

(editor's note: This paper was transcribed from a handwritten cursive copy with various difficulties. For a perfect rendition, the reader might wish to consult the original, itself a copy, in the volume entitled *Literary Club Papers*, Dec 20, 1890 to May 30, 1891)

Some "patches of Hellas;" otherwise, Greece spots.

Greek has its moods and tenses, as Greece has her vales and mountains, and a very limited acquaintance with the former prompts me to prefer the latter, even though totally unknown. Having occasion, recently, to look a little into the story of Greece as it was in its glory, some incidents connected with her most celebrated vales excited interest, and they are hastily jotted down, as they seemed to be, and if they depart from the accepted mythology of the subject, attribute it rather to modern pessimism, than to any lack of reverence for the immortal gods.

There was the vale of Thermopylae for instance, of which some of you may have heard under the more familiar name of Pass of Thermopylae, so-called because of certain warm baths thereabouts. Though to what use those baths were applied we cannot conceive, judging the habits of the prototype by what we observe in his descendents. The pass, however derived only its name from the proximity of the Hot Springs. Its fame grew out of a different circumstance, and was far wider than the Pass, or itself, the width of the latter being, in ancient times, but twenty five feet, while its fame was some 25,000 miles wide, that is to say, worldwide. The Persians, some three millions strong, under Xerxes, and three hundred Spartans, under Leonidas, had an engagement in this Pass 2368 years ago the 7th day of last August, and in spite of the great inequality in numbers of the contending armies, the Spartans held the position. In fact to a man they hold yet.

At the time of that battle the Pass was but twenty five feet in width, but like many other small things that have suddenly sprung into notoriety, it has spread itself until today it is wide enough to maneuver a large army upon. In the following century the Syrians under Antiochus were defeated at this Pass by the Romans, but without disturbing the tenure of Leonidas, which was literally a mortgage. Another of the Grecian vales about which much has been said and sung was the vale of Tempas a trifling place some five miles long and of varying width, in Thessaly, between Olympus and Ossa.

A reliable authority tells us that those two mountain peaks were originally joined in one, but were cloven in twain by Poseidon, alias Neptune, with its Trident. Another authority equally reputable attributes the splitting feat to Hercules, a distinguished slugger of the early Greeks. And as the latter was far the stronger man of the two and well known as a hard hitter, the latter story is most probably the correct one. The writer has no doubt whatever of the feasibility of the thing since seeing the [] hills, near Millrose, in Scotland, which that well-known and truthful historian, Sir Walter Scott, says work left by the great Wizard, Michael Scott. Sir Walter is good authority on the subject, for his residence was in sight of the cloven hills.

There is a tradition that the Greek mountains referred to were rent by a seismic disturbance, which the vulgar call an earthquake, but such a theory is too commonplace to be entertained for a moment, and was no doubt the work of some iconoclastic old

humbug, without sentiment or imagination. Mount Ossa you will remember as one of the mountains that the Giants piled up as stepping stones, to scale the heavens in their war with the gods. Hence the poet's expression "Pelikan on Oysters" I quote from memory and may not have the exact words. Through this vale of Tempe the Peneus flows to the Aegean. On the banks of that beautiful stream stands, or stood, "at the time our story opens," as the novelists say a laurel tree which tradition says once had been Daphne, a beautiful maiden, who was thus transformed to enable her to escape the too ardent wooing of one Apollo, a celebrated gallant of the family. Daphne seems to have been a moist and morbid maiden, for which peculiarity she was reputed to be the daughter of the river Peneus; but this I take to be a figurative expression, as men nowadays call a fellow who is prime to "go off" and make mischief, "a son of a gun."

I have even had doubts as to the story of Daphne's transformation into a tree, preferring to believe that when she was pressed too hard by the ardent swain she merely climbed the tree and hid in the leafy branches. Be that as it may, Apollo lost her, but consoled himself by wearing a wreath of laurel in memory of his defeat, which emblem he afterwards, singularly, prescribed as the emblem of victory in the Olympian games.

Apollo probably heard something derogatory to the reputation of Daphne, in the meantime, which led him to regard his amatory discomfiture in a different light, and that which had been defeat was found to have its compensations. In no other way can the change in the significance of the wreath be accounted for. Poets have described the Vale of Tempe as the very sweetest thing in vales in all the earth. To its cool shades and verdant walks came the immortal gods from "high Olympus" and there enjoyed their daily "constitutionals." Hence has Tempe become a synonym for all vales that are pleasant for climate and situation.

The vale of Parnassus, Parnassia Mape, known also as the Sacred Plain is situated in Phocis and lies on the south west side of Mt. Parnassus. From the cleft in Parnassus flowed the celebrated Castalian fount, unfailing source of poetic inspiration, until it was destroyed by an earthquake, in 1890, since which catastrophe there has been a great dearth of good poetry in the world.

The leading attraction of this valley was a structure known as the temple of Apollo, which was the home and place of business of an alleged Oracle, which has been celebrated in every age and clime. From the mass of dusty and doubtful traditions in regard to that Temple and oracle and their origin I have endeavored to elaborate a theory which is a once logical, reasonable and coherent. It is this, Parnassus Township had enjoyed the benefit of prohibition under the local option law of the Phocian Council, so long that intoxication was an unknown evil, a "lost art" so to speak. Apollo who had grown somewhat loose in his habits since being jilted by that girl over in Thessaly, had become a notorious "moonshiner" of the adjacent mountain district. He looked upon the Arcadian simplicity of this family and determined to turn an honest penny therefrom, in spite of the rigid prohibitory laws and that too without violating the same in letter, or spirit. He therefore ingeniously arranged one of his mountain stills so that the fumes of the distillation should ascend and escape through a rocky orifice, or grotto in the side of

the mountain. To this grotto came certain goats, then as now, engaged in browsing after the toothsome fruit-can and cast-off sandal, and inhaled the steam, or gas from the hidden stills.

This having peculiarly exhilarating effects the place at once became the favorite resort of all the goats in the village, and the natural, resulting demoralization, caused them to disport themselves as drunken goats and men have done ever since. Which seeing the goatherd was tempted to look upon the hole when it steamed, and of course, with like results. These vagaries and antics of intoxication were so unique that, prompted by adroit hints dropped by Apollo in the rustic ear, they were assumed to be, in some sort, an emanation from the gods which had percolated down through the mountain, and that they therefore voiced the portents and prodigies of men and nations. Now-a-days some enterprising trader would take out a license and retail the fluid, only requiring his customer to drop a nickel in the slot, or grotto, and thus get a full inhalation, to the demoralization of the Township, and the other discomfiture of all the prohibition cranks of the community. Not so Apollo, however. He knew the trick worth several of that. He had already filed a homestead claim on the land where the grotto was located. He next erected a shanty over the grotto, and employed a bright and pretty bar maid, Pythia, by name, not to sell the intoxicating fluid but to inhale it herself, and then market the vagaries of her excited imagination.

The thing worked like a charm though it was trying to the constitution of the young person, so that she and several of her successors succumbed to delirium tremens, until the proprietor was compelled to adopt a system of relays of barmaids, whereby each one should have but four hours of intoxication, daily and twenty hours in which to sober up. You will be able to see without a diagram the advantage of this method over ours. The fame of this resort spread over the whole world, which by the way, was a much smaller world than ours, so that Apollo made a good thing of it, and erected a gorgeous new saloon which she called a Temple, and which was fully equal to the finest of our Vine Street "sample rooms." The saloon was destroyed several times by reason of the disappointed habitués kicking over the stove, and the insurance companies refused longer to carry the risk. But the business was such that the saloon was rebuilt each time more magnificently than before, and wealth galore, in money, plate, statuary and jewelry was accumulated. Xerxes and Bremus, two Royal tramps who came that way, each tried to loot the place. But the proprietor rallied his divine chums to the rescue. Two or three centuries later Meno carried away several hundred of the statues to Rome, to beautify a saloon he was running in that town, and later still, Constantine "transferred" many of its most costly ornaments to adorn his capital.

At another time the Phocian council enacted some sort of Dow law, the text of which is not extant, but we know that it was effective, in that it drew some twelve millions of dollars from the saloon keepers' pockets. This valley was of further interest as being the very centre of the world, terra umbilicus, the Latins called it because the sky fitted down so snugly all around the horizon at that point. Apollo, having amassed great wealth in the saloon business, became quite an important personage, and like successful men of that calling now-a-days, displaced a good deal of atmosphere.

He established the Pythian afterwards called the Olympian games, to commemorate one of his big snake stories. He came in from the hills one day and related to the saloon loafers, with all the usual variations, how he had a terrific combat, with an immense snake called Python, which he killed. In this connection it is well to remember that Apollo was not only the god of lyre, but that he was also an expert in use of the long bow. Snake stories are not made so much of now, probably because every fellow knows that he is something of a liar himself.

The children of Apollo also began to look up in the world, because of the father's wealth. One of them Aesculapius by name, chose the profession of medicine, having observed that gentlemen of that calling took life so easily, and acquired considerable reputation. Orpheus, another of the boys, affected music, and was leader of the Orchestra. He became quite distracted over the mysterious disappearance of his wife, and betrayed his early training by the profane character of his inquiries after her. The Amphictyonic Council met in this Valley in semi-annual session, to consider public affairs. That council originally consisted of but twelve members, but the pressure for office became so great that the number was increased to thirty.

Before the members proceeded to the sessions it was customary to sacrifice an ox to Apollo in each of the cities of their residence, much as some of our members of Congress meet their friends and sacrifice to Bacchus before proceeding to Washington. How perfectly History doth repeat itself. The vale of Sparta was the name given to the middle valley of the Eurotus. Homer called it "hollow, lovely Lacedalmon (*sic*)," hence modern illiterati sometimes called a valley a "holler."

A cluster of villages in this valley, the houses in which were plain and simple in construction and style and stood in spacious gardens with olive trees, cultivated more for fruit than ornaments, was known to fame as the city of Sparta. It was celebrated more for its sturdy people than for its natural advantages or architectural beauty. Like our own New England, the soil was not adapted to high culture, and so the people turned their attention to the rearing of men, at which they had great success. But her human product seems to have taken largely to military pursuits, the surroundings not being suitable to the rearing of statesmen or thinkers, being therefore very different from the soil and climate of Ohio. Sparta owed her immunity from attack and conquest fully as much to the fact that she had little that was worth taking as to the soldierly quality of her sons.

Apropos of the zeal of the Spartans in the rearing of men, one of the favorite pastimes of the Spartan women at their public festivals was the chastisement of old bachelors around the altars. If the incorrigibles could not be made to come to the altar in one way they could in another. Whether the method was an inducement to the bachelor to alter his mode of living history fails to tell. It is reasonable to suppose, however, that so cruel an alternative would be effective.

The Spartans had peculiar notions of education, theft being one of the branches of the Spartan curriculum. They called it "klepht" because of the tenacity with which the culprit

cleaved to his prey. What we acquire through the instrumentality of “trusts” and “[]” they got more directly, and called the operation by its correct name. The Spartan “klepht” naturally became very expert and daring in his operations. Thus a boy who had stolen a fox being at once arraigned, entered his plea of not guilty with the utmost nonchalance at the very moment that the stolen animal, beneath his tunic, was leisurely lunching on his vitals. The Spartans set great store by all their belongings, especially their military equipment, which by the way, was about all they had. Thus the Spartan mother who told her son to come back behind his shield or on it, had no notion of losing that important and valuable part of a defensive armor. Like Mrs. John Gilpin:

“She had a frugal mind.”

And right here I wish to correct a popular error. He was a notorious prizefighter in the Roman arena, and all that such an occupation implies and the Romans found him a good deal of a “cuss” in other respects, but he was not of Sparta.

Vale

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