

# HOMER AND THE PROPHETS, OR HOMER AND NOW.

## HISTORY AND HISTORICITY.

BY CORNELIA STEKETEE HULST, M.A., M.P.D.

(Concluded.)

That Thersites had dared to speak against the King showed a stirring of the spirit in Greece which was soon to result in the deposition of kings in Greece, a spirit that had been killed in the East, and that was crude and rude, but full of hope for the future. This we can readily see in the light of Athenian history following Homer, in which a wider and wider democracy led to the Golden Age, proving the truth that rule by a wise and just people is better than rule by kings. Was Homer blind to this hope? Did he put rock-bottom truths into the mouth of this bad-mannered, ill-tempered, bandy-legged and generally crossed and mal-formed commoner as a kind of last warning to kings to be worthy of their charge or prepare to descend from their thrones? . . . He had shown that the Council was wiser than the King and reversed his decision. . . . The day of the common man had not yet come among the Homeric Greeks, but it was far on the way when men even whispered such truths as Thersites had uttered, when a great poet repeated them, having shown them justified by the facts, and when men felt a stirring of pity for the poor wretch who had spoken, thought at first they laughed when they heard him ridiculed and saw him beaten, as Thersites had been by Odysseus. In this case, as always, the blood and tears of the martyrs is the seed that will ripen later on. A generation after Homer, Grecian kings were displaced by a Council of Judges (in Athens, the Council of Areopagus), and reading Homer with this coming change in mind we see the Homeric Council as the nearly completed first stage toward democracy. In Thersites,

we see the rise of the Mountain, which, under the guidance of Solon, a century later, will mark the completion of the next stage.

In an age when people had begun to criticize their kings, Homer's drawing of the sons of Atreus, Menelaus and Agamemnon, must have been a strong factor in the democratizing process, helping to disillusionize the people as to their "heaven-descended kings." If Grecian kings had been less like Menelaus and Agamemnon and more like Odysseus, the Monarchies might have lasted longer. If monarchies had continued, it is very unlikely that they would have sunk into despotisms like those of the East, for Homer's Odysseus would have served as the model to which the kings would have to approximate. Princes would consciously or unconsciously emulate him, knowing that their people would judge them according to how well or how ill they succeeded. Thus, Homer is seen to be one of the Bards that outranked kings, a truth-teller and leader of both kings and people to a higher life, under Apollo, and, thanks to Apollo, the dispenser of just retribution to all, from swineherds to kings, with no mitigation of judgment to kings because of their higher rank. Homeric monarchy was approaching democracy because, in the realm of the poet, where Apollo was king, a good and just slave, like Eumaeus, *ἐν μάλομαι*, Try-Well, the swineherd, is judged higher than the less wise and the unjust kings. Eumaeus does not take his servitude slavishly; but, in complete independence of judgment, guides his master and king, Odysseus, into the better way. Would he obey if his master commanded him to do an evil thing?

In the incident at the swineherd's cottage, where Odysseus visits him disguised as a beggar, Eumaeus says and Odysseus admits that piracy is wrong, though Odysseus, as well as the other kings, has waged piratical wars for profit. This speech of "noble Eumaeus," as Homer calls him, is both wise and just in what he says about the war-makers of his time, and what he says makes for peace among men:

"Reckless deeds the blessed gods love not; they honor justice and men's upright deeds. Why, evil-minded cruel men who land on a foreign shore, and Zeus allows them plunder, so that they sail back home with well-filled ships—even on the hearts of such falls a great fear of heavenly wrath."

The principle here stated is not limited in application to the pirates of the Mediterranean of ten centuries before Christ, but is general and applies as well to ultra-modern imperialists who wage war for commercial or financial advantage. Apollo through Homer, and Homer, through Eumaeus, here breath spirit higher than

that of the Homeric age, a universal spirit that will find the fullest expression in the Beatitudes, eight centuries later.

Historically, this speech is seen to be very important. Odysseus, assenting to Eumæus, became the ideal king for the coming generation and waged no more wars for plunder; and shortly after Homer the tendency to piracy was checked and the Peace Movement, if we may call it so, was strengthened by the formation of the Delian League, a league of the Ionian cities of Asia Minor, the Grecian Islands of the Aegean Sea, and Athens, named *Delian* in honor of Apollo, whose most sacred temple was then at Delos. Homer might well give Eumæus the Swineherd higher honor than any other person in his story, for justice and peace among nations are the New Law that he is pleading for—the poet becomes so moved with enthusiasm telling the incident of Eumæus that he abandons the narrative form and breaks dramatically into direct address as he proceeds: “Then, swineherd Eumæus, you answered him, and said.”

In later Greece, also, the character of Eumæus was greatly revered—he was one of those herdsmen wiser than kings, whom the foremost nations of that age were giving ear to as their moral and religious teachers.

Some centuries previous to Homer, Moses had lived as a shepherd with the shepherd Jethro, from whom he learned much of the wisdom of life, before he was ready to lead his oppressed people out of their bondage in Egypt, to found a just state under a New Law higher than that of the Pharaoh—he had chosen the cause of the people though he had been reared in the Pharaoh's household in luxury. So Zoroaster, the herdsman, was wiser than his Persian kings, and taught them and their people to build a juster State. So, shortly after Homer, Amos, the shepherd-Prophet, was wiser than his king and the moral voice of his people. In those centuries, the truth seems to have been breaking upon these foremost nations of the West that imperial despots had not been justified in their rule, but that Truth speaks through humbler men, good shepherds, good swineherds, good cowherds, as the case might be, all working men who wished to live in peace and establish justice among the people and among the nations. The dream was rising that a Prince of Peace might come—and the Persian Magi found Him among the shepherds.

As every year the tribes of Israel met at Bethel to hold their sacred festival, so the Grecian cities of the Delian League began

to hold a yearly festival at Delos in honor of Apollo—again we see a parallel, which indicates that the Greeks were probably considering their neighbors' institutions before adopting their own. These Delian Festivals gave expression and bent to the strong, sound, faith-inspired and very beautiful life of Apollonian Greece. Not only the men took part, but the women and children also, realizing doubtless that they could have such a life as Homer had pictured only if they maintained their ideals against those of the East. Homer's good women had been sisters in spirit to the Mothers of Israel, and their homes afforded mothers and daughters as well as fathers and sons an opportunity to lead life in much freedom, which the women of the East did not have.

An important historic fact that is very clear in Homer is that his good women, as Penelope, Arete, and Nausicaä, are not of the Eastern, but distinctly of the Western type, though perhaps more restricted than some of the women of Israel had been. In Israel, as early as 1296 B. C., when Greece was still under kings and before Troy had fallen, a Deborah could hold the office of Judge and act as advisor on public policies and as a leader in battle, and a Jael had a literal as well as a figurative hand in bringing the war to a close when she lured the commander of the enemy, Sisera, into her tent and drove the nail into his brain as he slept. The Homeric women do not seem to have done such things, but they had considerable power and influence even in public life. Cassandra was a true prophetess to her people under Apollo, warning them of the punishment that the righteous gods would send upon them for their act, and in later Greece the pythoness of Apollo became an institution, her prophesying a factor in public as well as in private life.

Above all, the character and activities of Athene, as personified Wisdom, would show that Grecian women were not regarded in Eastern fashion, as lacking in mental, moral, or physical power and independence, witness the regard that Zeus pays to Athene and her successful personal combats with Aphrodite and Ares, both of whom she overthrows on the battlefield. She is a wise counsellor in Heaven, as her worshippers, men, women, young men, and maidens, are on earth under her guidance. We may not always like her ways, particularly in the scene where she lures Hector to his death—the poet created her in the image of his age, when Jael also was greatly admired. Such a stratagem as hers was then regarded wise in war, as traps, ambushes, and all manner of deceit are still widely approved. But where Athene could rouse the world to war, and where

she could take part in combat when that was necessary, her main activities were in the home, where she taught women to employ themselves with the loom and the distaff and to care for the clothing and other necessaries of the household, and men and boys to conduct themselves wisely. In their homes, Homeric women were not secluded, as were the women of the East, but lived very much as women of Europe now do, in the social life of the family, taking part in the conversation and other activities. Queen Arete walked unattended through the town, respected by all beholders, and she announced the decision on charities in the home when a suppliant made his appeal—that it was her custom to do so we learn from her daughter Nausicaä, when she told Odysseus how to approach her mother and gave him the needed clothing at the washingpool. The conduct of this maid is the final and convincing proof that the Homeric woman was free and worthy of her freedom. Nausicaä is as free as any girl need be, while her ideal, Wisdom Athene, is the extreme of independence, not exceeded by the modern bachelor girl.

In the Delian Festival, every member of the family took part:

“There in thy honor, Apollo, the long-robed Ionians assemble with their children and their gracious dames. So often as they hold thy Festival, they celebrate thee, for thy joy, with boxing, and dancing and song. A man would say that they were strangers to death and to old age evermore, who should come to the Ionians thus gathered; for he would see the goodness of all the people and would rejoice in his soul, beholding the men and the fairly cinctured women, and their swift ships, and their great wealth; and besides, that wonder of which the fame shall not perish, the maidens of Delos, hand-maidens of Apollo, the Far-Darter. First they hymn Apollo, then Leto and Artemis delighting in arrows; and then they sing the praise of heroes of yore and of women, and throw their spell over the tribes of men.”

That nation will be strong in which the maidens are taught to sing hymns praising the God of Justice, “the Far-Darter,” who shoots arrows of retribution to the farthest mark, and in which they sing also “praises of heroes of yore, and of women.” Those at Delos must have included Homer’s songs of Odysseus and Penelope, Telemachus and Nausicaä. So these would continue to throw over the tribes of men their “spell,” Apollo’s inspiration to the high life, conveyed to them through his poet, Homer.

Such a popular festival as this of the Delian League, in praise of the god of the sun and joy in all of the good things that he gives to men through the arts, poetry, song, the dance, athletics, must promote not only fellowship, commerce, and art, but freer social institutions, a stronger tendency toward Democracy in the State, and patriotism, the spirit which will safeguard the nation against attack from without. In spite of rivalries among themselves,

and hegemonies, the united Grecian cities of the Delian League preserved the Peace, and fostered the ideals of Apollo as against those of Baal and Ashtaroth, or Istar, who were now encroaching and threatening the States of the West. The lines were drawn and an Asiatic League was formed in opposition to the Delian League, comprised of cities along the coast of Asia Minor which held Asiatic ideals and served Baal and Istar. How much credit should be given to Homer for the Grecian ideals, and for the Delian League through which these were maintained against Asia?

The formation of these two leagues was a visible sign that war was on in the hearts and minds of the East and the West, and that the people on the frontier, at the lines of demarkation, were fully conscious of holding fundamentally different ideals. The East was an oncoming tide, which was to be stemmed if at all by the tribes of Israel in Palestine or by the Greeks united in the Delian League—by these, battles of greatest importance in the world's history were to be lost or won in the course of the three centuries following Homer.

We know the sequel. Israel, sunk in corruption except for the small "remnant" that her prophets rallied, was to be destroyed as a nation and carried into captivity by Assyria and Babylon; the Ionian units of the Delian League failed to support each other when the Asiatic armies made their attacks, and the Coast Cities and the Islands, one after the other, fell; only Athens was able to maintain her faith and keep her independence. The chances were hundreds to one against her, as they had been against Odysseus, but her hope was, like his, in the god of Justice because her cause was just. Athene was with her also, true Wisdom, "Wisdom in the scorn of consequence." She was strong with the greatest strength in the world, a great idea held with faith like that of a mustard seed: that the god of Justice will give help in what looks like hopeless straits. Their Homer had shown, as the Prophets of Israel had shown, the utter destruction of guilty men and nations and the salvation of those who lived the faith.

The East had begun encroaching before the time of Homer. In 876 B. C. an Assyrian army had penetrated to the Mediterranean Sea, laying Israel under contribution on the way. Israel was geographically near to the Ionian States, and it was easy for news to be carried from Israel to the Greeks of the Ionian Cities, for the land-route from Greece to Egypt passed over Palestine; and news was certain to be carried because Israel was the buffer-state, by

whose fall the Ionian States would themselves be endangered. In this early period, Israel would naturally exercise a very powerful influence upon her younger and weaker neighbor, through her superior institutions, experience, learning, religion and power, and this influence would be the stronger because of their common danger from the East. A few centuries later, when Israel had suffered the penalties of her corruption and Athens had reaped the reward of the Wisdom she had shown and the Justice she instituted, Athens would become a powerful influence upon restored Israel.

Following the Assyrian invasion, Israel fought a war with Damascus, also an Eastern State, and she came out of it with final success under King Ahab, who had strengthened his position by an alliance with Tyre, made by his taking to wife Jezebel, the daughter of the Tyrian king.

But now the East threatened Israel within her own borders through (1) the religion of Jezebel, whose gods were Baal and Ashtaroth, and (2) through her despotic methods of governing the people. King Ahab continued to support the Temple and the Prophets of Jehovah, but he also built a temple where the Queen might worship her Eastern gods and for the services of Baal he permitted hundreds of prophets of Baal to come into the land, who threatened the worship of the righteous God of the Fathers.

How the Eastern Queen took away the rights of the people is shown in the incident of Naboth's vineyard, which we will review briefly for purposes of comparison. Naboth was a humble subject of Ahab's, "humble," however not in the sense of "cringing," as will be seen. He owned a small vineyard near the royal palace, Jezreel, and this Jezebel wanted for her garden of herbs. But Naboth refused to sell his land, and even to trade it for a better vineyard, for it had come to him from his father, and he loved it. To the king, he persistently replied, "The Lord forbid it me that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee," a speech in which we see the former freedom of the people of Israel and the independence which they still felt under their kings. Naboth's refusal was not to end the matter. The spirit of the East spoke in Jezebel, and she said to Ahab, "Dost thou govern the Kingdom of Israel? I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth," and she summoned false witnesses and had Naboth tried and convicted on a charge of blaspheming God and the king. He was then stoned to death. Such events were very common in the ancient East, as today.

The Prophet Elijah came forth against Ahab and Jezebel, with

only the purpose of his righteous God to serve; and he appealed to the people. Against the "false god" of the neighboring nation, he thundered:

"How long will ye halt between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him."

The people finally rose in response to Elijah and killed all of the prophets of Baal; not one remained in the land. The rage of Jezebel against him forced Elijah to flee for his life and live in hiding, but after the death of Naboth he came forth again, and rebuked the King in the sternest and most public manner:

"Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? Thus saith the Lord, in the place where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine . . . because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the Lord. Behold, I will bring evil upon thee and will take away thy posterity."

Of Jezebel also he prophesied:

"The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the walls of Jezreel."

The fate that Elijah had prophesied came literally upon Ahab and Jezebel, and in 853 B. C. this baneful King and Queen paid the penalty for the injustice they had done to their humble subject—the loss of their throne, the destruction of their House, and their lives. To use a Grecian expression, *ἄρη, Ate, folly, judicial blindness*, had been their undoing; they were *ἀρηρός, baneful, driven to ruin*.

This is the very expression that Homer used for the folly and injustice of Menelaus and Agamemnon, when he called them *sons of Atreus*. Had the Ionian poet heard about Ahab and Jezebel and the danger that Israel had been in through them from the "false gods" of the East and the despotism of the East? Homer was himself of their generation, or that just following . . . can it be that *Baal*, the Eastern War-god, is in a general and allegorical way Homer's *Ares*, the god of war, whom he shows as a perfectly despicable character, intriguing in secret with Aphrodite (the Eastern Ashtaroth or Istar), utterly without principle in his fighting, an abject coward who goes down in defeat when he is faced in combat by Wisdom, or even by the youngest of the Grecian warriors who has faith in his righteous cause? No temple was reared to Ares on Grecian soil; no wise hero or heroine in Homer's epics pays him reverence; and Menelaus, the king, who is said to be "dear to Ares," is a "son of Atreus" and the worst man whom the poet shows on the Grecian side. It is not possible that Homer, who so loved Eumæus and Peace, in an age when Grecian kings and their sea-rovers were still profiting by piracy, should also love Ares and give him public honor. He shows Ares thoroughly beaten at



the end of the Trojan war. . . . Is Homer not saying to his people in an allegorical way that the righteous gods of their fathers will help them in their wars against Ares if their cause is just? Is he not facing them with the question whether the Far-Darter, Apollo, shall be their god, or this false War God? Is he not saying, in effect, what Elijah had said to Israel:

"How long will ye halt between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him."

only paraphrasing "the Lord" with "the righteous gods," and "Baal" with "Ares and Aphrodite"?

Homer shows Ares as so contemptible that any person who worshipped him would deserve defeat, and any person who was "dear to Ares," as Menelaus was, must be the antipodes of Eumæus, not blessed as a Peacemaker, but a man of violence and on the way to ruin. Was it not the final count against Menelaus as a man and a king that he was "dear to Ares," and not dear to Zeus, Athene and Apollo? . . . as if an Israelite had said of Ahab that he was "dear to Baal," but not dear to Jehovah?

Following this parallel in the cases of Ahab and Menelaus, we find on studying Menelaus that he is a much worse man than Ahab in various respects. Abroad, he has been a pirate who gained his wealth by despoiling cities with no high cause, while Ahab has fought on the defensive for his country; at home he conducts himself like a tyrant, or despot, where Ahab seems to have been kindly and indulgent to a fault. The incident where Telemachus visits Menelaus and Helen shows enough to tell the whole sad story of this baneful King's Queen, his servants, and his people. In a previous chapter we have spoken of the tragic situation of Helen—she might well wish that she had died, for the happiest occasion offers her no joy or honor. Today, if ever, Menelaus should be in a happy humor, for the occasion is the marriage of their daughter and the wedding feast is being held, but he is in a savage mood and rebuffs her cruelly when she tries to please him. To his servant, also, he shows a harsh humor, and his speeches reveal his despotic treatment of his people.

An attendant enters to announce that strangers are arriving and to ask whether they shall be given entertainment for the night or shall be *sent on for someone else to entertain*. Night is approaching, and if they are sent on into the mountains, it is most likely that they will be attacked by wolves, so this suggestion is heartless, and wicked. To a Greek with right feeling, who knew the danger, it must seem shocking, and impious, for Zeus commanded kindness to

strangers and wayfarers and was their special guardian—if these should die in the mountains Zeus would punish those who had refused them entertainment. In the scene where Eumaeus welcomes and entertains the beggar (who is Odysseus in disguise), Homer shows by contrast how even beggars ought to be received and cared for—Eumaeus entertains the beggar in the most generous way and invites him to remain as long as he wishes to do so. This servant of Menelaus was quite the opposite of “noble Eumaeus” in every way, and he might well have been named *Try-III*, but bears a name more fitting than this, which fits his character exactly and is universally hated throughout the East; *Eteoneus*, derived from *ἔτης, citizen, ὠρέομαι, I buy, I farm public taxes, I bribe*. The inference is clear. Addressing Citizen Tax-Farmer, Briber, by this name, Menelaus shows that he knows his character thoroughly and employs him nevertheless. We must conclude that he employs Eteoneus to farm his taxes and to bribe for him. It is clear, also, that this bad servant is not only a hand for the king, to serve him in evil-doing, but that he is an active prompter to bad acts when it seems that they will be to the least advantage. He has grown so bold as openly and in public to make this proposal to turn strangers from the door when night is coming on.

A wise king would now point out the wrong in this suggestion, and Menelaus does this, though rather from the point of view of his own interest than from a high principle. He says:

“Only through largely taking hospitality at strangers’ hands we two are here, and we must look to Zeus henceforth to give us rest from trouble. No! take the harness from the strangers’ horses and bring the men within to share the feast.”

The wisdom and moderation of this part of his speech is not maintained in the rest of it, however, for “deeply moved,” he says:

“You were no fool, Boethoos’ son, Eteoneus, before this time, but now you are talking folly like a child.”

This statement is perfectly true, but in manner it is violent, and it is indiscreet. Such treatment as this will not open Eteoneus’ eyes to a higher view of life, as the talk in the Swineherd’s cottage would have done, and it will not fan the spark of his loyalty to his king. We may take it for granted that when the day of Menelaus’ trial comes this Tax-Farmer and Briber will not be standing devotedly at Menelaus’ side, as Eumaeus will stand with Odysseus, but that he will be hiding among those who seek their own safety, or will have gone over to the king’s enemies if that should seem to his interest. No one knows better than he the evil side of the king, there can be no ties of affection to bind him to this kind of a master, and neither

of them has high principles to guide them in life. In fact, if Eteoneus should adopt high principles, he could not in conscience serve Menelaus.

The approaching stranger happened to be Telemachus, and when Menelaus learned that this was Odysseus's son he unrestrained in his praise of Odysseus. Here, again, his speech was an offense, for Apollo commanded *restraint in all things*. Menelaus shows no fine discrimination and appreciation of the excellencies of his friend Odysseus, such as Homer shows in drawing his character, and we suspect that there really was not much friendship between them, for the gods that they served were too different—serving the same God is a stronger bond of attachment than being born of one blood. Speaking of Odysseus, Menelaus exclaims:

"I used to say that I should greet his coming more than that of all the other Argives,"

thereby doing something of injustice to his other friends, one must believe. He proceeds to tell, too warmly, that he would delight to bestow upon his favorite very rich possessions, some of which he ought not to consider his own to give away:

"I would have assigned to him a city, would here have built his house, and I would have brought him out of Ithaca—him and his goods, his child and all his people—*clearing its dwellers from some single city that lies within my neighborhood and owns me for its lord.*"

King Ahab had weakly permitted his wife to *clear one man from his land* after that man had refused repeatedly to take what looked to them like a just and generous offer, and Jezebel urged her personal need of that particular piece of land, but here Menelaus proposes to *clear out the people of a whole city*, just to show his regard for a favorite who has not even requested this favor, apparently without compensation to the people dispossessed and without proposing to consult their feeling in the matter. Would they not probably object to being *cleared out*, and reply to the king, as Naboth had replied to Ahab:

"The Lord forbid it us that we should give up the inheritance of our fathers unto thee."

On his part, Odysseus would certainly think twice before he accepted such an offer as Menelaus here proposes, giving up his little independent kingdom for rich dependence on such a king. If he did accept, he soon would rue the day, for out of hand a king's favor can be withdrawn as summarily as it has been bestowed, and to please a new favorite, the former favorite is likely to be "cleared out" with as little consideration as his predecessors were. No Eastern despot could be more harsh and autocratic than Menelaus as he

is shown in this incident. The poet reveals the instant, and the future immanent in it. Ahab's throne, his life, and the succession of his House were the retribution he paid for taking the land of Naboth: will this baneful and fated Menelaus pay less of a penalty if he disposes his people?

False gods and unwise and unjust kings are shown in Homer's poems, as in the Sacred Books of Israel for the period in which Elijah and Homer lived, we must here admit. If the exact date and contemporary events of Homer could be discovered, they might throw a light upon his myths which would show us other moral and religious values. Perhaps a rumor of a new invasion from the East had reached him; perhaps he saw that some of the Grecian women were weeping for Adonis, the mortal lover of Aphrodite, while they turned from the altars of Athene and Apollo, as women of Israel wept for Tammuz, dishonoring the righteous God of their Fathers. It seems clear that the poet's purpose was to strengthen his peoples' faith in Wisdom and Justice, and to weaken the hold of all that is ignoble, to body forth the ideals of the West as their best protection against those of the corrupted East. If his purpose was high and serious, he succeeded notably, for the Greeks themselves credited him with having named their gods and given them their attributes, and Solon molded their public policy in accordance with the Wisdom and Justice which Homer had taught them to trust.

The love of Wisdom and Justice, which Homer had strengthened, bore noble fruits in the course of the generation following him, besides those that have been noted. In 750 B. C. occurred the first captivity of Israel; in 753 B. C. the city of Athens deposed its kings. This decade, then, marks a turning point in the decline of Israel and in the rise of the Athenian Democracy.

Where Homer presents a parallel to Elijah in his choice of a theme and his attitude toward the Eastern gods and despots, so later Apollonian Greeks of the Delian League present parallels to the later Prophets. In 722 Israel was taken captive the second time and her people were enslaved; in 588 B. C., Jerusalem was taken, the city utterly destroyed and the people carried to slavery in Babylon. Attacks on the States of the Delian League now followed, with unvarying success by the East, until Athens turned the tide at Marathon in 490 B. C., where she is rightly credited with having saved the Western world. Throughout this period Homer's spirit had been marching on to victory after victory in the purification of the State and in the development of the Athenian Constitution, with-

out which the miracle of Athenian victory over Persia would have been impossible—that Constitution which is one of the noblest works of the human race, wise and just beyond that of any other democracy, and the foundation on which could be built the works of art and intellect that characterized the Golden Age. Throughout the period between Homer and Pericles the poems of Homer were the Sacred Books of the Athenians, sung at religious festivals, presented on public occasions, put into dramatic form for the religious stage, and made the subject of careful study by the young.

The internal transformation of the Grecian States into democracies, toward which we found strong tendencies in Homer's poems, made steady progress. While Israel was going down, in 753 B. C., as we have said, the question of royal authority was settled in Athens by a decree of the Council that thereafter kings should rule for a period of only ten years, and shortly after that they were shorn of their military power, the Council alleging that they were not capable of command and appointing a military leader to act under the Council . . . an Agamemnon would not again be able to give rash and dangerous orders to the army before he had discussed them with the Council, and his baneful and ruinous rule would last for ten years at the longest, during which the Council would continue to limit him at every turn. A further important change for the better was made in the Athenian Constitution when an Archon was chosen by the Council to take special charge of the interests of widows and orphans—to us who have Homer in mind, these will be seen as developments felt to be needed at that time, but a result also of the need of such as Penelope and Telemachus, as Homer had shown them. The discussion of a purely ideal case prepares the mind and heart to react rightly when an actual case occurs.

This limitation of royal prerogatives, ending in the abolition of the kingly office, and this first reconstruction of the Athenian Constitution in the Eighth Century before Christ, and immediately following, Homer were contemporary with great events and great prophets in Israel. The times were anxious, and the evils that should be corrected were denounced by great and earnest men. Fortunately, Wisdom was prevailing in Athens and with little or no violence changes were being made for the better as needed to approximate justice; but in Israel, for the most part, high and low had fallen into evil ways and the call of the Prophets to purification was not heeded. Injustice continued to prevail. This was the case when the Prophet Amos began his mission at Bethel, in 760 B. C.

The Israelitish League of Tribes was holding its Festival in honor of Jehovah, with revelling and carousal as had come to be their bad custom of late years, this year with extreme abandon, for it was an occasion of peace with victory and Damascus had been defeated again. Pride and pomp and luxury were in full display, the prosperous were elated with a happy feeling that God was on their side, but they had not heeded the voice of Justice and the poor were poor as never before. It was now that Amos, the shepherd, thundered forth the wrath of Jehovah in a prophecy that took the form of a dirge. In the name of the Lord, he threatened the revellers at Bethel that unless they repented they would be delivered to defeat and slavery for the sins of the rich against the poor . . . the Assyrian army had recently penetrated to Lebanon. . . .

"Thus saith the Lord, for three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof, because they have despised the law of the Lord, and have not kept his commandments, and their lies caused them to err after that which their fathers have walked:

"I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem.

"This saith the Lord; for three transgressions of Israel and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have sold the righteous for silver and the poor for a pair of shoes."

The charges that Amos makes are definite, that the rich have profited in foodstuffs and manipulated the money market, the age-old methods of enriching the rich and "making the poor of the land to fail":

"Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail,

"Saying, when will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the Sabbath, that we may sell wheat, *making the ephah small and the shekel great*, and falsifying the balances of deceit?"

The only hope that the Prophet holds out to the nation is in its purification:

"Let Judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream . . .

"Hate the evil and love the good, and establish justice in the gate." . . .

This would be wisdom, and would still save the nation. In his denunciation Amos names the king by name:

"The high places of Israel shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste; and I will rise against Jeroboam with the sword."

Under this denunciation the king did not try to silence the Prophet with blows, and he did not imprison him, as has been commonly done with unwelcome prophets, and as Jeremiah was beaten and imprisoned for foretelling his country's defeat; but Amaziah, a sycophantic priest who was an adherent of the king's, tried to silence Amos:

"Then Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, went to Jeroboam, King of Israel,



the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city."

These prophets looked also to the coming of a Prince of Peace:

"And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

The problems that were faced by Israel and by the Greeks of this period were clearly parallel, and with Wisdom and Justice they might have been solved by both of those foremost nations of ancient history. But there the parallel stops. Except for a small "remnant" the corrupted people of Israel did not rise in response to their prophets. Hosea's reproaches that they had sold themselves to usury went unheeded; the warnings of Amos met no response; no changes for the better were made; and the nation met the defeat that the prophets had foretold. In 750 Judah was captured and in 722 she was destroyed as a nation; Jerusalem was destroyed in 588, her people carried away as slaves to Babylon. In Athens, meanwhile, kings were deposed, and the first less effective period of reconstruction was followed by a very effective reconstruction under Solon, who was elected Archon and Legislator for Athens in 594, six years before the fall of Jerusalem.

Before Solon, Athens was still far from a democracy. Though she had deposed her kings and appointed Archons, she was an Oligarchy, controlled by nobles and rich men to their class advantage. Those who spoke against abuses were being imprisoned or put to death, courts favored the rich, land was monopolized, the people were very poor and many of them had been sold into slavery as debtors, rates of interest were exorbitant, and money was controlled by a small class of private citizens who made high profits at the expense of the community, as bankers do in modern times. Athens was on the brink of civil war, the men of The Mountain rising against those of The Plain, who were mainly business men.

Solon was chosen Archon and Legislator because he had come to be known as The Just, and he justified the confidence of those who turned to him, as is evident in his code:

<sup>1</sup> He repealed the laws by which men had been imprisoned for political reasons and set free political prisoners.

<sup>2</sup> Courts had been favoring the rich—he reformed them in such a way as to give judges a strong personal reason for judging justly. Aristotle considered this reform of the Courts the measure by which Athens became a democracy.

<sup>3</sup> Land had become a monopoly in Attica, and much of it was heavily mortgaged at an extortionate interest. Solon set a limit to the amount of land that any one person might hold and cancelled the "mortgages" where extortionate interest had been collected from the people. He called this "the lightning of burdens," where others called it "repudiation," for he viewed the situation



from the angle of the peoples' rights and the wrong that had been done them. Grote says that he doubtless adopted this measure with the thought that it was right for the class which had profited greatly and unjustly as a class to suffer something of loss in the readjustment. In this cancelling of mortgages, Solon sacrificed his own fortune along with those of the rest of the mortgage-holding class. His action in this matter is the more creditable to him because he rose above the prejudice of his own class—he traced his own ancestry to the Kings.

<sup>4</sup> Perhaps the most important thing that Solon did was to nationalize money; that is, to take it from the small class of men who were profiting privately by coining, exchanging and controlling it in amount as bankers are profiting in modern times by these operations. Solon put all of these operations in charge of the national treasury and turned all profits on them into the national treasury, to be used for the nation's needs. This broke the "money power" of that day and prevented the formation of a class of financiers who could dominate Athens as modern financiers dominate the modern world, and it also filled the Athenian treasury so that Athens was able to spend richly for public purposes, paying new issues out for public works—there was no problem of unemployment in Athens with such a money system. Also, without laying taxes on her people, she could build the ships to defend Greece and the West against the attack of the Persian Empire which was about to be made. If Persia had made her attack before Solon, she would have found Athens an easy prey, her discontented and poverty-stricken people rising against the rich who oppressed them, the nation as a whole poor and weak. On the foundation laid by Solon in Justice, Athens became very strong, and the spirit of her people rose to the new life that was opened to them. Art and thought were stimulated as at no other period of history. The rich did not lose opportunity under the laws of Solon, and all gained opportunity to distinguish themselves in other ways than money-juggling, in philosophy, in poetry, sculpture, architecture, drama, and statesmanship—Athenian statesmen considered the people rather than some moneyed group of citizens.

With such conditions as this code gave, it is not surprising that little Athens became the wonder of the ancient world and that her citizens produced works that have never been surpassed. If Israel had heeded her prophets and had empowered a Solon to correct the wrongs that the prophets had pointed out, breaking the money power which had corrupted her kings, her priests, her prophets and her profiteers, as Hosca, Amos, Micah and Isaiah testify that they were corrupted . . . it is useless to speculate on what she might have become in history. As it was, she became a perfect example of the ruin of nations so unwise as to permit injustice to continue, a warning which they must heed, or disregard at their peril. The parallels that we have observed leave little doubt that her peril had much to do, from Homer to Solon, with the thought, institutions and policy of the Greeks.

If a Solon had guided Athens always in Wisdom and Justice, she might not have declined. Folly led to her defeat when she had undertaken leadership among the States of Greece, used their funds for her own adornment, permitted slave-driving and heavy profiteering in wars, and in various other bad ways lost the spirit that would have saved her, that had first made her great. Her rich men came to care more for their riches than they did for their coun-

try and urged her into war after war to add to their profits, though always posing as patriots; and the admirals of her fleet sold out her interests for their own. Finally, when Rome came, on her career of conquest, the richest of the Athenians welcomed the Empire and fought for her because the Romans had promised support in suppressing slave-insurrections and in conducting business abroad. Ferrere says:

"Everywhere, even in the most distant nations, powerful minorities formed, that worked for Rome against old, separating forces, against old traditions and local patriotisms alike. The wealthy classes were in a way wholly favorable to Rome."

So Athens passed from the spirit of Homer to that of degenerate Rome of the Caesars and Vergil. The imperial gods of devotion were now Ares, who was Roman Mars, and Aphrodite, Roman Venus. In turn, Athens became soon another perfect example of the nation so unwise as to permit injustice—a warning which others may heed, which they disregarded at their peril. Like uncorrupted Israel of Moses and the Prophets, the uncorrupted Athens of Homer's Wisdom and Justice is an inspiration and hope to the world: like Israel in her decay, she became a shaking of the head to the nations.