucydides (48) also gives us an example of Delphi telling another city to give up. The Epidamnians, who had become great and

47. Thuc. I 118.

48. I-24, 25.

populous, were greatly harassed by their barbarian neighbors so they sent to Corcyra, their mother city, but were refused aid. They then sent to Delphi and asked if they should give up to Corinth as their founder. Apollo counselled it so the Epidamnians came and offered themselves to Corinth and were accepted.

The further favor given to the Spartans is shown by Thucydides when he says: (49) "For they charged him with having, in concert with Aristocles, his brother, prevailed on the prophetess at Delphi to such Lacedaemonians as went, during a long period to consult the oracle."

This passage reveals to us that Delphi had fallen far below its early standards when Apollo had promised to give "fair counsel that never faileth".

## II.

## THE INFLUENCE OF DELPHI ON THE GREEK WORLD.

Delphi's greatest influence was two-fold - political and religious. Practically the greatest influence Delphi had was on colonization. Few, if any, colonies were sent out without the blessing of the god who dwelt on the slopes of Parnassus.

Thucydides (1) tells us that when the Spartans made ready to found the colony of Heraclea in Trachiniae they consulted Delphi and upon the advice of the god they chose their people and sent them forth.

Herodotus gives us numberless examples of the Greeks founding colonies by Delphi's orders.

Thera (2) sent Grinus to Delphi to offer a hecatomb for the city. He was accompanied by Battus, son of Polymnestus. The priestess of Apollo told Grinus he should "found a city in Libya". Because of his age he rejected the oracle and handed it over to Battus, who was a young man.

Upon their return to Thera no attention was paid to the oracle. A drought came upon the island and lasted seven years, whereupon Delphi was consulted. The priestess reminded them that they had never "founded a city in Libya". Then the Therans tried to find out where Libya was, and the result of the search was a small settlement on the island Platea. This settlement was reported to the mother city, who decided to send out men from each of the seven districts.

1. V 16.

2. Hdt. I V 150 ff.



Later Battus went up to Delphi to consult the oracle about his voice for he stuttered and had a lisp. Instead of answering his question the Pythian priestess said: (3)

"Battus, thou camest to ask of thy voice, but Phoebus Apollo Bids thee establish a city in Libya, abounding in fleeces."

After his return to Thera misfortunes came upon the people, in consequence of which they sent to consult the oracle, which again ordered them to make a settlement at Cyrene in Libya. If they would do this, the priestess promised them better things. When they returned they were not allowed to land at Thera; so they settled on an island near the Libyan coast. Here they remained for two years harassed by the same misfortunes as before; so now in a body they betook themselves to Delphi. To their questions they received this answer: (4) "Knowest thou <sup>better</sup> than I, fair Libya abounding in fleeces?

Better the stranger than he who has trod it? Oh! clever Theraeans!"

After this response of the oracle Battus and his companions sailed away and made a settlement on the mainland just opposite Platea at a place called Aziris. After six years there the Libyans persuaded them to move to a more fertile region. Here they dwelt many years and during the reign of Battus' grandson Delphi caused many new Greeks to come to the colony. The Cyrenasans had invited any or all to share their lands and Delphi gave out this word: (5)

"He that is backward to share in the pleasant Libyan acres, Sooner or later, I warn him, will feel regret at his folly".

The founding of Cyrene is told by Pindar (6).

The unwillingness of Battus to comply with the oracle is also mentioned by Plutarch. (7)

3. Hdt. IV 155.

4. Hdt. IV 157.

5. Hdt. IV 159.

6. Pyth. IV. (E. Myers).

7. " Or. XVII.

Another colony founded by the direction of Delphi was Alalia.(8) The Phocaeans "made up their minds to sail to Cynus (Coreyra), where, twenty years before, following the direction of an oracle, they had founded a city, which was called Alalia".

An example of disaster attending a settlement not authorised by Delphi is given by Herodotus (9). Dorieus was disappointed because he was not chosen for king by the Spartans and asked for followers to found a colony.

"However, he neither took counsel of the oracle at Delphi as to the place whereto he should go, nor observed any of the customary usages; but left Sparta in dudgeon, and sailed away to Libya, under the guidance of certain men who were Theraeans. These men brought him to Cinyps, where he colonized a spot, which has not its equal in all Libya, on the banks of a river, but from this place he was driven in the third year by the Macians, the Libyans, and the Carthaginians."

Later Doreus (10) saw the error of his ways and went to Delphi to see if he would be able to found the city of Heraclea in Sicily. He received a favorable answer, returned to Libya, gathered up his followers, and sailed on his way along the shores of Italy.

Cicero too (11) shows how common it was for the Greeks to consult Delphi for colonization. "Quam vero Graecia coloniam misit in Aeoliam, Ioaniam, Asiam, Siciliam, Italiam sine Pythio and Dodonaeo ant Hammonis oraculo?"

Pausanias (12) says: "The Lacedaemonians colonized Tarentum

- 8. Hdt. I 165.
- 9. Hdt. V 42.
- 10. Hdt. V 43.
- 11. De Div. I 3.
- 12. X 10.

under the Spartan Phalanthus, who, when he started on this colony, was told by an oracle from Delphi that he was to acquire land and found a city when he saw rain from a clear sky".

Another instance is also given (13) about the people of Asine who dwelt near Parnassus. They were called Dryopes from their founder and once were beaten and led as captives to Delphi by Heracles. "And being brought back to the Peloponnese by the oracle which the god gave Heracles, they first occupied Asine near Hermion, and having been expelled thence by the Argives, they dwelt in Messenia by permission of the Lacedaemonians, and when in progress of time the Messenians were restored they were not turned out by them from Asine."

Also "when (14) Thersander, the son of Polynices took Thebes, several captives, and among others Manto, were taken to Apollo at Delphi; and when the god sent them to form a colony they crossed over into Asia Minor, and when they got to Claros the Cretans attacked them and took them before Rhacius. And he, understanding from Manto who they were and their errand, married Manto and made her companions fellow-settlers with him".

The oracle of Delphi was believed in and honored by many of the wisest men of the day. By it Socrates (15) was declared to be the wisest of all men. He believed so firmly in the oracle that he even advised Xenophon (16) to consult Delphi about joining Cyrus' expedition. Xenophon asked Apollo to what gods he should sacrifice and pray in order to go and return home in safety. He reported the answer to Socrates, who reproved him for the way he

13. Paus. IV 34.

14. Paus. VII 3.

15. Plato - The apology page 81 (Loeb).

16. Xen. Anab. III 1 (Loeb).

stated the question but said: "However, since you did put the question in that way, you must do all that the god directed".

Plato, too, held Delphi in honor: (17) "For the Delphian Apollo", he said, "there will remain the most important, the noblest, the chiefest acts of legislation = the erection of temples and the appointment of sacrifices and other ceremonies connected with gods and demigods and heroes = For it is this god, I presume, expounding from his seat on the Omphalus at the earth's center, who is the national expositor to all men on such matters".

Plutarch, who held the priesthood at Delphi and passed his old age there says (18) that the oracle has brought much good to the Greeks in wars, in the founding of cities, in times of pestilence and in seasons of unfruitfulness. He also says (19) that the speech of the Pythia has never been false or deceitful up to his day.

"Dio Chrysostom, the great rhetorician and sophist, wandered as a beggar through many lands in obedience to the Delphic oracle."

"Do as thou dost", said Apollo to him, (21) "until thou reach the end of the earth."

Yet in those days just as now all the great thinkers did not agree and we find some who even scoff at Delphi. Euripides has Ion say: (22)

OR. "Is the God true? or doth his oracle lie?"

Ion. "Mother, my soul it troubleth: well it may".

Yet we would expect Ion, brought up in the temple and a devout

17. Plat. Rep. 427 B.C. (Dempsey).
18. De Def. Or. XVI
19. Plut. De Pyth. Or. XXIX.
20. Dempsey "The Delphic Oracle" 64.
21. Dio Chry. p. 221. (Dempsey).
22. Ion 1537 ff. (Loeb).

worshiper of Apollo to feel no doubt in any oracular utterance. Also when Xuthus comes out of the temple after receiving his oracle and attempts to embrace Ion, Ion even after hearing the oracle seems rather doubtful and says:

"Heardst riddles and misreadest".

Further examples of famous skeptics are given.

"Eusebrius (23) tells us that 'all the followers of Aristotle, the Cynics, and Epicureans, and all those who were of similar views, laughed to scorn the oracles that were noised abroad among the Greeks themselves."

Aristotle narrates (24) how Hegesippus consulted the oracle of Zeus at Olympia, and then went to Delphi and asked Apollo "Whether the son was of the same opinion as the father".

"All are familiar with the scoffing allusions of the skeptic Lucian, who depicts in amusing fashion the god's lack of poetic skill in the composition of his hexameters, and the annoyance to which he must be subjected when he has to hurry from the most distant parts to his oracular post, whenever the Pythia elects to chew laurel-leaf and drink of the sacred spring". (25)

Cicero says(26): "Atque haec, ut ego arbitror, veteres rerum magis eventis moniti quam ratione docti; probaverunt. Philosophorum vero exquisita quaedam argumenta cur esset vera divinatione collecta sunt; e quibus, ut de antiquissimis loquar, Colophonius Xenophanes unus, qui deos esse diceret, divinationem funditus sustulit; reliqui vero omnes praeter Epicurum balbutientem de natura deorum divinationem probaverunt, sed non uno modo.

23. Pr. Eu. IV 3, 14 (Dempsey).

24. Rhet. 139 8 b (Dempsey).

25. Jup. Trag. VI; Bis. Acc. I (Dempsey).

26. De Div. I 3-5.

Nam cum Socratis omnesque Socratici Zenoque et ii qui ab eo essent profecti manerent in antiquorum philosophorum sententia veteris Academia et Peripateticis consentientibus, eumque huic rei magnam auctoritatem Pythagoras iam ante tribuisset, quietiam ipse augur vellet esse, plurimisque locis gravis auctor Democritus praesensionem rerum futurarum comprobaret, Dicaearchus Peripateticus cetera divinationis genera sustulit, somniorum et furoris reliquit, Cratippusque familiaris noster, quem ego parem summis Peripateticis indico, isdem rebus fidem tribuit, reliqua divinationis generalia reiecit".

An organization which also had great influence over the Greek world was the Amphictyonic League. It would be too long a story here to go into the details of the history of this league but it would be well to look at its powers.

Plutarch (27) says: "At the Amphictyonic or Holy Alliance conventions, the Lacedaemonians introduced motions that they exclude from the Alliance all cities that had not taken part in fighting against the Medes. So Themistocles, fearing lest, if they should succeed in excluding the Thessalians and Argives and Thebans too from the conventions, the Spartans would control the votes completely and carry through their own wishes, spoke in behalf of the protesting cities and changed the sentiments of the delegates by showing that only thirty one cities had taken part in the war, and that the most of these were altogether small".

That the Amphictyonic League had charge of the temple is clear from Herodotus: (28) "It happened in the reign of Amasis that the temple of Delphi had been accidentally burnt, and the Amphictyons

27. Them. 20. (Loeb).

28. II 180.

had contracted to have it rebuilt for three hundred talents, of which sum one fourth was to be furnished by the Delphians."

Pausanias says: (29) "And the temple which still exists was built by the Amphictyones out of the sacred money".

The power of this league is still more evident from Aeschines:(30)

"They would destroy no city of the Amphictyones nor cut off their streams in war or peace, and if any should do so, they would march against him and destroy his cities; and should any pillage the property of the god, or be privy to or plan anything against what was in his temple at Delphi, they would take vengeance on him with hand and foot and voice and all their might". That they carried out this decree against some offenders we have seen in the case of the Sacred Wars.

The Amphictyones also gave out the prizes in the games. Pindar sings: (31) "To him Apollo and Pytho have given glory in the chariot-race at the hands of the Amphictyones.

Farnell has well summed up the influence and importance of the Amphictyony in the following words: (32)

"Limited, however, as their functions and power may have been, and contemptuously as Demosthenes might speak of the 'Delphic shadow', this Amphictyony remained the only institution in Greece that represented the highest politico-religious idea, the idea of Hellenic brotherhood; and it is hence that we may explain Philip's action in regard to it, and the carefulness of Augustus to secure for his new city Nikopolis a prominent position in this effete confederacy".

29. X 5.

30. De P.L. 115 (Farnell).

31. Pyth. IV 66.

32. Cults of the Gr. States I V 185.

One progressive influence of the Delphic Oracle was its regulation of slavery and enfranchisement. Apollo himself had slaves and could buy them from their masters, and yet it was through his intermediation that slaves could free themselves. Many of the inscriptions at Delphi are records of the manumission of slaves. Apollo was regarded as the witness and guarantor of good faith and might exact a fine if the master ever thereafter dared to lay claim to the former slave. The slave really paid for his own freedom with money he himself had saved. So long as the priests at Delphi were entrusted with the business of purchasing the slave's freedom for him as a religious act, they were not known to abuse their power. (32)

Among the religious powers of Delphi over the Greek world one of the most commonly exercised was that of establishing hero worship. We have countless examples of this recorded in literature. Most of these cults were established in order to ward off some pestilence or disaster. Those who consulted Delphi in regard to these things were generally told to bring home the bones of some hero and bury them and honor them. The following are a few examples of this custom.

Pausanias (33) tells us that at Orchomenus a pestilence came that destroyed men and cattle, so "they sent messengers to Delphi, and the Pythian Priestess bade them bring the bones of Hesiod from Naupactus to Orchomenus, and that would be a remedy".

"As to Actaeon there is a tradition at Orchomenus, that a spectre which sat on a stone injured their land. And when they

32. Farnell, *Cults of Gr. States* IV 177-179.

33. IX 38.



consulted the oracle at Delphi, the god bade them bury in the ground whatever remains they could find of Actaeon: he also bade them to make a brazen copy of the spectre and fasten it with iron to the stone. This I have myself seen, and they annually offer funeral rites to Actaeon".

Plutarch says: (34) "And after the Median wars, in the archonship of Phaedo, when the Athenians were consulting the oracle at Delphi, they were told by the Pythian priestess to take up the bones of Theseus, give them honorable burial at Athens, and guard them there".

We ourselves know that there was a Theseum at Athens.

Lycurgus, while he was yet alive, was promised worship by Delphi. (35)

"Oh! thou great Lycurgus, thou com'st to my beautiful dwelling;

Dear to Zeus and all who sit in the halls of Olympus,  
Whether to hail thee a god I know not, or only a mortal,  
But my hope is strong that a god thou wilt prove, Lycurgus".

In the war between Tegeans and Lacedamonians the latter sent to Delphi to see what they could do to win. (36) "The answer of the Pythoness was that before they could prevail, they must remove to Sparta the bones of Orestes, the son of Agamemnon".

In Mantinia, too, the people were commanded to do honor to a hero. Pausanias (37) in describing what he saw there says:  
"And near the altar of Hera is the tomb of Arcas, the son of Callisto: his remains were brought from Maenalus in accordance

34. Thes. 36 (Loeb).  
35. Hdt. I 65.  
36. Hdt. I 67.  
37. VIII 9.

with the oracle at Delphi:

"Cold is Maenalia, where Arcas lies  
 Who gave his name to all Arcadians  
 Go there, I bid you, and with kindly mind  
 Remove his body to the pleasant city,  
 Where three and four and even five roads meet,  
 There build a shrine and sacrifice to Arcas".

Pausanias (38) also says: "And the Achaeans buried the body of Tisamenus at Helice, but sometime afterwards the Lacedaemonians, in accordance with an oracle from Delphi, removed the remains to Sparta, and the tomb of Tisamenus is now where the the Lacedaemonians have their banquetings, at the place called Phiditia".

In the case of Cleomedes we see how low Delphi had sunk in using this power for those entirely unworthy and it is well indeed that Cleomedes was the last hero set up by Delphi. He had lost his mind over his defeat in a contest and wandered about the country doing many disastrous things. In one case he tore down part of a school house, thus causing the death of many innocent victims. Finally he disappeared and messengers were sent to Delphi to find out what had become of him. The priestess answered: (39) "Last of the heroes is Cleomedes of Astypalae, honor him with sacrifices as no longer a mortal".

More important than the establishing of hero-worship throughout Greece was Delphi's power of sanctioning the worship of other divinities. In one instance at least we find the worship of Demeter and Core spread through Delphi's power (40) A feud between

38. VII 1.

39. Paus. VI 9.

40. Hdt. V 82, 83.

the Aeginetans and Athenians was caused by lack of crops at Epidaurus and the people there sent envoys to Delphi to inquire into the cause. The oracle bade them set up images of Damia and Auxisia (Demeter and Core) and promised them better fortune when that should be done".

Even the worship of Zeus was strengthened by Delphi. After the battle of Platae the Athenians and Spartans were setting up trophies for themselves, and the Athenians consulted the oracle of Apollo concerning the sacrifices to be made: (41) "The Pythian god made answer that they were to erect an altar of Zeus the Deliverer, but were not to sacrifice upon it until they had extinguished the fire throughout the land, which he said had been polluted by the barbarians, and kindled it fresh and pure from the public hearth at Delphi".

This was all carried out according to the directions of the god.

Euchidas was dispatched to Delphi. "There he purified his person by sprinkling himself with the holy water, and crowned himself with laurel. Then he took from the altar the sacred fire and started to run back to Plataea. He reached the place before the sun had set, accomplishing thus one thousand furlongs in one and the same day. He greeted his countrymen, handed them the sacred fire, and straightway fell down, and after a little expired."

Delphi's influence on private morality was one of its best features. The power that can hold people to their better selves even though the tendency to go the other way is strong should receive the consideration due it. A case of this kind is seen in the story of Glaucus. (42) He was a Spartan who had a great reputation for honesty. To him came a certain Milesian who

41. Plut. Arist. 20. (Loeb).

42. Hdt. VI 86.

wished to entrust to him a part of his fortune. Years later the man's sons came to Glaucus and, producing their proofs, asked for the money. Glaucus pretended to be ignorant of the whole matter and put off settling it for several months. During that time he betook himself to Delphi to see if he might keep the money. The Pythian priestess gave him this answer:

"Best for the present it were, O Glaucus, to do as thou wishest, Swearing an oath to prevail, and so to make prize of the money. Swear then—death is the lot e'en of those who never swear falsely. Yet hath the oath-god a son, who is nameless, footless, and handless; Mighty in strength he approaches to vengeance, and whelms in destruction

All who belong to the race, or the house of the man who is perjured. But oath-keeping men leave behind them a flourishing offspring".

After this answer Glaucus repented of his intended sin "but the Pythoness replied that it was as bad to have tempted the god as it would have been to have done the deed. Glaucus, however, sent for the Milesian strangers and gave them back their money. And now I will tell you, Athenians, what my purpose has been in recounting to you this history. Glaucus at the present time has not a single descendant; nor is there any family known as his - root and branch have been removed from Sparta. It is a good thing, therefore, when a pledge has been left with one, not even in thought to doubt about restoring it."

This story of Glaucus reminds us of the early days of Delphi when purity of spirit was regarded more than outward signs. That spiritual purity was required is seen from two epigrams of the Anthology. The one reads: (43)

43. Anth. Pal. 14. 71. 74. (Loeb).

"Oh stranger, if holy of soul, enter the shrine of the holy god, having but touched the lustral water; for lustration is an easy matter for the good, but an evil man cannot be cleansed with all the streams of ocean".

The other says: "The temples of the gods are open to all good men, nor is there any need of purification: no stain can ever cleave to virtue. But depart whosoever is baneful at heart, for thy soul will never be washed by the cleaning of the body".

So after looking at the effects, good and bad, of Delphi on the Greek world no better summary than Farnell's can be found: (44) "The oracle allows us to sit down to its credit much public benefit, with but little harmfulness on the other side of the account. In the general field of Greek history, its most beneficent achievements were in the sphere of colonization; it may also have aided salutary legislation here and there, and occasionally stimulated a certain public conscience against tyranny and oppression. Its morals appear to have been sound, and though complaints of its partiality were sometimes heard, there were no authentic charges of gross corruption. It was not qualified to play a daring part in the national crises not to originate great moral reforms, but it seems to have endeavored to keep pace with such advance in moral idea as was initiated by the leading secular teachers of Greece. Finally, it is probable that at times it gave valuable help to the troubled conscience of the individual; and yet Greece was spared the evils of the confessional; for the consultants came from a distance, and the Delphic priest could gain no definite hold over them, nor was sacerdotalism a besetting vice of the old Hellenic religion".

## III.

## // VISITS OF ROMANS TO DELPHI.

As we know that the Romans freely used the art and literature of the Greeks, so we may be assured that they did not fail to become acquainted with the most famous oracle. Probably due to the expense and the long trip involved the oracle at Delphi was not consulted by Romans so often as one might imagine. The most frequent of the Roman visitors were kings or emperors.

The visits to Delphi by the Romans go back indeed to very early times. One of the early visits is recorded by Livy: (1) Tarquin was disturbed by some strange sights: "itaque cum ad publica prodigia Etrusci tantum, vates adhiberentur, hoc velut domestico exterritus visu Delphos ad maxime inditum in terris oraculum mittere statuit. Neque responsa sortium ulli alii committere ausus, duos filios per ignotas ea tempestate terras, ignotiora maria, in Graeciam misit. Titus et Arruns profecti.

Comes iis additus L. Iunius Brutus, Tarquinia, sorore regis, natus, uivenis longe alius ingenio, quam cuius simulationem induerat. Is cum primores civitatis, in quibus fratrem suum ab avunculo interfectum audisset, neque in animo suo quicquam regi timendum neque in fortuna concupiscendum relinquere statuit contemptuque tutuo esse, ubi in iure parum praesidii esset. Ergo ex industria factus ad imitationem stultitiae cum se suaque praedae esse regi sineret, Bruti quoque haut abnuit cognomen, ut sub eius obtentu cognominis liberator ille populū Romani animus latens opperiretur tempora sua. Is tum ab Tarquiniis ductus Delphos, ludibrium

verius quam comes, aureum baculum inclusum corneo cavato ad id baculo tulisse donum Apollini dicitur, per ambages effigiem ingenii sui.

Quo postquam ventum est, perfectis patris mandatis, cupido incessit animos iuvenum sciscitandi, ad quem eorum regnum Romanum esset venturum. Ex infimo specu vocem reditam ferunt: 'imperium summum Romae habebit, qui vestrum primus, O iuvenes, osculum matris tulerit'. Tarquinius Sextus, qui Romae relictus fuerat, ut ignarus responsi expersque imperii esset, rem summa ope taceri iubent, ipsi inter se, uter prior, cum Roman redisset, matri oculum daret, sorti permittunt. Brutus alio ratus spectare Pythicam vocem, velut si prolapsus cecidisset, terram osculo contigit, scilicet quod ea communis mater omnium mort alium esset. Reditum inde Roman, ubi adversus Rutulos bellum summa vi parabatur".

Until the war with Hannibal we do not hear of the Romans consulting the oracle of Delphi again: (2) "The Senate sent Quintus Fabius (the same one who wrote a history of these events) to the temple of Delphi to seek an oracle concerning the present position of affairs".

More details of this event are given by Livy: (3) "Dum haec gerantur, Q. Fabius Pictor, legatus a Delphis Roman redit responsumque exscripto recitavit. Divi divaeque in eo erant, quibus quoque modo supplicareter. Tum 'si ita faxistis, Romani, vestrae res meliores facilioresque erunt, magisque ex sententia res publica vestra vobis procedet victoriaque duelli populi Romani erit. Pythio Apollini re publica vestra bene gesta servataque, lucris meritis donum mittote deque praeda, manu iis spoliisque

2. App. Rom. Hist. Han. 27 (Loeb).

3. XXIII 2.

honorem habetote, lasciviam a vobis prohibetote'. Haec ubi ex Graeco carmine interpreta recitavit, tum dixit rem divinam ture acvino fecisse, iussumque a templi antistite, sicut coronatus laurea corona et oraculum adisset et rem divinam fecisset, ita coronatum navem ascendere nec ante deponere eam quam Roman pervenisset; se quaecumque imperata sint cum summa religione ac diligentia exsecutum coronam Romae in aram Apollinis deposuisse senatus decrevit, ut eae res divinae supplicationesque primo quoque tempore cum cura fierent".

That Pythian Apollo sanctioned the worship of other divinities for the Romans as well as for the Greeks we have evidence in the introduction into Rome of the healing god Asclepius. The following story is told by Ovid(4):

"Dira lues quondam Latias vitiaverat auras,  
pallidaque exsanguisqualebant corpora morbo.  
Funeribus fessi postquam mortalia cernunt  
Temptamenta nihil, nihil artes posse medentum,  
auxilium caeleste petunt mediamque tenentis  
orbis humum Delphos adeunt, oracula Phoebi,  
utque salutifera miseris succurrere rebus  
sorte velit tantaeque urbis mala finiat, orant:  
et locus et laurus et, quas habet ipse pharetras,  
intremuere simul, cortinaque reddidit imo  
hanc adyto vocem pavefactaque pectoria movit  
"Quod petis hinc, priore loco, Romane, petisses,  
et pete nunc propiore loco: nec Apolline vobis,  
qui minuat luctus, opus est, sed Apolline nato.  
ite bonis avibus prolemque accersite nostram'  
iussa dei prudens postquam accepare senatus,  
quam colat, explorant, iuvenis Phoebius urbem,  
quique petant ventis Epidauria litora, mittunt;



The rest of the story tells how the Romans sought for Asclepius at Epidaurus, found him, and took him with them to dwell on the banks of the Tiber.

Another divinity whose worship was established in Rome through the influence of the Delphic oracle was the Magna Mater. The following account is given by Livy: (5) "Civitatem eo tempore recens religio invaserat, invento carmine in libris Sibyllinis propter crebrius eo anno de caelo lapidatum inspectis, quandoque hostis alienigena terrae Italiae bellum intulisset, eum pelli Italia vincique posse si Mater Idae a Pessinunte Roman advecta foret. Id carmen ab decemviris inventum eo magis patres movit, quod et legati, qui donum Delphos portaverant, referebant, et sacrificantibus ipsis Pythio Apollini laeta extas fuisse et responsum oraculo editum, maiorem multo victoriam quam cuius ex spoliis dona portarent adesses populo Romano".

Another early visitation to Delphi by the Romans was in 398 B.C. during the war with Veii. (6) The Romans were winning the war until the people of Veii fought with the aid of their allies. At this time the lake near the Alban Mount, "which was shut in by the surrounding hills and had no outlet, overflowed its banks during the siege of Veii to such an extent that it actually poured over the crests of the hills and went rushing down to the sea. The Romans, judging that something supernatural was surely signified by this event, sent to Delphi to consult the oracle about the matter. There was also among the inhabitants of Veii an Etruscan soothsayer whose prophecy coincided with that of the Pythia. Both declared that the city would be captured when the overflowing water should not fall into the sea, but should be used up elsewhere; and they also ordered sacrifices to be

5. XXVIII 11.

6. Dio's Rom. Hist. VI 189 (Loeb).

performed because of the occurrence. But the Pythian god did not specify to which of the divinities nor in what way these should be performed, while the Etruscan appeared to have the knowledge but would explain nothing." So through crafty means the latter was caught by the Romans and forced to give them the desired information. Thus Veii was captured by the Romans.

After the conquest of Veii the Romans followed the Greek's example of giving thanks to Apollo with material gifts. Diodorus tells us: (7) "The dictator then celebrated a triumph, while the Roman people collected tithes of the booty and dedicated a crater of massive gold to Apollo. But the envoys who were carrying the gifts fell into the hands of Liparean pirates, and all were captured and carried to Lipara. There Timasitheus, who at that time held the highest office at Lipara, informed of this, not only saved the envoys but restored their gift to them and secured for them a safe journey to Delphi. They dedicated their crater in the treasury of the Massilians, and then returned to Rome".

Another instance of Rome returning material thanks to Apollo at Delphi was after the war with Hasdrubal: (8)

"Ludi deinde Scipionis magna frequentia et favore spectantium celebrati. Legati Delphos ad donum ex praeda Hasdrubalis portandum missi M. Pomponius Matho ac Q. Cadius. Tulerunt coronam auream ducentum pondo et simulacra spoliiorum ex mille pondo argenti facta".

Of the Roman emperors who visited Delphi we have records of three, Augustus, Nero, and Hadrian. In the second part of this

7. XIV 93.

8. Livy XXVIII 45.

paper we have found that Augustus wished the favor of Delphi for his new city. That he himself visited Delphi we have no record in literature but we do find <sup>from</sup> Plutarch (9) that Livia, the wife of Augustus, dedicated the golden E in the temple of Apollo.

"For the golden E they mention as a dedication of Livia, wife of Augustus, the bronze one as a gift of the Athenians, a wooden one, the oldest and first of all, not dedicated by one but by all in common".

Augustus reorganized the Amphictyonic Council: (10) "And the emperor Augustus wished that the inhabitants of Nicopolis near Actium should belong to the Amphictyonic Council, so he joined the Magnetes and Malienses and Aenianes and Phthiotes to the Thessalians and transferred their votes, and those of the Dolopes who had died out, to the people of Nicopolis".

There are more references in literature to the visit of Nero to Delphi than of any other of the emperors. Plutarch (11) himself was at Delphi during Nero's visit and yet he does not tell us the purpose of it but merely mentions the fact that Nero came there.

That Nero questioned the great oracle we see from Seutonius: (12) "Ut vero consulto Delphis Apolline septua gensunum ac tertium annum cavendum sibi audivit, quasi eo demum obiturus, ac nihil coniectans de aetate Galbae, tanta fiducia non modo senectam sed etiam perpetuam singularemque concepit felicitatem, ut amissis naufragio pretiosissimis rebus non dubitaverit inter suos dicere pisces eas sibi relatueros".

9. De E Apud Delph. III.  
 10. Paus. X 83.  
 11. De E Apud Delph. I  
 12. Nero 40.

Yet not even the holiest spot on earth had power enough to stay Nero's impious hand when once his anger had been aroused. Pausanias tells us (13)

"And last of all it (the temple at Delphi) was fated to experience Nero's contempt of everything, for he carried off from Apollo five hundred bronze statues, some of gods, some of men".

Besides removing the five hundred bronze statues Nero is reported to have done much worse. (14) Because the Pythian priestess gave him a prophecy he did not like (that he was a second Orestes) he took the Cirrhaean plain and gave it to his soldiers. Moreover he destroyed the oracle and even blocked up the sacred chasm with corpses. Nothing more sacriligious than that could have been devised.

Hadrian in his many years of travel visited Delphi. While he was there he asked the oracle about Homer and received this reply:(15)

"Thou askest me that which is unknown to thee, the parentage and country of the immortal Siren. A certain Ithaca was the seat of Homer, Telemachus was his father, and his mother Nestor's daughter Polycaste. Her son was he, the most excellently wise of all mortals".

From Hadrian's visit to Delphi there is a new light thrown upon his character. His benevolent deeds toward all Greece are too well known to need repetition. Here we find him actually doing harm.

Frazer tells us: (16) "Hadrian is said to have choked up the

13. X 7.

14. Dio Cass. LXIII 14.

15. Gr. Anth. XIV 102 (Loeb)

16. Paus. V 256 (Ammianus Marcellinus XXII 12-8)

spring with a mass of rock, because he had learned his imperial destiny from its prophetic water and feared that others might consult it for a similar purpose; Julian intended to clear away the obstruction".

There were found in the excavations inscriptions that concern visits or dealings of other Roman emperors with Delphi. (17) "In an existing fragment we find that Vespasian managed certain questions of finance and territory. Titus conferred upon the city the honor of accepting the archonship in the year 79. Such are the precedents that Domitian found in his family; he himself had a religious spirit, respect for ancient cults, and passion for building".

Other famous Romans who are especially mentioned in regard to Delphi are Mark Antony, Sulla, and Cicero. Plutarch tells us of these(18): "Antony also had measurements taken of the temple of Pythian Apollo, with the purpose of completing it; indeed he promised as much to the senate".

Antony evidently wanted to repair the work done by a devastating hand and by the great earthquakes.

Sulla plundered Delphi mercilessly. (19) He sent word to Delphi that the treasures should be sent to him. He sent Caphis, "one of his friends, with the letter, bidding him receive each article by weight". Caphis went to Delphi but was very loath to carry out Sulla's orders. He even informed him that the god's lyre was heard in the inner sanctuary; yet even this did not stay the hostile hand and the treasures were taken away wherewith to pay the wages overdue his soldiers.

17. B.C. H XX 1896 715.

18. Ant. 23 (Loeb).

19. Plut. Sul. 12 (Loeb).

Cicero (20) is said to have consulted Delphi to see how he should become more famous. He received the answer that "he should make his own nature, not the opinion of the many, his guide in life".

And yet Cicero seems to scoff at Delphi. (21) He says: "Sed, quod caput est, cur isto modo iam oracula Delphis non eduntur, non modo nostra aetate, sed iam diu, iam ut nihil possit esse contemptius? hoc loco cum urguntur, evanuisse aiunt vetustate vim loci eius, unde anhelitus ille terrae fieret, quo Pythia mente incitata oracula ederet".

Cicero goes on to say that divine things should not disappear as merely earthly things do.

We have here seen Delphi rise; we have observed its great influence on Greece; and now it has fallen, and after a last spasmodic flicker its light dies out. During the time of Juvenal we are told: (22)

"Quoniam Delphis oracula cessant

Et genus humanum damnat caligo futuri".

To Julian is said to have been given the last oracle of the Delphic god: (23) "Tell the king," said the Pythia, "to earth is fallen the deft-wrought dwelling, no longer hath Phoebus shelter, or prophetic laurel, or speaking fountain; yea, the speaking water is quenched".

So in a final survey of the Romans at Delphi we see that in some respects the influence was the same on the Romans as the Greeks. Delphi took up its stand against the Greek tyrants and also against Tarquins and Brutus. In Rome also through the influence of Delphi

20. Plut. Cic. 5 (Loeb).

21. De Div. II 57.

22. Sat. VI V. 554.

23. Cedren. Hist. Comp. 1304 (Dempsey).

the worship of other divinities was established, Aesclepius and the Magna Mater.

One of the greatest differences, however, was in the attitude of the Greeks and Romans toward the oracle. To the Greeks it was a divine thing to be sought and revered; to the Romans it was to be sought in curiosity. To see this we need only to look at the two extremes of Roman emperors, Nero and Hadrian, one notorious for his destructive pursuits, one possessing a fair name because of his benefits heaped upon the countries he visited. Both of these men did one thing in common - stopped up the sacred chasm at Delphi. In Nero's removing five hundred bronze statues we may find some good in that he thus helped to scatter the ideals of Greek art in the Roman world.

## IV.

## DELPHI TODAY.

It would take too long to give in detail a description of the ruins of Delphi. The material here comes from three sources, lectures at Delphi by Dean Walter Miller in October 1925, and from Poulsen's Delphi and from Baedeker.

The excavations at Delphi were begun in 1892 by the French and have been under their control ever since. Several others were interested in the matter but it is not necessary to discuss their attempts. In order to excavate, however, it was necessary to move the village of Kastri which was built on the present site of the excavations. It was moved about half a mile west. From it one can see Crisa, a little village known from the first Sacred War; Itea, the seaport of Delphi, and the Corinthian gulf. One of the most impressive sights is the valley of the Pleistus, now green with one of the largest and richest olive groves in the world.

Delphi is situated on the slopes of Parnassus and is laid off in terraces: (1) "The Temenos is surrounded by walls on all sides and covers twenty thousand square meters. It is shaped like an irregular trapezium, the east side is longest, 190 meters, the south side shortest 125 meters. The Peribolus wall differs in construction, some irregularly polygonal, some of equal sized well formed blocks. This is pierced by several entrances on each side. The chief entrance is at the south east and faces a large paved area bounded on the north east by a colonnade".

As the ancients went down to the Castalian spring to drink



and be purified before they entered the sacred precinct, so now many who are conducted to Delphi are taken there first. To reach it one follows the modern road until he passes the ruins of the Temenos. Here he sees two huge cliffs, forming a deep gorge, from which issues a copious stream of water. These cliffs are the famous "shining rocks" of antiquity. The stone basin for water is still visible. Opposite stand two large plane trees said to have been planted by Agamemnon.

Returning to the main entrance, we follow the Sacred Way, which winds up the hill in the shape of an inverted S. It is paved with squared blocks of smooth stone which was laid in the time of the Romans. (2) Along each side of the Sacred Way up to the great temple of Apollo we find bases and remains of votive offerings. Some of the more important of these are; on the left Phallus of Croton; the Marathon monument - Miltiades crowned by the gods, - the bronze Trozan horse; the Epigoni; the heroes of Argos; the monument of the Tarentines consisting of a bronze group of captive women and horses; on the right stood the Corcyraea Bull, the Arcadian heroes, Lysander among the gods, votive offerings for Leuctra, and one for Mantinea. These last two were groups of heroes.

One pleasing little touch along the way is the marble exedra on either side, marble semicircular seats placed there for weary pilgrims to rest as they toiled up the rather steep way.

Besides votive offerings there are remains of many treasuries at Delphi. These were small temple like buildings to contain the offerings of certain tribes and to keep the paraphernalia for the games. They would save the tribe the expense of conveying all this to Delphi each year. Some of the most important treasuries

are those of Sicyon, Siphnos, Cnidos, and Athens. The Athenian is the only treasury reconstructed.

The treasury of Sicyon is next to the dedication of the Tarentines. Nothing but the foundation is left but it is very interesting. It is made of poros limestone and the lower parts of the foundation are clearly remains of an older circular building. Several metopes of the treasury have been found and set up in the museum. The four best represent Europa on the Bull, the Calydonian Boar, Orpheus on Board the Argo, the Dioscuri, and Apharidae with the plundered cattle.

Another treasury of which we have parts is the Siphnians. It lies next to the treasury of the Sicyonians. Its entrance is from the west. It was destroyed down to the foundation, but enough is left for its reconstruction. It, too, was a temple in antis with a cornice decorated with lion's heads and instead of columns there were two female figures on high plinths. Part of the pedimental group of this treasury was also found, representing the fight of Apollo and Heracles for the sacred tripod.

Just at the first turn of the Sacred Way is the reconstructed treasury of the Athenians. It is of Parian marble in Doric style and its entrance is on the east. This treasury contained thirty metopes, six on each narrow and nine on each long side. The subjects represented on them may be divided into three groups, the adventures of Heracles, the exploits of Theseus, and battles with the Amazons. The original metopes are in the museum. Even though art critics say that the Athenian Treasury is lacking in some respects to us it seems quite splendid.

At Delphi many of the votive offerings were in the form of columns with tripods on the top. One such was the column of the

Dancing Maidens. This is made in the shape of an Acanthus and at the top are three graceful petals, each one holding a maiden lightly poised. Above them was placed a tripod. Another column was the column of the Naxians. It was a tall one on whose top rested a great sphinx. Parts of both column and sphinx were found. This column was erected near the long stoa of the Athenians.

Next to the Athenian Treasury lies the foundation of the Buleuterium or Senate house. Back of this extends the long polygonal wall covered with inscriptions of the manumission of slaves. This wall performed a double purpose, it is the back of the stoa of the Athenians and is also a retaining wall for the temple terrace.

Next to the column of the Naxians is a large rock seeming about to fall. This is the rock of the Sibyl where Ge, the first holder of the oracle, gave out her prophecies.

As we turn the second bend in the Sacred Way we find on the right a large round base with two steps. On this stood a great tripod and it was the votive offering of the Greek states commemorating the battle of Plataea.

To the left and just at the corner of the great temple of Apollo we find reerected the great altar built by the Chians. This is made sure for us by an inscription on it. It is made of squared blocks of stone. Here we turn to the west and go up a ramp which leads to the threshold of the once splendid temple of Apollo. All that now remains are the floor, made of huge blocks of grayish limestone, and scattered pieces of huge columns. The north side is much shaken out of place by earthquakes. The history of this temple is most interesting. Poulsen (3) gives us the history of the temple. First was a wooden hut of laurel from Tempe; then came a temple made

of bird's feathers and beeswax. Then was erected a temple of metal, then one of stone built by Trophonius and Agamedes and destroyed by fire in 548 B.C. In 547 to 526 B.C. Greece was trying to raise money to rebuild Apollo's temple. In 513 B.C. the Alcmaeonidae, who had been expelled from Athens, got the contract and, in order to secure a recall to Athens, they used their own wealth to beautify the temple. This temple was destroyed by an unknown catastrophe in 373 B.C.

Subscriptions were asked for but the work of rebuilding the temple went on slowly - due to the Sacred War; but in 305 B.C. the temple was considered completed. This is the temple whose ruins are visible to us to day.

Just south of the temple we find a little flight of stairs leading down to a dark passage which allows one to crawl through and come out in the back part of the temple. When one has gone into this, he may stand there aware that he is in the very center of earth's central shrine, the very oracle of Apollo. (4)

After we leave the temple we go up a few steps to a higher terrace and here we find the theater, one of the best preserved in all Greece. It lies in the northwest corner of the Temenos and commands a fine view of the whole extent of ruins as well as the lofty mountains opposite. It has a paved floor of limestone and is divided into seven wedges by eight stairways. The theater has one diazoma. The seating capacity is about six thousand.

East of the steps leading up to the theater is a large square chamber in which was set up the famous lion hunt of Alexander, a group made by Lysippus.

4. Dean Walter Miller - lecture at Delphi.

On the terrace above the theater is the great stadium of Delphi with a seating capacity of seven thousand. It is in better preservation than any other stadium in all Greece. The seats on the south side were built against a retaining wall and have been swept away. Those on the north were built into the natural mountain and are almost intact as are those at the circular end. The top row of seats has a back and one section of the front middle row has one. At the entrance to the stadium was a gateway of rounded arches. Four huge pillars of this are still to be seen. Before these is a grooved stone sill, with spaces separated by holes for wooden posts. This was used as a starter for the athletes and the division for each person was marked off by these posts. The length of the race course was five hundred eighty four feet and its breadth eighty to ninety.

Near the northeast of the Temenos are some remains of the Lesche or club house of the Cnidians. (5) Nothing but foundations and a few upright blocks remain. The walls of the foundation are of poros limestone. The building was a rectangular hall. On the south was a little platform to which ran a stairway from the south. In the east side are several blocks of marble in which to fasten wooden pillars. Here were found traces of paintings by Polygnotus and even yet one may see remnants of color.

Below the modern road and opposite the Castalian spring we may descend to a lower Temenos. This, too, consists of several terraces. The excavations here are neither so clear nor so extensive as in the upper Temenos. Here we find the Gymnasium and Palaestra (6).

5. Poul. Delph. 241.  
6. Poul. Delph. 50.

"Here was a Xystos, an open airspace surrounded by colonnades, and a Paradromis, a walk with plane trees for physical exercise in the hot season. This is the great circular swimming basin one meter deep, which was in the open air, and in Roman times had added to it a room for warm baths. "There are remains of long colonnades used for exercise and also for lectures.

On the other terrace we find traces of four temples, one dedicated to Athena Pronaia, one to Athena Ergane, and a small one of no importance. In addition we find a large circular building or tholos. Its use is not known. Part of its columns are still standing.

Beyond these terraces to the east we find remains of the Necropolis or cemetery. Many of the monuments are from the sixth century. This cemetery is valuable to show us the limits of ancient Delphi, for it is a well known fact that no graves ever were dug inside the walls of an ancient city.

Near the modern road we find a large rock with the semblance of a door carved on it, which is known as the gate to Hades.

The spirit of Delphi is well presented in a stanza of Byron's (7)

"Slow sinks, more lovely ere his race be run,  
 Along Morea's hills the setting sun;  
 Not, as in northern climes obscurely bright,  
 But one unclouded blaze of living light!  
 O'er the hushed deep the yellow beam he throws,  
 Gilds the green wave, that trembles as it glows.  
 On old Aegina's rock and Idra's isle,  
 The god of gladness sheds his parting smile:

7. To Athens (The Eng. in Greece 25).

O'er his own regions lingering, loves to shine,  
Though there his altars are no more divine.  
Descending fast the mountain shadows kiss  
Thy glorious gulf, unconquer'd Salamis!  
Their azure arches through the long expanse  
More deeply purpled meet his mellowing glance,  
And tenderest tints, along their summits driven,  
Mark his gay course, and own the hues of heaven:  
Till, darkly shaded from the land and deep,  
Behind his Delphian cliffs he sinks to sleep".