

ART IN PRIMITIVE GREECE AS TREATED BY GEORGES PERROT AND CHARLES CHAPIEZ.

By the President, FRANCIS C. PENROSE, M.A., F.R.S.

THE work of MM. Perrot and Chipiez, of which the book under notice is a translation,* embraces so many objects that in this notice the discussion of many of them must be curtailed. One may dismiss the introductory chapter and commence with calling attention to the judicious remarks on the effect of the geography and climate on the character of the people (pp. 28, 29, &c.). A country of harbours, superficially smaller than Portugal, but having a seaboard more extensive than that of Spain; supplied with defensive mountain barriers, calculated to isolate the inhabitants into small groups; with scarcely a road until Roman times; with an atmosphere healthy to the body, and, by its brilliancy, encouraging the artistic faculty; abounding in marble, thus facilitating the sculpture of the great period; an almost entire absence of metal making commerce a necessity. All these circumstances, however, would have had but little effect had not the genius of the people contributed its share.

It is a most important subject of speculation to try and discover the derivation of this wonderful people, particularly the later Hellenes of the Great Period. "The most authoritative historians, such as Herodotus and Thucydides, whilst they lay stress on the slight resemblance observable between Pelasgic and Greek dialects, are inclined to believe that no real difference of race existed between the two peoples. They are disposed to see in the Hellenes tribes which through some sort of natural selection came out of the Pelasgian stock and rose to superior culture.† It is a highly probable hypothesis. Nowhere do we find, either in a mythic or historical form, the faintest echo of a religious strife such as would have taken place had Pelasgian gods been superseded by Hellenic ones." From this point (pp. 55-111) follows a lengthy discussion on the obscure movements which seem to have taken place in the country, ending with the Dorian conquest of the Peloponnesus—about the eleventh century B.C.—not without interest, but having little or nothing to do with architecture. The same may be said of the next chapter (pp. 112-139), on the Stone Age in Greece. Paleolithic specimens are rare, but neolithic not infrequent. At p. 139 we touch primitive architecture in the island of Thera—now Santorin—an island of extreme interest to the geologist on account of the changes wrought by subterranean fires—changes supposed to have taken place some sixteen or seventeen hundred years B.C. There is not much to tell architecturally about Thera, but it seems to mark a period. A hundred pages follow with an account of Troy—that is, of Hissarlik—which shares with Tiryns and Mycenæ the chief interest in these volumes, the three sites the exploration of which is almost solely due to the energy and liberal enthusiasm of Dr. Schliemann, led on by his undying belief in the verbal inspiration of Homer. The reader is recommended, in addition to the account which MM. Perrot and Chipiez give of

* *History of Art in Primitive Greece—Mycenian Art.* From the French of Georges Perrot and Charles Chipiez. Illustrated with 544 engravings in the text and 20 coloured

plates. 2 vols. Large 8o. Lond. 1894. Price 42s. Messrs. Chapman & Hall, 11, Henrietta Street, Covent Garden.

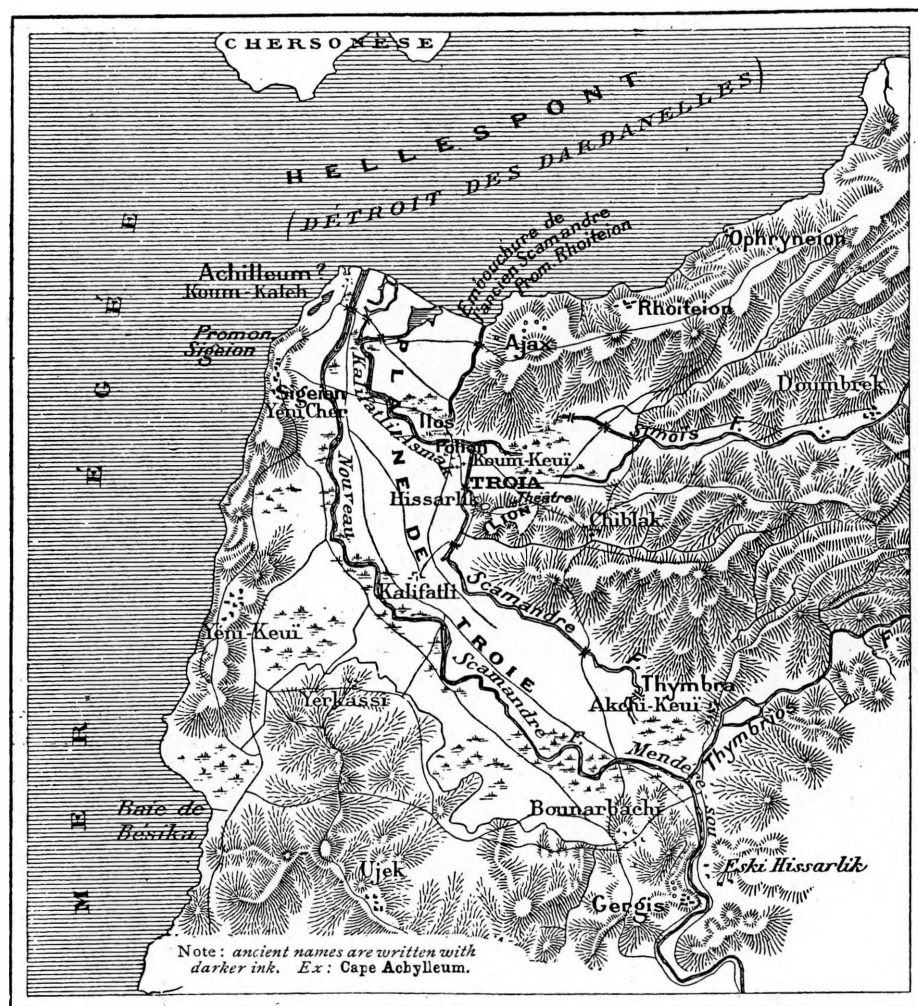
† *Herod.* i. 58 and i. 60.

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Troy in this volume, to refer also to Schuchardt's work, entitled *Schliemann's Ausgrabungen in Troja, Tiryns, &c.* [English translation by Miss E. Sellars: Macmillan, 1891.]

Plate I. in the present work is sufficient to show at a glance the extreme complication of this site of Hissarlik; it is the more so because Dr. Schliemann's first excavations in 1872 were not made with the same care that he afterwards applied—in fact, he was so

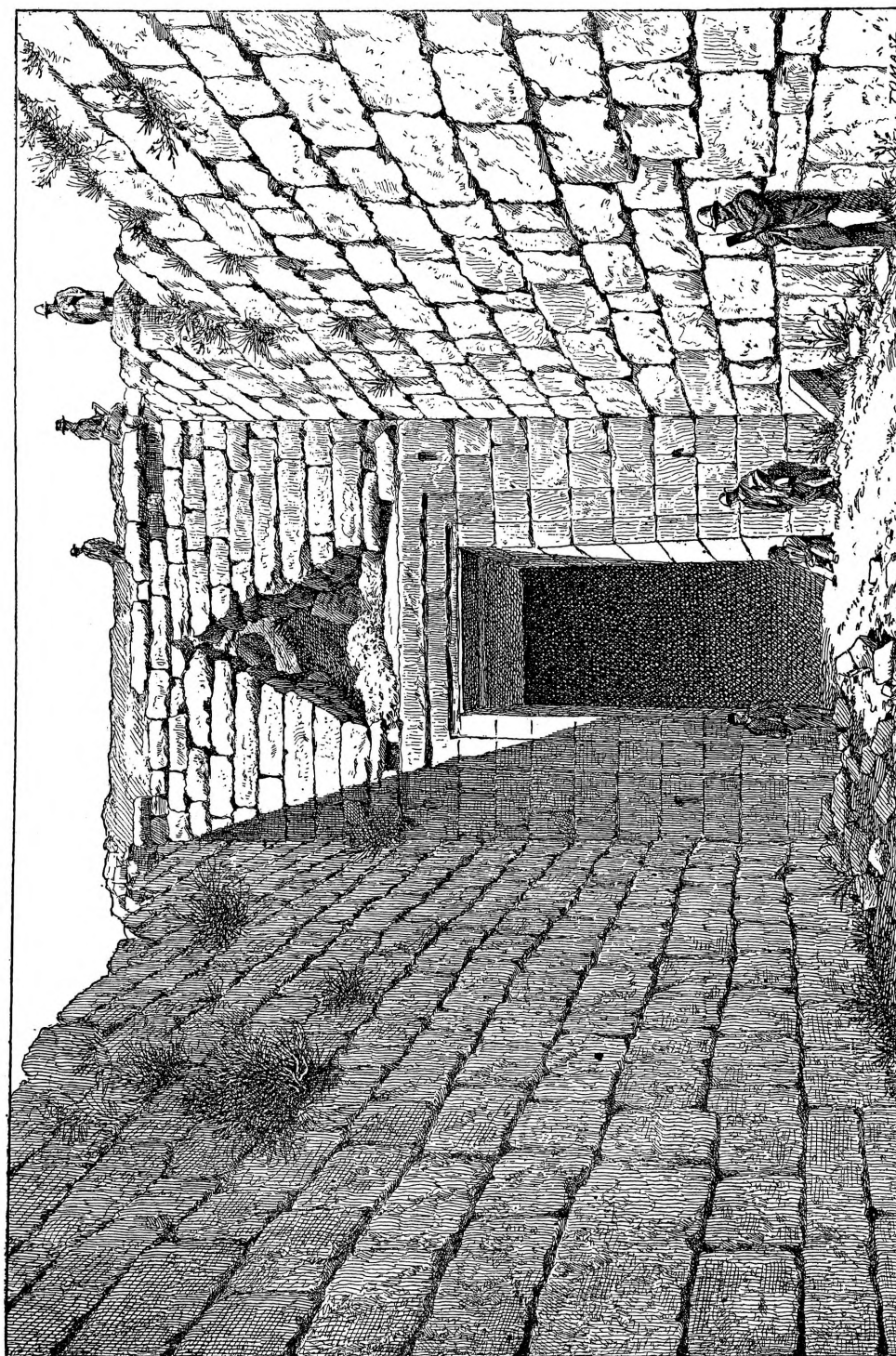
dominated with the idea that the Homeric descriptions were topographically accurate that nothing which did not conform to that hypothesis was treated with any respect; and much evidence which, had it been left alone, would subsequently have been usefully observed was utterly lost. Several different strata of occupation were found on this site, and one of them, called in this book the Third Period, but in Schuchardt's the Second, is that which particularly claims attention. Our authors discuss



[FIG. 33.]—MAP OF TROY (AFTER SCHLIEMANN).

many interesting points of construction, but seem to carry on to a very unnecessary length the discussion of the analogies and differences between Homer's description of Troy and the remains as discovered. There results, however, so much analogy between the architecture of this Third Period city and that of the more easily authenticated cities of Tiryns and Mycenæ that the authors have no difficulty in coming to the conclusion that, although Homer's description of Troy bears a highly poetical dress, he nevertheless described to his contemporaries a site which was well understood by them, and that Hissarlik has the best claim of any of the places which have been put forward to be the true site of the city of Priam.

At p. 255 we open upon a much clearer description—namely, of the remains of Tiryns,

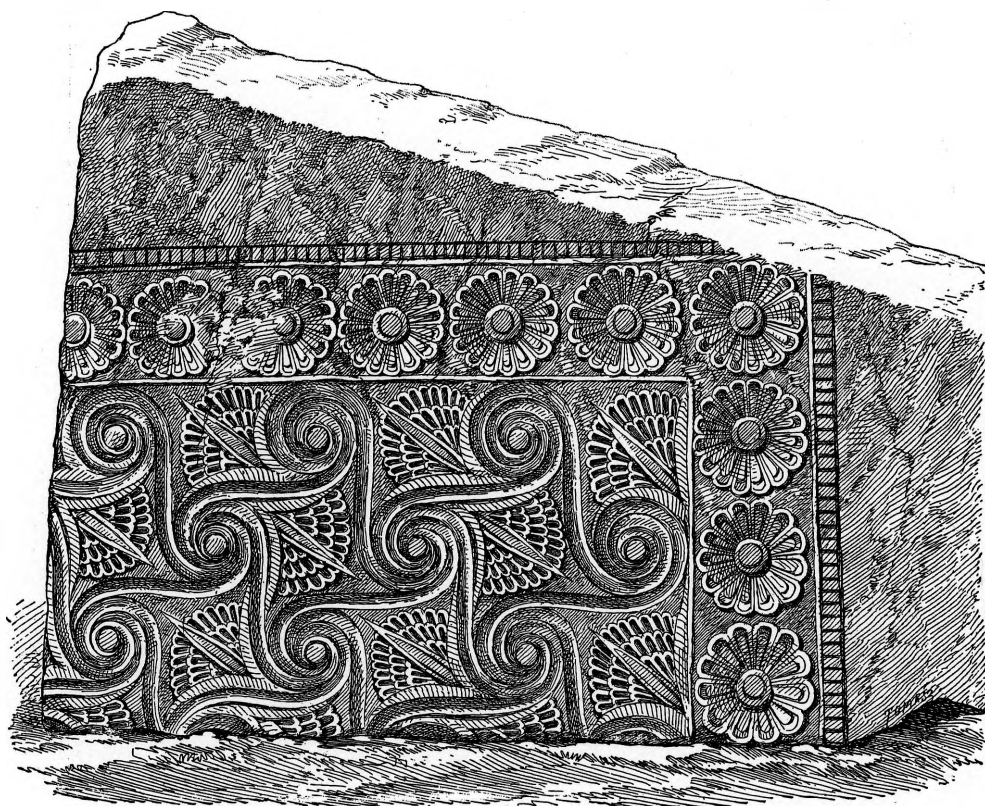


[FIG. 121.]—THE TREASURY OF ATREUS. PRESENT STATE.

a site which has never been at all doubtful, and has not been much interfered with by settlements earlier or later than that of its builders in the Pelasgic period. The plan of this fortress in Plate II. forms a strong contrast with the Plate I. of Troy on the hill of Hissarlik. There are several other very good illustrations of parts of the structure. The reader may be cautioned against an error in p. 274, line 25. The letter *r* on the plan does not refer to the entrance which the author is describing, but to the sally port or postern at the bottom of the staircase on the other side of the hill.

At p. 294 the third great example of a primitive fortress is described, viz. Mycenæ. This example, as well as the previous one, is well illustrated, and in this edition the English student has the further advantage of several of the woodcuts from Schliemann's *Tiryns*

and *Mycenæ*, as the Publishers acknowledge in the Preface. So much of this fortress and the so-called Treasury of Atreus remained above ground before the late excavations that it is extraordinary that Strabo should have said that it had been so entirely destroyed by the Argives "that no trace of it remained in his day." Pausanias, however, describes these

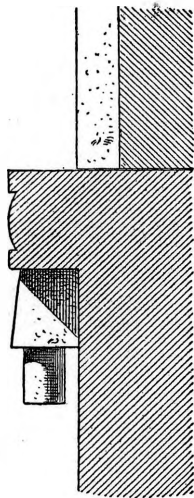


[FIG. 217.]—FRAGMENT OF SLAB FROM CEILING FROM DOMED TOMB AT ORCHOMENUS.
ABOUT ONE-SEVENTH ACTUAL SIZE.

places very distinctly, and our authors argue, with much plausibility, that whilst he must have actually seen the Lion's Gate and the Treasury of Atreus [p. 527], the royal tombs discovered by Schliemann were probably hidden at the time of his visit, and that he quoted in what he recorded on the subject from an earlier chronicler named Hellanicus. Whilst on the subject of the references to passages from ancient authors quoted in this work, it is a serious defect that the references are hardly ever complete, the name of the author without any further reference being thought to be sufficient. After the account given of Mycenæ the description follows of a number of tombs found at the Argolic Heræum, at Nauplia, and in parts of Attica. The authors then proceed to the Acropolis of Athens. In p. 404 there is a curious error as to the height of the Acropolis, which is stated to rise above the general level *nine*

At pp. 418-429 is the description of the very remarkable domed tomb at Orchomenus, almost vying with the Treasury of Atreus at Mycenæ in size, and quite so in regard of sumptuousness. Figs. 217 and 218 (pp. 528-529), and several of the following cuts, should be referred to in connection with this building—beautiful in themselves, and also showing germs of the ornaments in use in the Great Period. At p. 446 we find allusion to the practically new language imported into archæological investigations by the examination of potsherds, signs and evidences of date which had escaped the observation of the earliest explorers. For this “sherd lore,” as it may be called, the Mycenæ discoveries furnish an important and recognised standard of comparison. At p. 459 attention is directed to the curious fact that whilst the Greeks, in these primitive times, were accustomed to use lime for making plaster with great effect, they never employed it for making mortar, but were contented with clay for this purpose. It is rather singular that in speaking of the great size of the stones used in the Cyclopean walls in Greece no mention is made of the buildings of the same race of people in Italy, where sometimes—and particularly at Alatri—even larger stones have been used than any at Tiryns.

At pp. 469-470 is a discussion on the comparative antiquity of the walls built with approximately horizontal courses and of those in which polygonal blocks have been used, and the earlier date is ascribed to the former method. There will be differences of opinion on this point, but it is certainly true that some walls of polygonal masonry can be referred to dates of only moderate antiquity. At pp. 481-483 the origin is considered of door openings diminishing upwards, which are attributed to timber door jambs having been used inclined towards one another, figs. 189-190. At p. 492, referring to the fact that the columns used at Mycenæ and Orchomenus diminished from the top downwards, contrary to the now received method, the primitive practice is derived by our authors from the original wooden construction of the superstructure in domestic buildings, the large top diameter of the column offering a stronger hold upon the necessary framing; but then follows the strange observation that the props of our chairs and tables are a “survival of this primitive arrangement”—an illustration it might be, but not a survival, for the cases of the two things, buildings and furniture, are quite distinct. The *point d'appui* for the building is the ground; that of the piece of furniture is its seat or table-top.



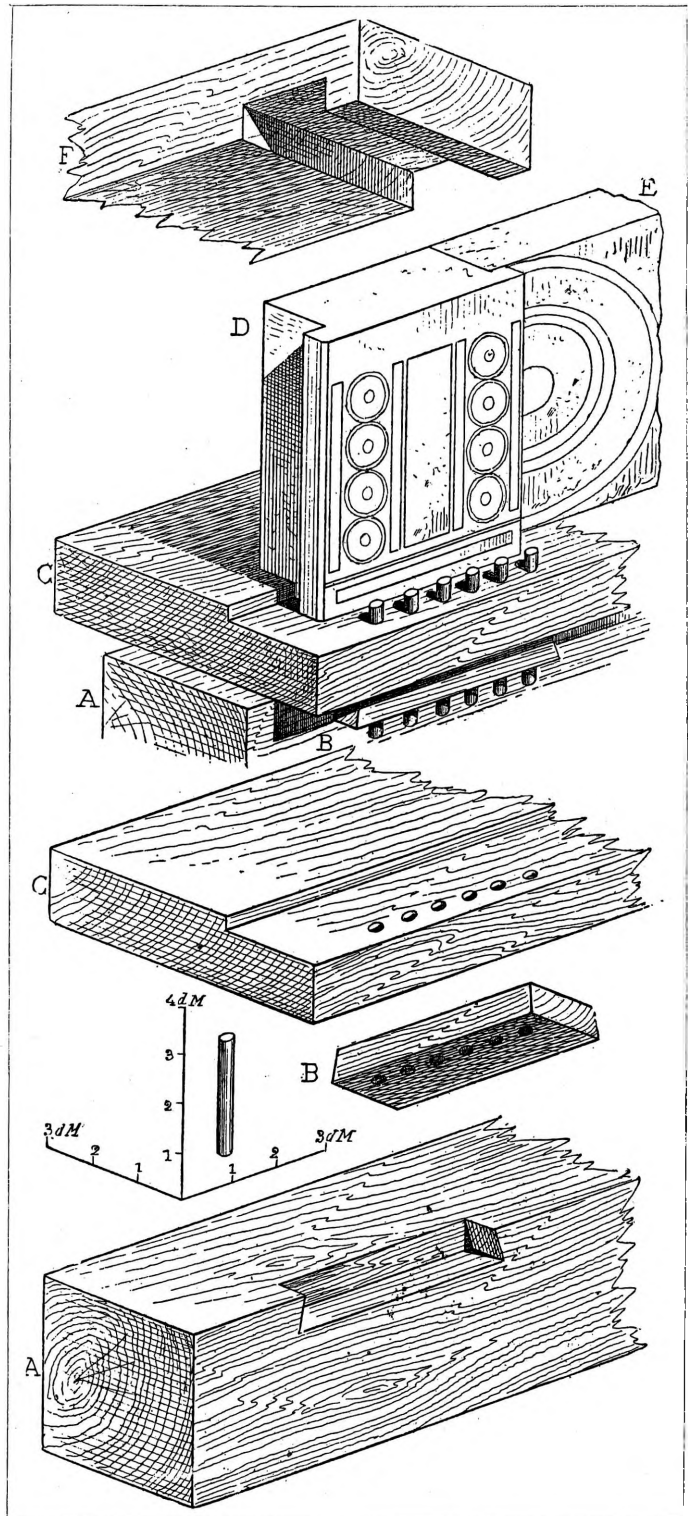
[FIG. 304.]—GUTTA IN C.
TEMPLE AT SELINOUS.

The discussion of the timber construction of this period is useful in showing how the timber type, imitated in the maturer style in stone, took its origin. The subject is pursued further in the second volume. The labyrinth scroll was evidently a great favourite in the ornamentation of this period; but when a spiral is used, it is always the simple spiral in which the convolutions increase in diameter by equal increments. The more beautiful and expanding scroll of the Ionic volute, &c., was a later invention. Towards the end of the volume there is a discussion on the use of metal coverings, which added greatly to the richness of the principal apartments, whether of the palaces or the tombs. The reader may see in these the relationship to Phœnician art by reference to the gold overlayings of so much of the architecture of Solomon's Temple and the connection of Hiram's Tyrian workmen with that building.

At p. 5 of vol. ii. some tombs are referred to at Mycenæ, in which the skeletons were found in a sitting posture, and which seemed to be quite different from any found elsewhere in Greece. It is remarkable that Mr. Flinders Petrie has lately discovered, at a place called Nubt-Ombos, near Denderah, a number of tombs belonging to

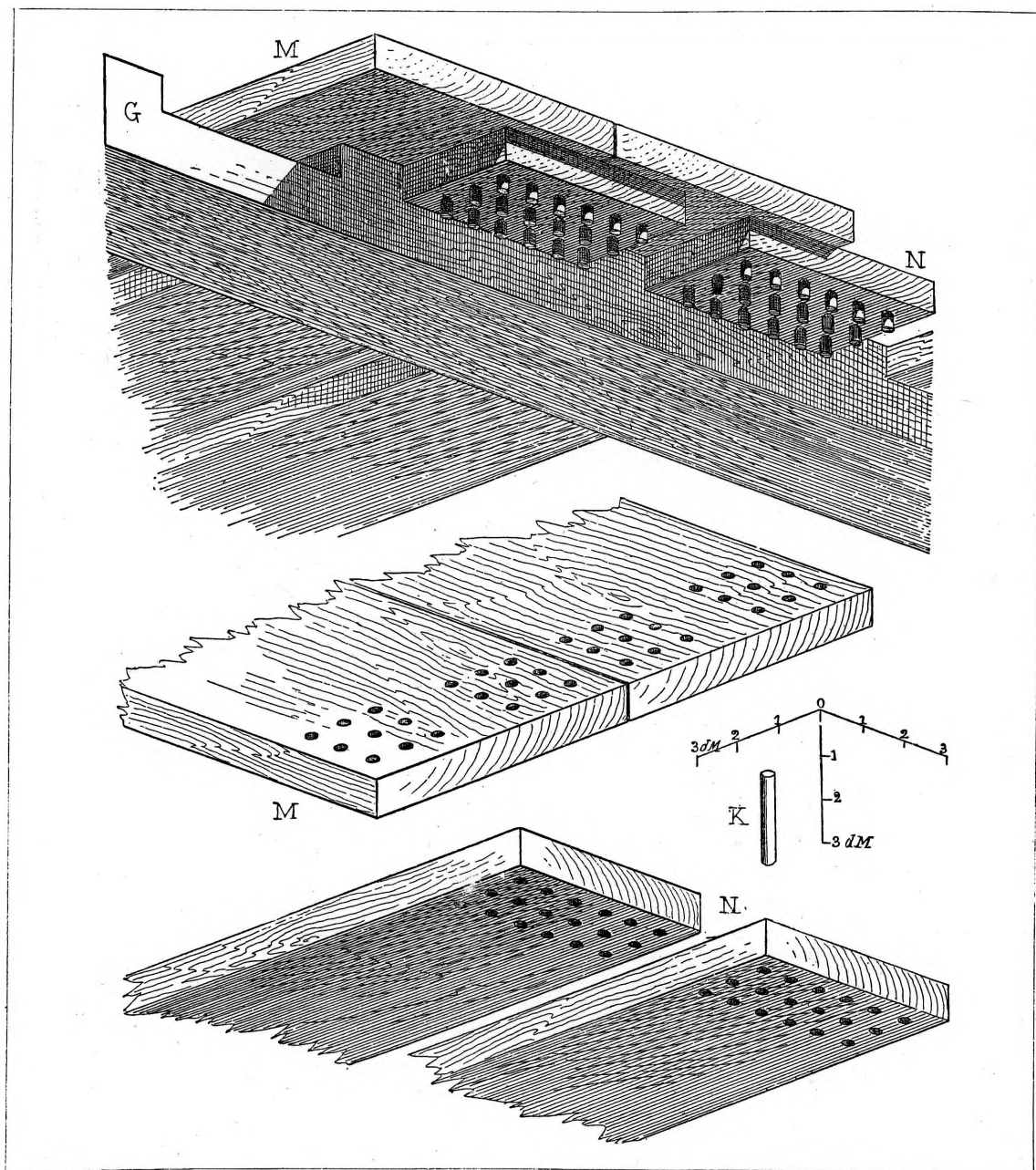
a race very different from any known race of Egyptians, and of which the relationship has not yet been identified, in which the bodies were placed in a very similar posture.

Although the frontals of the beehive tombs, such as the Treasury of Atreus, were generally elaborately ornamented, it appears that it was the final intention, as soon as the family sepultures were all complete, to entirely conceal these frontals with a solid wall. As the graves which have been discovered in them were always interments, this filling up would have taken place much more rapidly than a columbarium of the Roman pattern, in which ashes only were deposited. The authors find no signs whatever of cremation at Mycenæ, which is remarkable, as, according to Homer, it was the usual form of burial—at any rate for a chief. From pp. 19 to 45 we have a discussion at great length on the general character of the shaft and beehive tombs, with the conclusion that the former were the earliest, and probably belonged to a different dynasty, namely, the *Perseidæ*, the latter being those of the *Pelopidæ*. The elaborate architecture of these latter is also in favour of that view. It is right, however, to say that there are differences of opinion on this point. A detailed description of the tomb called the Treasury of Atreus follows, with Plates IV.–VII., the first giving the details of the present condition, the three latter as restored by the authors, with their reasons for each step very fully detailed in the text. Chapter VI. consists of a discussion on the religious architecture of the primitive period. Any existing remains which



[FIG. 305.]—MYCENIAN PALACE. SECOND EPOCH. SHOWING THE SEVERAL PIECES OF THE ENTABLATURE: ARCHITRAVE AND FRIEZE.

can be identified are shown to be very scant, and it is also true that the passages in which Homer mentions temples of the gods are few in number. This does not, however, prove



[FIG. 308.]—MYCENIAN PALACE. SECOND EPOCH. SHOWING THE SEPARATE PIECES OF THE CORNICE.

that there may not have been a considerable number, though of comparatively small size, and which have subsequently been rebuilt on the same foundations.

In some temples, of which considerable remains exist, there are not wanting evidences of portions of much greater antiquity than the general mass of the structure, and this claim of

great antiquity is supported in several notable instances by recent investigations based on their orientation. There are, however, in this volume, descriptions of two ancient shrines, one on Mount Ocha, in Eubœa, and the other in Delos (see p. 95). They are both very small, and seem thereby to confirm the view already advanced that this early epoch was not a time of much display in temple architecture. On p. 97 the authors, without however assigning any argument, refer the Delos example to a comparatively late period—the eighth or ninth century B.C. In their description of Plates VIII., IX., X., the authors justify the introduction of wooden galleries on the top of the citadel walls by reference to a decree respecting a restoration of the walls of Athens dated A.D. 323. It should be stated, however, that the relief on the Nereid tomb, of a much earlier date, which represents a besieged city, shows nothing of the kind, but battlements only. The different styles of masonry in the walls of Mycenæ are explained (p. 110) by successive reconstructions, and the polygonal masonry, as already observed, is considered to be later than that with approximately horizontal courses. In the same page the advanced character of the military engineering at Mycenæ and Tiryns over that of Troy is referred to. In Plates XI., XII., and fig. 301, the authors seem to have allowed much liberty to their fancy in the restorations of the palace architecture. The strange appearance of the columns diminishing from the top downwards seems, however, to follow the evidence as already mentioned. In the long discussion on the origin of the Doric Order there are some interesting suggestions, particularly the derivation of the guttæ from constructive pegs; and it may be allowed that the reconstruction given of the timber architecture of the palaces of this period and the explanation of the wooden types used decoratively in the later stone architecture are well dovetailed into each other. The reader will probably see how the argument applies more readily by inspection of Figs. 304, 305, and 308 [pp. 530–32], than in reading the twenty pages of text on the subject. Fig. 320 is a very plausible explanation of the form of the antæ in a Doric temple. The authors seem to decline to accept the favourite theory of the derivation of the Doric capital from the Egyptian—as, for instance, the example at Beni Hassan—but give no derivation of it themselves. The metal work depicted in Plates XVI., XVII., and XIX., fig. 391, and several others of the figures, shows a great superiority in this branch of art over sculpture and painting. Pottery, in Chapter XI., is a distinct subject in itself, and is well illustrated; and this is of the greater importance in consequence of the Mycæan pottery having become, as already noticed, an archæological standard. The gold and silver ornaments illustrated in figs. 504 to 540 are particularly worthy of attention, and show the high order of merit to which this branch of art had attained.

In the last chapter, of recapitulation, it is argued with much probability that the primitive Achæans, to whom the marvellous works at Tiryns and Mycenæ, &c., were due, had already fallen into a great state of decadence when they were overthrown by the ruder Dorians about 1100 B.C., which for a time, but fortunately not finally, threw backward the civilisation of Greece.

Lastly, it may be observed that the wealth of illustration in this work is very remarkable, almost all the 544 woodcuts are in themselves interesting and also well drawn, some of them being of great elaboration. Almost the only desideratum is connected with the text, which would have been better if it had been less prolix; an opinion in which the English editor, judging from his remarks in the Preface, seems to have anticipated me.

* * The Institute is much indebted to Messrs. Chapman & Hall, the publishers of the English edition, for the loan of the blocks with which the above review is illustrated.