CHAPTER XIII

ATHENS: FROM MONARCHY TO DEMOCRACY

From the Mycenaean Age to about 500 B.C

I. The Kingship

147. Attica and Athens. — In our study of the geography of Greece we noticed that Attica was a peninsula with an unusually long coast-line, that the country was made up of mountains and little plains, and that the soil was stony and unproductive.[1] All these features had a bearing on the history of the country. In the midst of the largest plain, about four miles from the coast, rises a group of hills. On and about the central height, known as the Acropolis [2] ("citadel"), stood the city of Athens.

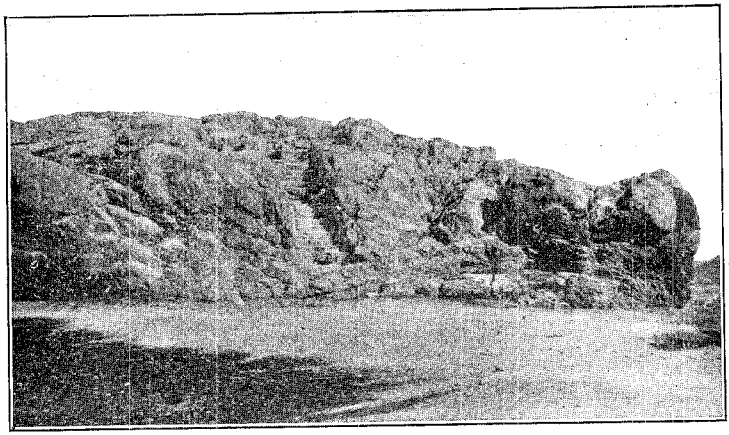
In the Mycenaean and epic ages — about 1500–700 B.C. — Athens was but one of several independent cities in Attica; but before the opening of the seventh century the whole country had been brought within the limits of the city-state of Athens.

We are better acquainted with the early history of Athens than of any other Greek state, and can therefore trace its progress with greater certainty. This is one reason why we study the early period. We are led to this subject, too, by the fame which the state afterward won. During the period covered by this chapter Athens lagged behind Miletus [3] and some other Greek cities in civilization. Soon afterward she outstripped all the rest, and became the foremost city of the world in intelligence, in literature, and in art. Hellenic history centres, therefore, in Athens.

148. The Kingship (to about 750 B.C.). — The chapter on the myths gave an account of Theseus and other legendary kings.[4] It remains to speak of the closing years of the regal period. The last royal family, the Me-don'ti-dae, claimed descent from King Co'drus

[1] § 76. [2] § 111, n. 2. [3] §§ 93, 120 [4] § 111.

("The Glorious"). There is a myth that in his reign the Dorians invaded Attica. Word came to him from Apollo at Delphi that the army whose leader should be killed by the enemy would be victorious in the war. Thereupon he dressed himself like a peasant, and going into the Dorian camp, intentionally provoked a quarrel and was slain without being known, thus bringing eternal glory to himself and victory to his country. The Athenians, from gratitude for his heroic self-sacrifice, decreed that his son Me'don should reign in his stead; and after Medon, his descendants, the Medon-



AREOPAGUS
South side near east end
(From a photograph)

tidae, were kings of Athens for many generations. Although Codrus is mythical, no one doubts the existence of the family.

In this period the government was carried on by the king, assisted and limited by a council of nobles and by an assembly of freemen.

In later history the council, in the exercise of some of its duties,[1] sat on the A-re-op'a-gus, a hill just west of the Acropolis. From the place of meeting it came to be named the Council of the Areopagus. This council, like those of other Hellenic states, desired to increase its own power at the expense of the king. About 750 B.C.

[1] § 154.

accordingly, it cut down his office to a period of ten years, whereas his rule had been lifelong. While the government remained for a time a kingship in name, this change made it in fact an aristocracy.[1]

II. The Aristocracy and the Timocracy

About 750–594 B.C.

149. The Aristocracy (about 750–650 B.C.). — One power after another was taken from the king and bestowed upon new officers until (about 650 B.C.) there were nine principal magistrates called archons. They were (1) the Archon, who was the chief executive magistrate,[2] (2) the pol'em-arch, who commanded the army, (3) the king, now a mere priest and judge, and (4) the six thesmoth'e-tae ("legislators") who recorded the laws, had charge of public documents, and acted as judges in certain civil cases. For a time these officers were selected from the nobles by the Council of the Areopagus.

The Council of the Areopagus, like the council in other cities,[3] was originally made up of great nobles. The members held their places for life. All the nobles called themselves Eu'pa-trids (Greek Eu-pat'ri-dae, "sons of noble fathers"). They alone had the means of equipping themselves with heavy armor. They no longer used chariots,[4] but rode to war on horseback. Looking down with contempt on the ill-armed commoners, these lordly knights allowed them no share in the government. The assembly of freemen fell into disuse. The nobles in council cared only for the interests of the richer class, supervised the magistrates, and punished immoral as well as lawless citizens. During this period they were the supreme power in the state.

150. The Timocracy (about 650–594 B.C.): **the Phalanx.** — Naturally the common people chafed under this oppressive rule, and strove for a share in the government. They were especially favored by the circumstance that Athens was continually at war with her neighbors. To save their country from conquest the

[1] For an explanation of aristocracy see §§ 103, 126.

[2] In this book, when the word archon applies to the head of the board of "nine archons," it will be capitalized.

[3] § 121.

[4] § 90.

nobles were forced to adopt the phalanx, which the other Hellenic states were borrowing from Sparta.[1] As the nobles were few, it was necessary to enlist in the phalanx all the commoners who could afford a complete equipment.[2] It chanced that the industries were cheapening armor, and that many common families were now well-to-do. A census was taken to determine who were wealthy enough to provide equipments. But no sooner had the wealthier commoners been admitted to the phalanx than they began to meet in assembly and to take part in the government. As political privileges had come to be based on the possession of property, the government was now a timocracy. This change took place about 650 B.C.

151. Constitution of the Timocracy. — Like other Ionic states, Attica was divided into four tribes.[3] Each of these districts was now subdivided into twelve townships,[4] making forty-eight in all. The object was to secure better government for all parts of the country and to make every man bear his share of the public burdens.

A Council of Four Hundred and One, newly formed, was filled by lot in such a way as to represent the four tribes and forty-eight townships. It prepared decrees for presentation to the assembly, and assisted the magistrates in their duties. Henceforth the Council of the Areopagus was made up of retired archons. Though limited by the other council and by the assembly, it was still the head of the state.

The assembly, now consisting of all who could equip themselves with full armor, began to meet regularly. It elected magistrates, and accepted or rejected decrees prepared for it by the Council of Four Hundred and One. At the same time, the wealthy, even though they might not be noble, became eligible to the offices.

With a view to taxation and military service, the citizens were divided into four classes according to the amount of produce which each citizen derived from his land. These census classes, however, did not become important till the following period.

[1] Compare the effect of the phalanx on the Lacedaemonian government; § 138 f.

[2] The equipment was about the same as the Spartan; § 138 and n. 1.

[3] The Geleontes, Aegicoreis, Argadeis, and Hopletes. They are called the Ionic tribes, as they are found in many Ionic states: cf. § 117.

[4] Called naucraries.

152. Outline of the Constitution[1]

I. **Territorial Divisions of Attica**
The four tribes and forty-eight townships (nau'cra-ries), for the local administration.

II. **The Four Census Classes**
For determining the public burdens and privileges of the citizens; not known in detail for this period; cf. 158, II.

III. **The Principal Magistrates**

1. The Archon
   - *a.* Chief executive.
   - *b.* Judge in cases affecting family rights.
   - *c.* Head of the board of "nine archons."
2. The King
   - *a.* A priest.
   - *b.* Judge in murder cases.
3. The Polemarch
   - *a.* Commander of the army.
   - *b.* Judge in cases affecting alien residents.
4. The six Thesmothetea, "legislators"
   - *a.* Keepers of the laws and public documents.
   - *b.* Judges in certain civil cases.

These nine magistrates sometimes acted as a board under the presidency of the Archon.

IV. **The Councils**
1. The Council (*Bou-lê*) of the Areopagus
   - *a.* Composed of retired archons; membership lifelong.
   - *b.* As highest authority in the state it supervised the magistrates and the conduct of the citizens.
   - *c.* As a court it tried wilful murder.
2. The Council (*Boulê*) of Four Hundred and One,
   Representing the tribes and townships,
   - *a.* Assisted the magistrates in the government.
   - *b.* Prepared decrees for presentation to the assembly.

V. **The Assembly** — *Ec-cle'si-a*
1. Composed of all those who could furnish a complete military equipment.
2. It elected magistrates and voted on questions brought before it by the Four Hundred and One.

VI. **Form of Government**
As political rights were graded according to property assessments, the government was a timocracy.

This is an outline of the Athenian constitution. Occasionally parts of it were changed and new features added, but it was never displaced by a new constitution.[2] In brief, Athens had but one constitution.

[1] The constitutional matter in fine print may be deferred for review, or omitted altogether at the discretion of the teacher.

[2] Two oligarchic usurpations, 411 and 404–403 B.C., need not be taken into account here.

153. The Conspiracy of Cylon (628 B.C.). — While these changes were taking place, the country was full of confusion and strife. The poor, who were for the most part in slavery to the rich, threatened to rebel against their lords; the shepherds and peasants of the Hills in north Attica hated the wealthier men of the Plain about Athens, just as the highland and lowland Scots used to hate each other; both Plain and Hills were hostile to the traders and fishermen of the Shore; and the contention between these local factions was continually breaking out into civil war. In addition to these troubles, the great families were actually fighting with each other for the possession of the offices, and as the son inherited the feuds of his father, no one could hope for an end of the turmoil. The state was in fact drifting into anarchy.

There was at this time in Attica an ambitious young man named Cylon, who belonged to one of the noblest and most powerful families of the state, and who had greatly distinguished himself by winning a victory in the Olympic games. Taking advantage of the weakness of his country, he planned to usurp the government. With the help of some mercenaries and of a band of friends from the nobility, he seized the Acropolis. But the country people in great numbers put on their armor and besieged him in the citadel. When their provisions were exhausted, Cylon and his brother stole through the besieging lines; their starving followers, forced to surrender, flocked for protection about Athena's altar on the Acropolis. Hereupon the chiefs of the townships[1] promised these suppliants their lives if they would submit to trial. They agreed; yet, not having full confidence in the promise, they tied a thread to Athena's image, and, holding one end of it, went down to the tribunal. But when they came near the shrine of the Furies,[2] the thread by which the goddess gave them her protection broke; and then the Archon Meg'acles and his followers stoned and butchered them, permitting only a few to escape. Probably a feud between the family of Cylon and that of Megacles led to this impious massacre. The Alc-me-on'i-

[1] § 151.

[2] The work of the Furies, or angry goddesses, was to punish perjury, murder, mistreatment of parents and suppliants, and other such offences. At that time their shrine was a cave on the south side of the Areopagus.

dae, to whom Megacles belonged, were the mightiest family in Attica. The state appears to have been powerless to bring them to trial either for murder or for the mistreatment of suppliants, but the curse of impiety rested upon the whole family for two centuries or more.[1] There was need of laws and courts for the suppression of such feuds.

154. Draco, the Lawgiver (621 B.C.). — By keeping the laws secret the nobles had ruled thus far in their own interest; the magistrates decided cases in favor of those of their own rank or of those who could pay the highest fee. Men were growing rich through injustice; and though the great lords were often at strife with one another, they agreed in insulting and oppressing the lower class. Naturally the commons resisted this oppression and demanded to know the laws by which they were judged. The nobles yielded, and in 621 B.C. the citizens elected Draco "legislator"[2] with full power to write out a code for the state.

His laws of homicide are of chief interest because the Athenians retained them unchanged for many centuries. Before Draco's time a man who killed another in self-defence, or for any other good reason, was compelled, like the wilful murderer, to flee from the country or satisfy the kinsmen of the slain by paying them a sum of money; otherwise they would kill him in revenge. According to Draco's code wilful murder was to be tried by the council of nobles sitting on the Areopagus,[3] a hill sacred to the Furies, and the penalty in case of conviction was death, with the confiscation of the murderer's property. Other cases of homicide were tried in lesser courts, and were not so severely punished. One who accidentally killed another was sent temporarily into exile, whereas killing in self-defence went unpunished.

Theft of vegetables was punishable with death; and this fact has given Draco a reputation for cruelty. But though the penalty for stealing was too severe, the laws of homicide were a great improve-

[1] A suppliant was one who took refuge at an altar or in a temple of some god. Any one who mistreated a suppliant brought upon himself and his family the curse of impiety.

[2] He was one of the six thesmothetae; § 149.

[3] From this place of meeting the council of nobles received its name, Council of the Areopagus.

ment. "Whoever made them originally, whether heroes or gods, did not oppress the unfortunate, but alleviated humanely their miseries so far as they could with right." [1] It is even probable that apart from his laws of homicide he made little change in existing customs, so that he cannot be held wholly responsible for the harsh features of his code.

155. Lords and Tenants.—His laws did nothing, however, to help the wretched poor. The cause of their misery requires explanation. The nobles were not content with the enjoyment of all the political power, but aimed also to acquire all the wealth in the state and to gain an absolute mastery over the citizens. They forced the free peasants into dependence on themselves; when a lord laid claim to a field, whether justly or unjustly, he placed on it a "boundary" stone, as a sign that the land and the persons on it were his. It was not long before these stones stood on nearly all the farms in Attica, holding "Black Earth enslaved," in the words of Solon, a great statesman of the time. If any one failed to pay his rent, or otherwise fell into debt to his lord, he and his children could be sold into slavery. With nothing but sharpened sticks for digging the stony soil, the poor tenants found it so difficult to make a living and pay their dues, that many were actually sold into slavery to foreign masters. There was no legal way of obtaining satisfaction, for their lords were the judges in the courts. Accordingly they agreed among themselves to rebel.

III. Solon's Reforms

156. His Archonship (594 B.C.). — Solon was not only a member of one of the noblest families in Attica, but also a merchant of wide experience, and a friend of the poor. As all classes, therefore, had confidence in him, they elected him Archon and lawgiver for the year 594 B.C., that he might restore harmony among the citizens and give them a better govenment.

On the day he entered office he ordered the removal of all the boundary stones, so as to release the tenants from the payment of dues to their lords. To secure the freedom of citizens for the present

[1] Demosthenes, xxiii. 70.

and future, Solon reënforced his order by the following personal liberty laws: —

(1) All who are in slavery for debt shall be free.

(2) No one shall sell his children and kinswomen into slavery.

(3) No one shall lend money on the security of the person.

(4) No one shall own more than a certain amount of land fixed by law.

157. His Improvements in the Constitution. — In order that the people might henceforth protect their freedom and their property, he admitted the poorest class (the the'tes)[1] as well as the others to a popular supreme court which he established, and to the assembly. The court was composed of all citizens thirty years old and above who offered to serve as jurors; all who were eighteen and above might take part in the assembly. Yet as these duties long remained unpaid, none but the well-to-do could find leisure regularly to attend to them. In the assembly the people elected their magistrates and voted on important public questions brought before them by the Council of Four Hundred — formerly Four Hundred and One.[2] The popular court, on the other hand, received appeals from the judgments of the archons, and tried the magistrates at the expiration of their terms, if any one accused them of having abused their authority. These were by far his most important measures. He did not rest, however, till he had improved the entire government.

158. Outline of the Reformed Constitution

I. **The Territorial Divisions of Attica**
The four tribes and forty-eight nau'cra-ries, or townships, remained as before (§ 152, I).

II. **The Four Census Classes**
1. The *pen-ta-co-si-o-me-dim'ni* — "five-hundred-bushel men" — whose estates yielded 500 or more measures of grain, oil, and wine. They were eligible to cavalry service, to the highest military offices, to treasuryships, and archonships.

[1] As explained above (§§ 150, 152, V), the assembly under the pre-Solonian government admitted those only who could afford to equip themselves with heavy armor. They made up the three higher, or wealthier, census classes (§ 152, II). Members of the lowest class — the thetes — were excluded under the pre-Solonian timocracy, but admitted by Solon; cf. § 158, II. 4.

[2] §§ 151, 152, IV.

2. The *hip'peis* — knights — whose estates yielded from 300 to 500 measures wet and dry. They were eligible to cavalry service, probably to the archonships, and to various offices of moderate importance.
3. The *zeu-gi'tae* — "yoked-men," that is, heavy-armed men in battle array — whose estates yielded from 200 to 300 measures wet and dry. They served in the heavy infantry, and were eligible to inferior offices.
4. The *thetes* — the laborers, the poor — whose estates were inferior to those of the zeugitae, or who were entirely without land. They served as light-armed troops, and though eligible to no offices, they could attend the assembly and the popular court.

The first three classes paid war taxes, which were rarely levied; but the thetes were exempt. The classes existed before (§ 152, II), but Solon gave them this definite form.

III. **The Magistrates**

They had the same duties as in the preceding period (§ 152, III); for their qualifications, see II. At the close of their terms of office they were now responsible to the popular court.

IV. **The Councils**

1. The Council (*Boulê*) of the Areopagus
2. The Council (*Boulê*) of the Four Hundred

Qualifications and method of appointment of the councillors and powers of the councils were substantially as before (§ 152, IV).

V. **The Assembly** — *Ec-cle'si-a*

1. Composed of all the citizens who had the leisure and the desire to attend.
2. It elected magistrates and voted on questions brought before it by the Council of Four Hundred.

VI. **The Popular Supreme Court** — *Hel-i-ae'a*

1. Composed of all citizens above thirty years of age who had the leisure and the desire to attend.
2. It received appeals from the judgments of archons, and tried the magistrates at the end of their terms.

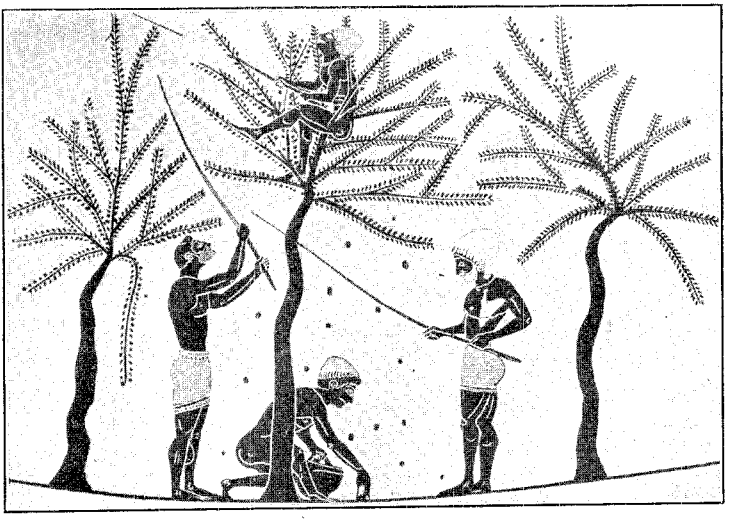
VII. **Form of Government**

A comparison with the outline given in § 152 proves that, though Solon introduced important changes, the greater part of the earlier constitution continued in force. The government was still a timocracy, as political privileges were graded on the basis of wealth. But in Solon's arrangements the popular court and the attendance of the thetes at the assembly were democratic. These popular elements of the constitution gradually grew so strong that in time they made the whole government democratic.[1]

[1] The constitution of a period should be studied only in comparison with the one which preceded. The changes should be noted, and the reasons for the changes sought. Studied in this way, the history of government becomes profitable and even interesting.

159. Special Laws of Solon. — The improvement of the constitution was but a part of Solon's work. He made laws on various subjects. The most important are given below: —

(1) Draco's laws of homicide he accepted without change, for he believed them to be just; but in the case of other offences he



GATHERING OLIVES

(Attic vase painting, sixth century B.C.; British Museum)

lightened such penalties as he found too severe. Henceforth the theft of a cabbage or an apple was not punishable with death.

(2) He forbade the exportation of all products of the soil except olive oil. His object was to prevent famine by keeping at home the food produced in the country.

(3) He compelled every man to teach his son a trade, and passed other laws to encourage skilled industry. For he saw that the soil was unfit for agriculture, and believed the only hope of prosperity for the country to be in manufacturing and commerce. Thereafter Athens developed along these lines.

(4) Before his time Athens had no currency of her own, but used the coins of Aegina. This island-state was now a rival of Athens.

Her more friendly neighbor, Chalcis, however, had issued a lighter silver coin, which Solon adopted as a standard for his city.[1] This measure helped trade with Euboea, with the Chalcidic colonies, and with all other countries which used the same standard. Thus Solon introduced Athens to a commercial world which she had scarcely known before.

(5) He limited, too, the freedom of women, not permitting them to go out at night except in a carriage with a torch-bearer ahead. The women in Homer's time enjoyed as much freedom as the men; those of Sparta had more,[2] but Athenian women from Solon's time came to be confined more and more to the house, and their social influence waned through the years that followed.

(6) Lastly may be mentioned his sedition law. Knowing that there would still be civil strife in Attica, he ordered the people in case of violent party conflict to join whichever side they deemed most just. Any one who held aloof from the contention should be dishonored and deprived of the citizenship. His object was to compel the commons to take an active part in public life; and he believed that they could by united effort bring any sedition quickly to a close, as they had done in the case of Cylon's conspiracy.

160. Drifting into Anarchy (594–560 B.C.). — Solon made his laws binding for a hundred years, and required all the citizens to swear to obey them. When he had completed his work, "he found himself beset by people coming to him and harassing him concerning his laws, criticising here and questioning there, till as he wished neither to alter what he had decided on nor yet to be an object of ill-will to every one by remaining in Athens, he set off on a journey to Egypt . . . for ten years with the combined objects of trade and travel." [3]

After visiting many foreign lands, he returned home to find his country in great confusion. No one was satisfied with his reforms; the nobles had hoped he would restore to them all their old power, and the poor had expected a complete redistribution of property.

[1] His silver drachma was nearly equal in weight to twenty cents (ten-pence) of our money, but the purchasing power was much greater. In Solon's time one drachma would buy a medimnus (1½ bu.) of wheat, and five drachmas an ox.

[2] §§ 97, 137.

[3] Aristotle, *Athenian Constitution*, 11.

In fact, though Solon had provided his country with excellent laws, there was no one with the will and the power to enforce them. The state accordingly was falling into anarchy; the men of the Hills, Plain, and Shore[1] were fighting one another so that in some years no Archon could be elected.

IV. The Tyranny[2]

560–510 B.C.

161. Pisistratus becomes Tyrant (560 B.C.). — The leader of the Hill men was Pi-sis'tra-tus, "crafty and pleasant of speech, a protector of the poor, and a man of moderation even in his quarrels."[3] These popular qualities attracted many followers. But the men of the Plain and of the Shore[4] were his bitter foes, who would not hesitate to kill him if an opportunity afforded. One day he drove into the market-place at Athens, and showed the people wounds which he said his enemies had inflicted on himself and his mules. The people in the assembly voted their favorite a guard of fifty men who were to arm themselves with clubs. Pisistratus quietly increased the number, and after substituting spears for clubs, he seized the citadel and made himself tyrant — illegal ruler[5] — of Athens.

An Athenian Lady
In time of Pisistratus.
(Acropolis Museum, Athens)

Though the government of Pisistratus was moderate, he had not ruled long when the leader of the Shore, combining with the chief of the Plain, drove him into

[1] § 153. [2] As an introduction to the tyranny at Athens, § 121 should be reviewed.
[3] Plutarch, *Solon*, 29. [4] § 153. [5] § 121.

exile. The two allies soon quarrelled; then the leader of the Shore "opened negotiations with Pisistratus, proposing that the latter should marry his daughter; and on these terms he brought him back to Athens by a very primitive and simple-minded device. He first spread abroad a rumor that Athena was bringing back Pisistratus, and then having found a woman of great stature and beauty, . . . he dressed her in a garb resembling that of the goddess and brought her into the city with Pisistratus. The latter drove in on a chariot with the woman beside him, and the inhabitants of the city, struck with awe, received him with adoration." [1] A disagreement with his father-in-law forced the tyrant a second time into exile. After devoting ten years to gathering resources, he again returned. The commons welcomed him, but many nobles in terror fled from the country. Regaining his authority in this way, Pisistratus established himself firmly by means of troops hired from other states.

162. His Government. — "His administration was temperate, as has been said before, and more like constitutional government than tyranny. Not only was he in every respect humane and mild and ready to forgive those who offended, but in addition he advanced money to the poorer people to help them in their labors, so that they might make their living by agriculture. In this he had two objects: first that they might not spend their time in the city, but might be scattered over all the face of the country; and secondly that, being moderately well off and occupied with their own business, they might have neither the wish nor the leisure to attend to public affairs. At the same time his revenues were increased by the thorough cultivation of the country, since he imposed a tax of one-tenth on all the produce." [2]

He built an aqueduct to supply Athens with fresh water; he erected temples, founded religious festivals, and encouraged literature and art. His reign marks a great advance, not only in education, but in agriculture, in the industries, in wealth, and in quiet, orderly government.

163. Hippias and Hipparchus. — When he died in old age (527 B.C.), his sons Hip'pi-as and Hip-par'chus succeeded him.

[1] Aristotle, *Athenian Constitution*, 14. [2] Aristotle, *Athenian Constitution*, 16.

For a time they imitated the wise government of their father. But unfortunately Hipparchus, the younger, in an affair of love, insulted Har-mo'di-us and Ar-is-to-gei'ton, two noble youths, who in return plotted the overthrow of the tyrants. Taking advantage of a festival in honor of Athena, they concealed their swords in myrtle wreaths, and killed Hipparchus while he was arranging the procession. Hippias, who as the elder was the head of the government, they could not surprise. Failing therefore to overthrow the tyranny, they were themselves taken and put to death. But after the Athenians regained their freedom, they celebrated Harmodius and Aristogeiton in song as tyrant-slayers, and decreed public honors to be enjoyed forever by the descendants of the two heroes.

GRAVESTONE OF ARISTION
An Athenian warrior in the time of the tyranny
(National Museum, Athens)

In consequence of the murder Hippias treated the nobles with great harshness, so that he became very unpopular.

Meanwhile the exiled nobles were trying to bring about their return. Cleis'the-nes, leader of the exiles, won the favor of the Delphic oracle by building for Apollo a splendid temple with a marble front; on this work he spent far more money than the contract demanded. In gratitude for the generous deed, the prophetess was ready to aid in restoring the exiles to their homes. Accordingly whenever the Lacedaemonians, now the leading people of Peloponnese, sent to consult the oracle on any subject whatever, the answer was always, "*Athens must be set free.*"

In obedience to the oracle Cle-om'e-nes, king of Sparta, led an army into Attica and besieged Hippias in the Acropolis. The tyrant and his friends attempted to send their children secretly through the besieging lines to a place of safety, but they fell into

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