

**EDUCATIONAL BOOKS,
HISTORICAL
SERIES - NO. III:
THE HISTORY OF GREECE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649516735

Educational Books, Historical Series - No. III: The History of Greece by John Rigaud

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JOHN RIGAUD

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EDUCATIONAL BOOKS.

HISTORICAL SERIES.—No. III.

THE

HISTORY OF GREECE.

PUBLISHED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF
THE COMMITTEE OF GENERAL LITERATURE AND EDUCATION,
APPOINTED BY THE SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING
CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE.

LONDON:

Printed for the

SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE;

SOLD AT THE DEPOSITORY,

GREAT QUEEN STREET, LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS,

NO. 4, ROYAL EXCHANGE;

AND BY ALL BOOKSELLERS.

1846.

937.

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THE
HISTORY OF GREECE.

CHAPTER I.

Geographical outline and divisions of Greece—Early inhabitants—
Pelaagi—Hellenes—Amphictyonic council—Settlement of tribes—
Dorian migration.

GREECE, anciently called Hellas, the land of poetry and philosophy, falls as far below the nations that surround it in extent, as she once rose above them in all that in ancient days was good and admirable. It contained, even in its physical characteristics, indications of the varied nature of its inhabitants, and the scenes which were there enacted. Small as Hellas was, its picturesque coast, its rugged shores, and highly cultivated inland valleys, foretold, as it were, the rude nature of some, and the polished civilization of others of its possessors. Bounded on the north by Epirus and Macedonia, countries not strictly considered by the Greeks as united to their body, its most northern province was the extended vale of Thessaly, whose singular fertility was sheltered and surrounded by the lofty ridges of Pindus, Ceta, Pelion, Ossa, and Olympus. The pass between Olympus and Ossa is an outlet for the water of the Titaresius, which, with the Apidanus and other streams of Thessaly, falling into the Peneus, is by it borne through the romantic

glen of Tempe into the sea. On the west stretches the country of Acarnania, separated from the mountainous, but not unfertile Ætolia, by the river of Achelous, so celebrated in the fable of Hercules and the story of Alcæon¹.

Pursuing our track along the Corinthian gulf, we notice the Ozolian or Western Locrians, with the towns of Amphissa and Naupactus; eastward is Phocis, which boasted the once oracular cavern of Delphi; Dryopis and Doris extend to the borders of the Thessalian mountains, and are commanded from the south themselves by Helicon and the lofty mountain of Parnassus, the fabled haunt of the Muses, whence sprang that Castalian fount, whose draughts the ancient Greeks believed were the sources of poetical inspiration. From the shores of the Corinthian gulf, (the gulf of Lepanto,) to those of the Euripus, were the alternate hills and dales of Bœotia, whose plains were small, but of great fertility; it was separated from Phocis and Doris by Parnassus and Helicon, while it was divided from Attica by Parnes and Cithæron. Its principal river is the Asopus, which, having collected the waters of Phocis, enters by the pass of Elateia, the only northern entrance to Bœotia, and falls into the Lake Copais. In the southern portion of Bœotia were the towns of Thebes, Thespisæ, and Plataea. As from its central position it was calculated to be, so in fact Bœotia was, the scene of most of the memorable struggles which occur in Grecian story. Northward of it dwelt the Opuntian and Epicnemidian Locrians; and hard by was the southern border of Thessaly, the pass of Thermopylæ, for ever rendered memorable by the fall of Leonidas and his small but courageous band. — Separated by the Euripus from the main land is the island Eubœa (Negropont), important from its position and fruitful produce, and possessing from its own tall mountains a view of Bœotia and Thessaly, of Othrys and

¹ Thucyd. ii. 102.

snow-capped Olympus. The last country of Northern Greece might well claim from its history a longer notice, but its soil was not so fruitful as that of the neighbouring countries, and its boast was more of men and deeds, than of wood and plain. Attica was a rocky province of triangular form, bounded on the north by Bœotia, on the south by the Ægean and Saronic gulf, which separated it from Peloponnesus. Still it had "Sunium's marbled steep," the brooks of Cephissus and Ilissus, and Eleusis, the scene of the celebrated mysteries.

The peninsula, which bore the name of Peloponnesus, in our day that of Morea, lies to the south of Greece, and is connected with it by a neck of land, called, from the chief city there, the Isthmus of Corinth. The great mountain chain of Greece is continued through Megara, the Geranea, and Corinth, and expanding thence, forms the central province of Arcadia, and branches of the mountain extending on every side divide the rest of the peninsula into Achaia, Argolis, Laconia, Messenia, and Elis. Arcadia itself is of varied character, possessing deep valleys and lakes, ravines and forests, mountain ranges and elevated plains. Its chief towns were Tegea and Mantinea. The narrow tract to the north of Arcadia was Achaia, with its twelve towns. Sicyon, and the luxurious city of Corinth, piled on a lofty rock, succeeded, and Argolis, in a south-eastern direction, follows; a peninsula in form like Attica, and similar also in the character of its soil. Laconia to the south, with its bold promontories of Tanarum (Matapan), and Malea (now St. Angelo or Maleo), boasts the fertile valley of the Eurotas, and the ancient city of Lacedæmon. Messenia to the south-east, and Elis with Olympia, so celebrated for its games, and the bank of the Alpheus to the east, complete Peloponnesus.

A few words on the islands that surround it will complete our description of the geography of Greece. In the Ionian sea, which washes it on the west, lies

Corcyra (Corfu), not strictly bordering on Greece, but Épirus, and opposite Acarnania and Elis, lie Cephallenia (Kephallonia), and Zacynthus (Zante). Off Cape Malea, in the Cretan sea, is Cythera (Cerigo), to the north-west of the large island of Crete (Candia). The Sporades, containing Rhodes and others, are to the north-east, and the Cyclades to the north-west, of the same island. Of these last, the most noted were, perhaps, Delos, Naxos, and Melos. Lemnos, Thasos, and others, are on the coast of Thrace, while Lesbos, Chios, and Samos, with others of less note, are on that of Asia.

Such were the divisions of Greece in ancient times; yet, though separated into these numerous provinces, the whole extent of land is far less than Portugal, while the sea-coast, so varied is its outline, is more than double that of France. Still Hellas boasted of scenery superior to that of countries of larger extent; and a climate so pure, that the marble of the Acropolis at this day dazzles the eye of the modern stranger, whose fathers' works are, in his own land, crumbling to decay around him.

To trace the early history of a nation, involved, as it generally is, in fable and obscurity, becomes far more difficult when we cannot look to other nations connected with them in peace or war, as at least our partial guides. We cannot gather the earlier history of Greece from other countries, as we can that of Britain and Gaul from Rome. Indeed, so essentially opposed were the original tribes to other nations, that, as it has been observed, one and the same term denoted equally a stranger and an enemy. Thus it is from the Greeks alone that we can gather any thing of Grecian story, and mingled as the traditions are with much that is fabulous or mythic, it is a work of deeper research than this can claim to be, to unravel a thread so tangled and confused. The most we propose to do is to give an outline of the opinions of others concerning the original tribes, their settlements and customs.