



STRABO'S GEOGRAPHY.

BOOK VIII.

EUROPE CONTINUED.—GREECE.

SUMMARY.

The remaining parts of Macedonia are considered, and the whole of Greece; on this the author dwells some time on account of the great reputation of the country. He corrects minutely, and clears up, the confused and vague accounts respecting the cities contained therein, given by poets and historians, and especially in the Catalogue and in many other parts of the Poem.

CHAPTER I.

1. AFTER having described as much of the western parts of Europe as is comprised within the interior and exterior seas, and surveyed all the barbarous nations which it contains, as far as the Don¹ and a small part of Greece, [namely, Macedonia,]² we propose to give an account of the remainder of the Helladic geography. Homer was the first writer on the subject of geography, and was followed by many others, some of whom composed particular treatises, and entitled them "Harbours," "Voyages," "Circuits of the Earth,"³ or gave them some name of this kind, and these comprised the description of the Helladic country. Some, as Ephorus and Polybius, included in their general history a separate topography of the continents; others, as Posidonius and Hipparchus, introduced matter relating to geography in their writings on physical and mathematical subjects.

It is easy to form an opinion of the other writers, but the poems of Homer require critical consideration, both because he speaks as a poet, and because he describes things not as

¹ The ancient Tanais. ² These words are interpolated. *Casaubon.*

³ λιμένας, περίπλοι, περίοδοι γῆς.

they exist at present, but as they existed anciently, and the greater part of which have been rendered obscure by time.

We must however undertake this inquiry as far as we are able, beginning from the point where our description ended.

It ended with an account of the Epirotic and Illyrian nations on the west and north, and of Macedonia as far as Byzantium on the east.

After the Epirotæ and Illyrii follow the Acarnanes,¹ the Ætoli, the Locri-Ozolæ, then the Phocæenses and Bœoti, Grecian nations. Opposite to these on the other side of the strait is Peloponnesus, which comprises the Gulf of Corinth,² interposed between, and determining the figure of the latter, from which it also receives its own. Next to Macedonia³ are the Thessalians,⁴ extending as far as the Malienses,⁵ and the other nations, situated on both sides of the isthmus.

2. There are many Greek tribes, but the chief people are equal in number to the Greek dialects with which we are acquainted, namely, four. Of these, the Ionic is the same as the ancient Attic; (for Iones was the former name of the inhabitants of Attica; from thence came the Iones who settled in Asia,⁶ and use the dialect now called Ionic;) the Doric was the same as the Æolic dialect, for all the people on the other side of the isthmus except the Athenians, the Megareans, and the Dorians about Parnassus, are even now called Æolians; it is probable that the Dorians, from their being a small nation, and occupying a most rugged country, and from want of intercourse [with the Æolians], no longer resemble that people either in language or customs, and, although of the same race, have lost all appearance of affinity. It was the same with the Athenians, who inhabiting a rugged country with a light soil, escaped the ravages of invaders. As they always occupied the same territory, and no enemy attempted to expel them, nor had any desire to take possession of it themselves, on this account they were, according to Thucydides, regarded as Autochthones, or an indigenous race. This was

¹ The territory of the Acarnanes is still called Carnia, south of the Gulf of Arta. The rest of the countries mentioned by Strabo no longer retain the ancient divisions, Bœotia is the modern Livadhia. G.

² The Gulf of Lepanto.

³ Makedunea.

⁴ The ancient Thessaly is the modern Vlakea.

⁵ The neighbourhood of the Gulf of Zeitun—the ancient Maliac Gulf.

⁶ In Asia Minor, and founded the cities Miletus, Smyrna, Phocæa, &c.

probably the reason, although they were a small nation, why they remained a distinct people with a distinct dialect.

It was not in the parts only on the other side of the isthmus, that the Æolian nation was powerful, but those on this side also were formerly Æolians. They were afterwards intermixed first with Ionians who came from Attica, and got possession of Ægialus,¹ and secondly with Dorians, who under the conduct of the Heracleidæ founded Megara and many of the cities in the Peloponnesus. The Iones were soon expelled by the Achæi, an Æolian tribe; and there remained in Peloponnesus the two nations, the Æolic and the Doric. Those nations then that had little intercourse with the Dorians used the Æolian dialect. (This was the case with the Arcadians and Eleians, the former of whom were altogether a mountain tribe, and did not share in the partition of the Peloponnesus; the latter were considered as dedicated to the service of the Olympian Jupiter, and lived for a long period in peace, principally because they were of Æolian descent, and had admitted into their country the army of Oxylus, about the time of the return of the Heracleidæ.²) The rest used a kind of dialect composed of both, some of them having more, others less, of the Æolic dialect. Even at present the inhabitants of different cities use different dialects, but all seem to Dorize, or use the Doric dialect, on account of the ascendancy of that nation.

Such then is the number of the Grecian nations, and thus in general are they distinguished from each other.

I shall resume my account of them, and describe each nation in their proper order.

3. According to Ephorus, Acarnania is the commencement of Greece on the west, for it is the first country which lies contiguous to the Epirotic nations. As this author follows the coast in his measurements, and begins from thence, considering the sea the most important guide of topographical description, (for otherwise he might have placed the beginning of Greece in Macedonia and Thessaly,) so ought I, observing

¹ The word Ægialus (Αἰγιαλός) signifies sea-shore. The name was given to this part of the Peloponnesus (afterwards called Achaia) from the towns being situated generally along the coast. Others, however, give a different explanation to the word.

² 1113 before the Christian era. G.

the natural character of places, to keep in view the sea as a mark by which I should direct the course of my description.

The sea coming from Sicily spreads itself on one side towards the Corinthian Gulf, and on the other forms a large peninsula, the Peloponnesus, united to the main-land by a narrow isthmus.

The two largest bodies of country in Greece are that within the isthmus, and that without the isthmus, [extending to the mouths of the river Peneius]. That within the isthmus is however larger, and more celebrated. The Peloponnesus is, as it were, the acropolis or citadel of all Greece; and all Greece in a manner holds the chief or leading position in Europe. For independently of the fame and power of the nations which inhabited it, the position itself of the places in it suggests this superiority. One site succeeds another diversified with numerous most remarkable bays, and large peninsulas. The first of these peninsulas is the Peloponnesus, closed in by an isthmus of forty stadia in extent. The second comprehends the first, and has an isthmus reaching from Pagæ in Megaris to Nisæa, which is the naval arsenal of the Megareans; the passage across the isthmus from sea to sea is 120 stadia.

The third peninsula also comprises the latter. Its isthmus extends from the farthest recess of the Crissæan Gulf to Thermopylæ. The line supposed to be drawn between these is about 508 stadia in length, including within it the whole of Bœotia, and cutting Phocis and the country of the Epicnemidii obliquely. The fourth peninsula has the isthmus extending from the Ambracian Gulf through Mount Cæta and Traclinia to the Maliac Gulf and Thermopylæ, about 800 stadia.

There is another isthmus of more than 1000 stadia reaching from the same Gulf of Ambracia, and passing through the country of the Thessalians and Macedonians to the recess of the Thermæan Gulf.

The succession of peninsulas furnishes a convenient order to be followed in describing the country.

We must begin from the smallest, as being also the most famous of these peninsulas.¹

¹ Taking the reverse order in which these peninsulas are described, the fifth and last contains all the rest, the fourth all but the difference

CHAPTER II.

1. THE Peloponnesus resembles in figure the leaf of a plane tree.¹ Its length and breadth are nearly equal, each about 1400 stadia. The former is reckoned from west to east, that is, from the promontory Chelonatas through Olympia and the territory Megalopolitis to the isthmus; the latter from south to north, or from Maliaë though Arcadia to Ægium.

The circumference, according to Polybius, exclusive of the circuit of the bays, is 4000 stadia. Artemidorus however adds to this 400 stadia, and if we include the measure of the bays, it exceeds 5600 stadia. We have already said that the isthmus at the road where they draw vessels over-land from one sea to the other is 40 stadia across.

2. Eleians and Messenians occupy the western side of this peninsula. Their territory is washed by the Sicilian Sea. They possess the coast also on each side. Elis bends towards the north and the commencement of the Corinthian Gulf as far as the promontory Araxus,² opposite to which across the strait is Acarnania; the islands Zacynthus,³ Cephallenia,⁴ Ithaca,⁵ and the Echinades, to which belongs Dulichium, lie in front of it. The greater part of Messenia is open to the south and to the Libyan Sea as far as the islands Thyrides near Tænarum.⁶

Next to Elis, is the nation of the Achæi looking towards the north, and stretching along the Corinthian Gulf they terminate at Sicyonia. Then follow Sicyon⁷ and Corinth, extending as far as the isthmus. Next after Messenia are

between the fourth and fifth, and so on in order until we come to the Peloponnesus, properly so called, which is thus the least of the peninsulas. Strabo himself seems to admit the term peninsula to be improperly applied to these subdivisions, by first describing Greece to be divided into two great bodies, viz. that within and that without the Isthmus of Corinth.

¹ For the same reason, at a subsequent period, it obtained the name of Morea, in Greek (Μορέα) which signifies mulberry, a species or variety of which tree bears leaves divided into five lobes—equal in number to the five principal capes of the Peloponnesus. See book ii. ch. i. 30.

² Cape Papa.

³ Zante.

⁴ Cephalonia.

⁵ Theaki.

⁶ Cape Matapan.

⁷ Basilico.

Laconia and Argeia, which latter country also reaches as far as the isthmus.

The bays of the Peloponnesus are the Messeniæ,¹ the Laconian,² a third the Argolic,³ and a fourth the Hermionic,⁴ or the Saronic,⁵ which some writers call the Salaminian bay. Some of these bays are supplied by the Libyan, others by the Cretan and Myrtoan Seas. Some call even the Saronic Gulf a sea. In the middle of Peloponnesus is Arcadia, lying contiguous to all the other nations.

3. The Corinthian Gulf begins from the mouths of the Evenus,⁶ (some say from the mouths of the Achelous,⁷ which is the boundary between the Acarnanes and Ætoli,) and from the promontory Araxus. For there the shores on both sides first begin to contract, and have a considerable inclination towards each other; as they advance farther onwards they nearly meet at Rhium⁸ and Antirrhium,⁹ leaving a channel of only about 5 stadia between them.

Rhium is a promontory of Achaia, it is low, and bends inwards like a sickle, (indeed it has the name of Drepanum, or the Sickle,) and lies between Patræ¹⁰ and Ægium,¹¹ on it there is a temple of Neptune. Antirrhium is situated on the confines of Ætolia and Locris. It is called Rhium Molycrium. From this point the sea-shore again parts in a moderate degree on each side, and advancing into the Crissæan Gulf, terminates there, being shut in by the western boundaries of Bœotia and Megaris.

The Corinthian Gulf is 2230 stadia in circuit from the river Evenus to the promontory Araxus; and if we reckon from the Achelous, it would be increased by about 100 stadia.

The tract from the Achelous to the Evenus is occupied by Acarnanians; next are the Ætoli, reaching to the Cape Antirrhium. The remainder of the country, as far as the isthmus, is occupied by Phocis, Bœotia, and by Megaris, it extends 1118 stadia.

The sea from Cape Antirrhium as far as the isthmus is [the Crissæan Gulf, but from the city Creusa it is called the Sea of] Alcyonis, and is a portion of the Crissæan Gulf.¹²

¹ Gulf of Coron,

² Gulf of Colochina.

³ Gulf of Napoli.

⁴ Gulf of Castri.

⁵ Gulf of Egina.

⁶ Pidari.

⁷ Aspropotamo.

⁸ Drepano.

⁹ Castle of Roumelia.

¹⁰ Patras.

¹¹ Vostitza.

¹² The words in brackets are inserted according to the suggestion of

From the isthmus to the promontory Araxus is a distance of 1030 stadia.

Such in general then is the nature and extent of the Peloponnesus, and of the country on the other side of the strait up to the farther recess of the gulf. Such also is the nature of the gulf between both.

We shall next describe each country in particular, beginning with Elis.

CHAPTER III.

1. At present the whole sea-coast lying between the Achæi and Messenii is called Eleia, it stretches into the inland parts towards Arcadia at Pholoe, and the Azanes, and Parrhasii. Anciently it was divided into several states; afterwards into two, Elis of the Epeii, and Elis under Nestor, the son of Neleus. As Homer says, who mentions Elis of the Epeii by name,

“Sacred Elis, where the Epeii rule.”

The other he calls Pylus subject to Nestor, through which, he says, the Alpheius flows:

“Alpheius, that flows in a straight line through the land of the Pyliaus.”²

The poet was also acquainted with a city Pylus;

“They arrived at Pylus, the well-built city of Neleus.”³

The Alpheius however does not flow through nor beside the city, but another river flows beside it, which some call Pamisus, others Amathus, from which Pylus seems to be termed Emathöeis, but the Alpheius flows through the Eleian territory.

2. Elis, the present city, was not yet founded in the time of Homer, but the inhabitants of the country lived in villages. It was called Cœle [or Hollow] Elis, from the accident of its locality, for the largest and best part of it is situated in a hollow. It was at a late period, and after the Persian war, that the people collected together out of many demi, or

Groskurd. The Gulf of Corinth is, in other passages, called by Strabo the Crissæan Gulf.

¹ Od. xv. 298.

² Il. v. 545.

³ Od. iii. 4.

END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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