CHAPTER XXVII

THE HELLENISTIC AGE

331. Character of the Period. — With Alexander's conquest of the Persian empire the history of Greece merges in that of the world. The interest no longer centres in the creation of the Hellenic civilization through the rivalry of political parties and of little city-states. For about two centuries after the conquest, history is concerned with the spread of Hellenic culture over a great part of the ancient world. Naturally while non-Greeks were taking upon themselves some of this culture, they modified it more or less. At the same time there were internal changes independent of foreign influence. The civilization resulting from these two causes is termed Hellenistic, as distinguished from the better Hellenic culture of earlier time.

I. Political Events

322–146 B.C.

332. The Succession; the Battle of Ipsus (301 B.C.). — When Alexander died, the authority passed to his generals, all trained in war, yet none qualified to fill the place of the master. As his son was but an infant, and as the generals began to fight among themselves for the first place, the empire naturally fell to pieces. The decisive battle among these generals was fought at Ip'sus in Phrygia (301 B.C.). This was one of the most important battles of ancient times, as it determined the history of the empire till it fell under the power of Rome.

The victors divided the empire into kingdoms for themselves: Se-leu'cus received Asia from Phrygia to India; western Asia Minor and Thrace fell to Ly-sim'a-chus; Ptolemy became king of Egypt; and Cassander, already governor of Macedon, was now recognized


KINGDOMS FORMED FROM
ALEXANDER'S EMPIRE
301 B.C.
Macedon
Kingdom of Lysimachus
Empire of the Seleucidae
Kingdom of the Ptolemies
Other States
Longitude 40° East from 50° Greenwich
Williams Engraving Co., N.Y.
BLACK SEA
CASPIAN SEA
Aral Sea
PERSIAN GULF
ARABIAN GULF
ARABIA
EGYPT
SCYTHIANS
ILLYRIANS
GETAE
THRACE
MACEDON
GREECE
CRETE
CYPRUS
LYDIA
PHRYGIA MINOR
CAPPADOCIA
PHRYGIA MAJOR
CILICIA
CARIA
RHODES
PAPHLAGONIA
BITHYNIA
PONTUS
CAUCASUS MTS.
CASPIANS
ARMENIA
MEDIA ATROPATENE
MESOPOTAMIA
BABYLONIA
SUSIANA
PARAETACENS
PERSIS
CARMANIA
GEDROSIA
HYRCANIA
PARTHIA
MEDIA
ARIA
PARAPANISA DAE
BACTRIA
SOGDIANA
CHORASMIANS
MARGIANA
ARACHOSIA
INDIA
GERRHAEANS
Tanais
Tyras
Panticapaeum
Heraclea
Theodosia
Byzantium
Sinope
Amisus
Trapezus
Araxes R.
Oxus R.
Jaxartes R.
Maracanda
Bactra
Indus R.
Porcela
Hecatompylos
Ragae
Ecbatana
Alexandria
Prophthasia
Arbela
Antioch
Aradus
Damascus
Sidon
Tyre
Jerusalem
Seleucia
Babylon
Susa
Carmana
Persepolis
Harmozia
Pattala
Alexandria
Cyrene
Barca
Alexandria
Ammon
Memphis
Alla
Thebes
Syene
Epidamnus
Lamia
Athens
Ipsus
Tigris R.
Euphrates R.
Nile R.
Indus R.

as sovereign. In this way four kingdoms arose from the empire. Somewhat later Lysimachus was killed and his realm divided. While most of his Asiatic possessions were annexed to the kingdom of Seleucus, barbarous tribes, including many Gauls, seized the interior of Thrace and threatened the Greek cities along the coast.

333. The Great Powers. — Through most of the Hellenistic age, therefore, to the Roman conquest (146 B.C.) we have to do with three great eastern powers, the Seleucid empire, Egypt, and Macedon. To complete the political map of the world in this age we should include the Carthaginian empire, often mentioned above, and Rome, now supreme in Italy. These western powers were equal in strength to those of the East. Never before had the world possessed so thorough a political organization. Finance, armies, navies, and internal improvements assumed grander proportions than had hitherto been possible outside the Persian empire. Industry and commerce flourished, and the wealth of the world increased.

The eastern rulers were absolute monarchs. They were all Macedonians, and they based their power on armies made up largely of Macedonians and Greeks. Like Alexander, they professed to be gods. Surrounding themselves with the pomp and ceremony of an Oriental court, they compelled the subjects to prostrate themselves in the royal presence. To the end they remained conquerors in a foreign land. Alexander's attempt to employ Orientals in high office had failed; for they were morally inferior to Europeans, and could not be trusted. Profiting by this experience, his successors admitted them to the lowest offices only, and in limited numbers to the army. All the court society, and in general the refined and educated society, with the rare exception of individuals, was Hellenic, whereas there was much mixing of races in the working population. The advantage of Greek civilization to the natives, therefore, was exceedingly slight. It was more than counterbalanced by the curse of foreign domination. The Persian empire had meant peace for the Orient, defence against foreign enemies, protection of life and property, and tolerable burdens of taxation and military service. The new monarchies substituted devastating wars, the increased expenses of great standing armies, of an official class of rapacious foreigners, utterly devoid of sympathy with their subjects.

However desirous of justice the kings may have been, most of them lacked the strength necessary for controlling their officials.

334. The Empire of the Seleucidae. — Among the successors of Alexander, the ablest administrator was Seleucus. Following the policy of his master, he planted as many as seventy-five colonies in his realm. Among them was Se-leu'ci-a on the Tigris, said to have contained six hundred thousand inhabitants and to have rivalled Babylon in splendor. As a capital for his kingdom he founded Antioch in Syria, not far from the sea. The nucleus of these colonies, as of Alexander's, was a company of veterans retired from active service. They received houses and lands from the king on condition of performing garrison duty for him. Around this nucleus were grouped natives and colonists from Greece. Most of the commerce and industry of the empire, hence also the greater part of its wealth, fell into Greek hands. The new towns were Hellenic in language, in civilization, and in free local institutions. Most of them were in Syria, which Seleucus and his descendants, the Se-leu'ci-dae, tried to convert into a new Macedon. To a great extent they succeeded in this effort. But they lacked the means of planting colonies in the country farther east in sufficient numbers to Hellenize it or to hold it long in subjection. The eastern provinces rapidly fell away from their dominion. On their western border the Seleucid kings held some parts of Asia Minor a little longer. In 189 B.C., however, Antiochus III was defeated by the Romans at Magnesia, and compelled to withdraw permanently from Asia Minor. The empire soon shrank to the petty kingdom of Syria.

335. Egypt: the Ptolemies. — On the division of Alexander's empire, Ptolemy, one of his generals, received Egypt, with parts of Syria and a few other widely scattered possessions. His descendants, the Ptolemies, continued to rule Egypt till its incorporation in the Roman empire in 30 B.C.[1] The earlier rulers of this line were able, intelligent men. Aiming to hold merely their own, they generally sought to preserve peace. Because of the situation of their country, the task of defence was relatively easy. They made no attempt, however, to Hellenize the natives, but regarded Egypt

[1] § 497.

as their private estate, to be worked prudently for the owner's profit. They refrained from oppressing the natives in order to keep them in good spirits and in good working condition.

The only Greek colony worthy of mention was Alexandria. It was now the centre of a commercial world which extended from India to Britain. In wealth, in the refinements of life, and in educational facilities it outshone all other cities of the time. The population was exceedingly mixed. It consisted of native Egyptians, mercenaries of various nationalities, pure Greeks and Macedonians, other foreign residents, like the Jews, who came for trade, and lastly a mongrel class formed by the intermarriage of Greeks with all sorts of people.

336. **Macedon and Greece** (323–322 B.C.). — When the Greeks heard that Alexander was dead, they revolted, and defended Thermopylae against An-tip'a-ter, then governor of Macedon. They besieged La'mi-a, — whence this struggle is known as the Lamian War. Many states, chiefly the Aetolians, supported the Hellenic cause. For a time all were hopeful; but an attack on Lamia failed, and thereafter everything went wrong. Finally the states fell apart, and Antipater made separate treaties with them. Athens was compelled to receive a Macedonian garrison in Peiraeus, to exclude her poorer citizens from the franchise, and to deliver up the orators who had opposed Macedon. Among these offenders was Demosthenes. He fled at once from Athens, and soon afterward took poison, that he might not fall alive into the hands of his pursuers. Thus his mighty spirit ceased to contend against despotism. On the base of his statue his countrymen placed this epitaph: "Had your strength equalled your will, Demosthenes, the Macedonian War-God would never have conquered Greece."

337. **The Gallic Invasion** (beginning 279 B.C.). — The inroads of the Gauls into Thrace have already been mentioned.[1] A horde of these barbarians poured into Macedon, defeated a Hellenic army there, and devastated the country. Thence they crossed into Thessaly to continue their widespread ravages. A Greek army tried in vain to block their march at Thermopylae. They entered central Greece, and robbed Delphi of its rich treasures. On the

[1] § 332.

approach of winter, however, they retired northward, suffering great losses from hunger and cold as well as from the attacks of the Greeks.

Soon afterward a swarm of ten thousand Gallic warriors with their families crossed into Asia Minor. After plundering the country far and wide, they settled permanently in the district henceforth named after them Galatia.[1] For more than thirty years the states of Asia Minor paid them tribute as the price of security from their plundering. Finally Attalus, king of Pergamum, a little state in western Asia Minor, defeated them in two great battles and put an end to their domination (about 230 B.C.). The artistic memorials of these victories will be mentioned in another place.[2]

338. The Aetolian League. — The Greeks began to feel that in order to preserve their liberties they must unite more closely. The first to put this idea into practice were the Aetolians, the least civilized of the Greeks, yet among the foremost in political capacity. Their league, which had existed from early times, enjoyed in the present period a remarkably good form of government. Many communities outside Aetolia willingly joined it. Though others were forced to become members, yet all had equal rights, and enjoyed fair representation in the government.

339. The Achaean League: Aratus. — Some Achaean cities, too, renewed an ancient league in imitation of Aetolia. From this small beginning a great federal union was afterward built up, chiefly by A-ra'tus, a noble of Sicyon. The father of Aratus had been killed by the tyrant of his city, and the lad who was one day to be the maker of a great state grew up an exile in Argos. While still a young man he expelled the tyrant from his native city and brought it into the Achaean League. "He was a true statesman, high-minded, and more intent upon the public than his private concerns; a bitter hater of tyrants, making the common good the rule and law of his friendships and enmities." He advanced so rapidly in the esteem of the Achaeans that they elected him general when he was but twenty-seven years of age. Their confidence was by no means misplaced. Under his lifelong guidance the league extended itself till it came to include all Peloponnese with the

[1] See map between pp. 370 and 371.

[2] § 345.

exception of Lacedaemon. Nothing was so dear to him as the union he was fostering, "for he believed that the cities, weak individually, could be preserved by nothing else but a mutual assistance under the closest bond of the common interest." [1]

340. Constitution of the Achaean League: the States and the Federal Power. — The object of the union was the maintenance of peace within its borders and protection from foreign enemies. The federal power was limited strictly to this object. It alone made war, peace, and alliances, and managed all diplomatic matters. The army and navy, though furnished by the states according to their means, were solely at the command of the federal power. It coined all money, excepting small change, and enforced a uniform system of weights and measures. Aside from these necessary restrictions, the states were sovereign and self-governing. The only requirement was that they should be republics and should remain permanently in the union. They enjoyed full rights of trade and intermarriage with one another; and any state was free to admit to its citizenship the inhabitants of any other. All stood on an absolute political equality. To prevent any one of them from gaining the leadership, it was decided that the cities should serve in turns as the place for holding the federal assembly.

341. The Federal Government. — The highest federal authority was the assembly of all the citizens of the league. It elected magistrates and voted on all important matters concerning the union as a whole. The votes were not counted by heads, but by states. Each state was allowed a number of votes proportioned to its population.

The council was composed of deputies from the cities, each sending a number proportioned to its population. The total number we do not know. This council deliberated on matters to be presented to the assembly, and settled less important affairs on its own responsibility. It met more frequently than the assembly.

The highest magistracy was the generalship. At first there were two generals with equal power, in later time but one. He not only commanded the army, but acted as the chief executive. A board of ten advisers aided him and limited his authority. The same

[1] Plutarch, *Aratus*, 24.

man might hold the office any number of times, though not in successive years. This restriction was to prevent him from gaining an excess of power. Among the other high officials were the admiral, the commander of cavalry, and the secretary. No treasurer was needed, as the states managed all financial matters.

342. Significance of the Federal Unions. — The Achaean constitution, described above, applies in broad outline to the Aetolian league as well. The Achaeans were more progressive in civilization, however, and more inclined to peace. The federal union, in the form used by these two peoples, was the most nearly perfect political institution created by the ancients. While providing for the security of all, it gave complete freedom to each state to develop its own genius in its individual way. In this respect it was a great advance beyond the league under a city-state leadership, which was always felt to be more or less oppressive. It was a still greater advance beyond monarchy, a form of government altogether foreign to Greek sentiment and character. A striking merit of the federal union is that its increase in area, while affording greater security, in no way hampered the individuality of the states. The citizens of the league were satisfied with their condition, and it rarely happened that any state wished to revolt.

There were, however, certain defects in the institution. It was unfortunate that the highest magistracy had to be filled by a man who was both statesman and general. For military science had grown so complex as to demand the whole attention of the general throughout his entire life; in this respect it was in the condition which exists to-day. Usually, therefore, the magistrate was little qualified for one or another part of his duties. A still greater defect, from a military point of view, was the weakness of the federal government in relation to the states. It possessed no funds of its own or army of its own, but had to depend wholly upon the states for these resources. In time of war, accordingly, it rarely succeeded in persuading the states to do their best, and it had no efficient means of forcing them. In a word, it was very similar to the union of the American states before the adoption of the present federal constitution. On account of these defects, the federal

unions failed to defend the freedom of the Greeks against the strongly centralized powers of Macedon and Rome.

343. Cleomenes and Aratus (235–220 B.C.). — The further growth of the league was hindered on one side by Lacedaemon, now under an able king, Cleomenes. Wishing to restore decayed Sparta to her ancient condition, Cleomenes abolished the ephorate, cancelled debts, and redistributed property, with a view to increasing the number of citizens and soldiers. Sincere in his desire to benefit his city, he was perhaps the ablest statesman of Greece after Alexander. Cleomenes applied for permission to bring his state into the league, and asked to be appointed general. But Aratus refused. One of his motives was political principle. He was a thorough conservative, who believed that the wealthy should have the greater share of political power, and that the rights of property should be inviolable. Cleomenes, on the other hand, was a pronounced democrat and socialist. Another motive was personal. To admit the brilliant Spartan king into the league meant for Aratus total self-effacement. Such heroic self-sacrifice could hardly be expected of human nature; and Aratus, though he lived for the glory of the union, was selfish.

Cleomenes, who had already opened war upon the league, now assailed it so vigorously that Aratus was induced to call upon Macedon for help. A Macedonian army entered Peloponnese, and thoroughly defeated Cleomenes. When the Spartan king saw all his hopes shattered, he bade farewell to his ruined country and sailed away to Egypt, where he met a violent death. Greece was now in a wretched plight: Sparta had lost her independence, and the Achaean League had for the time being enslaved itself to Mecedon. Aratus, the mainstay of the union, was poisoned at the instigation of Philip V,[1] who had become king of Macedon in 220 B.C.

344. The Roman Conquest of Greece (completed 146 B.C.). — But Macedon could not long maintain her supremacy in Greece; for a still greater power in the West was now interesting itself in Hellenic affairs. This was Rome. Originally a little city-state like Athens or Sparta, Rome gradually won the supremacy in Italy. In the third century B.C. she entered upon her career of conquest

[1] §§ 430, 433 ff.

outside Italy, and early in the second she began to interfere in the affairs of the Greek peninsula. Acting as the protector of Greek liberty, she defeated the Macedonians in three separate wars, put an end to their kingdom, and divided their country into four republics (168 B.C.). Before completing this work she had defeated the army of the Seleucid king and had forced him to evacute Asia Minor (190 B.C.).[1] Meanwhile changing her attitude toward the Greek states, she became tyrannical. Opinions in Greece differed as to the wisdom of yielding or resisting. Thus every Hellenic city divided into a Romanizing and an anti-Romanizing party. The quarrels between these factions and between one state and another led to further interference from Rome. Besides the Aetolian and Achaean leagues, there continued to be many isolated states. Thus the Hellenes were still disunited. They were also more peacefully inclined than they had been in the time of their great war with Persia. Rome, on the other hand, now had more good soldiers than any other state in the world, and they were at the command of one central authority. These facts sufficiently explain the Roman conquest of Hellas.

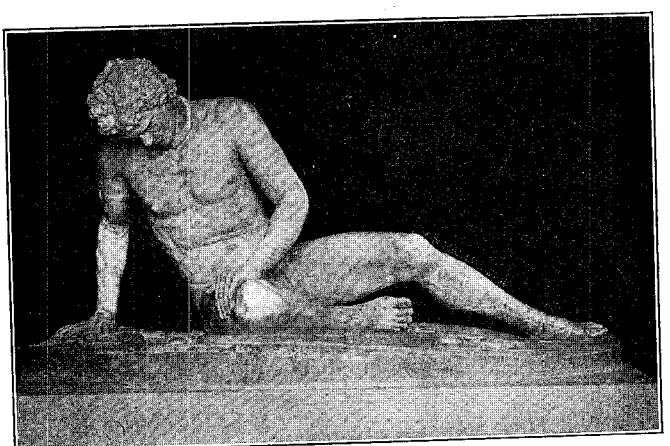
To suppress an outbreak in Macedon and Greece, the Romans sent another army to the peninsula. No force great enough to withstand it could be brought together. The Romans made of Macedon a province — a dependent district ruled by a magistrate sent out by the imperial government. They destroyed Corinth as a punishment for her rebellion. All the states which had revolted, including the entire Achaean League, were deprived of their independence and placed under the governor of the new province of Macedonia. They may be considered therefore a part of that province (146 B.C.). The rest of the states, including Thessaly, Aetolia, Athens, and Sparta, remained free allies of Rome. Finally, about 27 B.C., all the peninsula south of Macedonia became a separate province under the name of Achaia.[2] Though the Greeks thus lost their independence, they remained the artistic and intellectual masters of the world.

[1] § 334.

[2] The story of the conquest will be given in somewhat greater detail in connection with the history of Rome; §§ 433–438.

II. Hellenistic Culture

345. Literature and Art. — In this age, the Greek genius had declined. In literature and art, the two fields which display the noblest activity of the mind, it had ceased to be inventive. Losing sight of nature, both artists and writers were content to imitate existing models. At the same time they lost the classic balance and



The Dying Gaul
(Capitoline Museum, Rome)

self-restraint, and pursued emotional or realistic effects. The most eminent poet of the age was The-oc'ri-tus, a composer of pastoral idyls. His delightful pictures of country life pleased the prosaic scholars of the time, and have charmed the world to the present day. The scientific writings of the period will be mentioned in another place.

Classic art had represented persons as types of character stripped of their minor individual traits. It was ideal. The realism of the new age aimed to express peculiarities, and even to exaggerate them. In classic art human beings are portrayed as calm and free from disturbing emotions. In the fourth century, however, the

sculptor began to express feeling, and in the period we are now reviewing, he put into his statues a great amount of emotion.

One of the best portrait statues of the time is that of Demosthenes, which combines realism and emotion with classic dignity.

A GAUL AND HIS WIFE
(Museum of the Terme, Rome)

He is represented as the "mourning patriot," grieving for his country's misfortunes.[1] The struggle of Pergamum with the Gauls of Asia Minor brought forth some of the most vigorous work of the age. Among the memorials of the victory won by Attalus, king of that city,[2] are the "Dying Gaul" and the "Gaul and his Wife." In the latter the defeated Gaul, after killing his wife, is thrusting

[1] P. 271. [2] § 337.

the sword into his own breast. They represent the Gauls accurately, and are full of life and feeling, but lack the classic poise. The Apollo Belvedere of the same period, though admired for its refined beauty, is weak in comparison with the Hermes of Praxiteles.[1]

346. Alexandria: Science. — In every important Greek city of this period, whether in old Hellas or in the Orient, lived poets, artists, scholars, scientists, and philosophers. Under the patronage of the Ptolemies, Alexandria became the chief of these many centres of intellectual life. In the so-called Alexandrian Age (323–146 B.C.), ancient science and scholarship reached their highest point of development. The campaigns of Alexander had greatly enlarged the bounds of geographical knowledge, and had stimulated men to explore other regions then unknown. The new information they gathered was published in geographies. Greek scientists had long believed the earth to be round; and now one of the famous geographers computed its circumference at about 28,000 English miles, which is remarkably near the truth. He believed, too, that the opposite side of the world was inhabited, and that India could be reached by sailing west across the Atlantic, were it possible to make so long a voyage. Similar advances were made in astronomy. It was found that the sun is many times as large as the earth, and

APOLLO BELVEDERE
(Vatican Museum, Rome)

[1] § 330.

that the earth revolves on its axis and around the sun. This truth was rejected, however, by most scientists of the day in favor of the view afterward known as the Ptol-e-ma'ic system, which represents the earth as the centre of the universe. A certain physiologist found that the brain is the seat of the mind, and that the nerves are of two kinds, for conveying the feeling and the will respectively. He discovered, too, the circulation of the blood.[1] Many of these truths were rejected at the time, or soon forgotten, to be rediscovered in recent years. In the same age the practice of medicine became scientific, and surgeons acquired great skill.

347. **The Zoölogical Park and the Museum.** — One of the kings of Egypt founded a zoölogical park, in which he and his successors gathered many varieties of animals from all the known parts of the earth. It served not only as an attraction to visitors, but as an incentive to the study of nature. Scholars began to write works on zoölogy and botany. A far greater institution was the Museum, which contained the largest collection of books in the ancient world. We are informed that in the time of Caesar the number of volumes, including duplicates, amounted to seven hundred thousand. A volume (roll) was not an entire work, but a large division (book) of a work. The history written by Herodotus, who lived in the time of Pericles, contains nine such books, and the poems of Homer contain forty-eight. Besides the library, the Museum included a dining-hall, buildings for the residence of poets and scholars, and porticoes for walking, conversation, and lectures. The entire financial support came from the treasury of the kings.

348. **Scholarship, Hellenic and Jewish.** — In the Museum scientists devoted themselves to the discovery of new truth; and scholars were equally busy with systematizing existing knowledge. They compared and criticised the manuscripts of earlier authors, with a view to preparing correct texts. They wrote commentaries on the language and style of these works, and composed histories of the various departments of literature. Others produced biographies, political histories, and works on philosophy. Naturally the work in Hellenic literature and history was all done by Greeks.

[1] The geographer referred to was Er-a-tosth'e-nes; the astronomer was Ar-is-tarch'us; whereas Hi-er-oph'i-lus was the great discoverer in physiology.

The Jews, who had their quarter in Alexandria, enjoyed equal opportunities with the Greeks for trade and for culture. Under the patronage of the Ptolemies, learned Jews translated their Bible — the *Old Testament* — into Greek. This version is called the Sep'tua-gint, because, it is said, there were seventy men engaged in the work. The fact that such a translation was necessary proves that even the Jews, with all their love for the institutions of their fathers, had exchanged their own language for that of Hellas.

349. Contributions of Hellas to Civilization. — Most of the good and beautiful things of the life we now enjoy were created by the Greeks. The fundamental thing is freedom — freedom from the despotism of kings and priests. Perfect freedom gives courage. The Greeks had no fear of men; they loved their gods and looked upon them as friends. It is only the brave, free mind that dares think original thoughts, that dares invent. Their greatest contribution to civilization, accordingly, was political, religious, and intellectual freedom. Liberty is worth little, however, unless it is self-controlled. The Greeks have given us the ideal human character — a strong, perfectly developed body, and an equally strong intellect and feeling, absolutely free and fearless, but held in control by the reason. Their language, their literature, their science, and their art are simply expressions of the classic spirit of symmetry and beauty which we find in their noblest personal characters and in their best-regulated states. The greater part of Hellenic civilization, however, died out during the later Roman empire and the Middle Ages. As the modern nations in the period of their origin were ignorant of the ancient Greeks, they had to create anew and independently many of the elements of our modern civilization which had once existed in Hellas; much, too, they learned by the study of the literature and the art which survived. Thus it happens that much of the attractiveness and beauty of modern life is Hellenic.

Suggestive Questions

1. Write a summary of this chapter like that on p. 285. 2. Why did the empire of Alexander fall? 3. Compare the Aetolian and Achaean federations with the Peloponnesian and Delian leagues. In what details of organization were the later leagues an improvement on the earlier? 4. Ex-

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