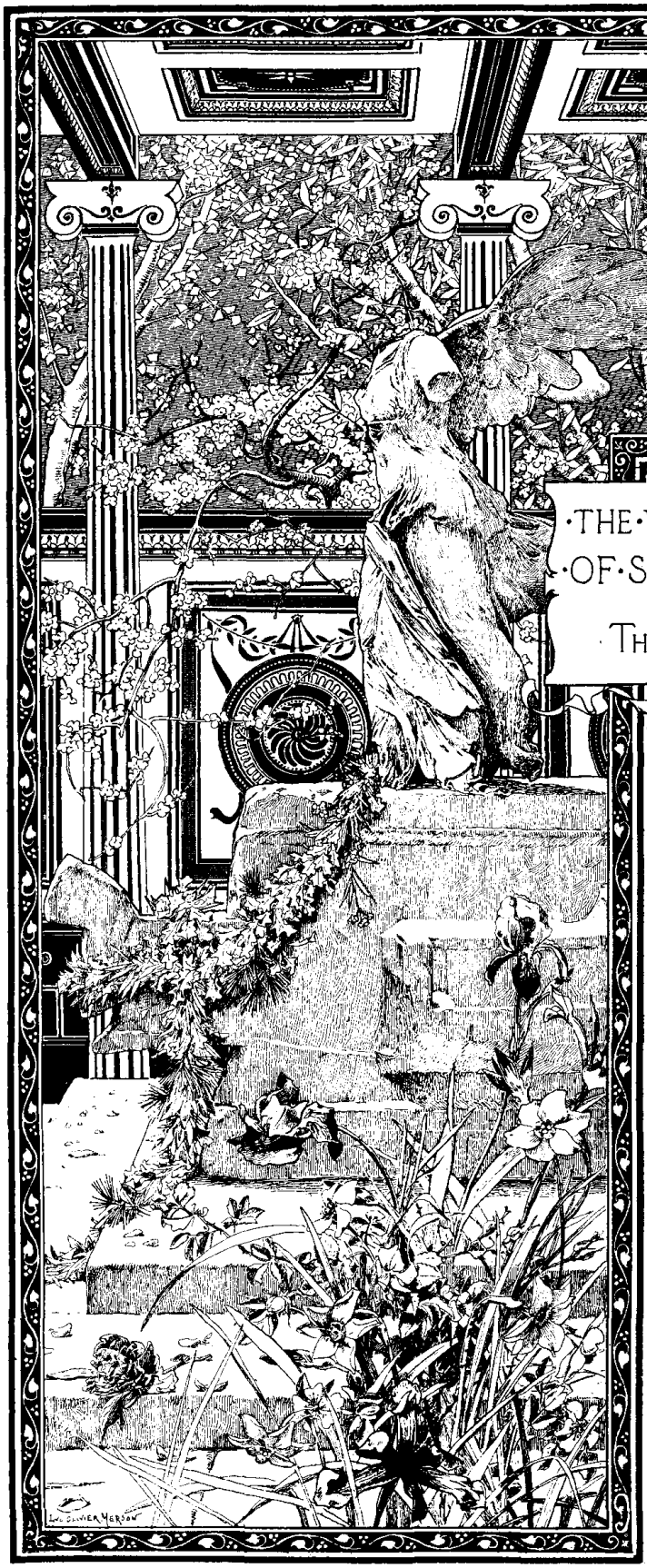

THE WINGED VICTORY OF SAMOTHRACE

BY

THEODORE CHILD

SAMOTHRACE is an island on the northwest of the entrance of the Dardanelles, opposite the mouth of the Hebrus, and distant about thirty-eight miles from the coast. Oval in shape, and measuring some eight miles long by six miles broad, it stands very high above the water, and no island in the whole northern archipelago is so conspicuous except Mount Athos. The history of this brown rock is not rich in events; sterile and without ports, it never had either commercial or political importance; its name is rarely mentioned by the Greek and Latin writers; the only town on the island, the ruins of which are now called Palæopoli, derived its celebrity amongst the ancients from its very antique sanctuary of

strange divinities called Kabeiroi, into whose mysteries many came from all parts to be initiated. The exact nature of these divinities has not been ascertained, but the name betrays Semitic origin, and their mystic rites appear to have been celebrated in Phœnicia, in various parts of Asia Minor, and in the island of Lemnos, as well as in Samothrace. The Kabeiroi came more particularly into favor in the Hellenic world in the second half of the fourth century B.C., when faith in the old national idols began to grow weak, and the Greeks turned toward foreign deities. The Macedonian princes were especially devoted to the service of these Great Gods, as they were called. Philip and his wife Olympias were initiated into their mysteries, and from about 350 B.C., during two centuries, until the Roman conquest, the protecting altars of Samothrace played a great rôle in the life drama of several of the Macedonian and Ptolemæan princes. In 280 B.C., Arsinoë, daughter of Ptolemy Soter, threatened with death by her second husband, Ptolemy Ceraunus, found asylum in Samothrace until she was able to pass into Egypt, where, in 279, she married her brother, Ptolemy II., Philadelphus. In 165 B.C., Perseus, the last king of Macedonia, conquered by the Romans at Pydna, sought refuge in the sanctuary of Samothrace, which had been hitherto inviolable; but he found the asylum insecure, and finally surrendered himself to the prætor, Octavius. Thus, thanks to these great patrons, the old Doric temple, situated in the valley, became gradually surrounded by various votive edifices, notably a new Doric temple, a portico built by one of the Ptolemæan princes, a propylæum, and an elegant rotunda erected by Arsinoë.

These buildings have left considerable traces at a short distance from the modern village. A Viennese archæologist, M. A. Conze, was the first to explore them superficially in the year 1858. In 1863 M. Champoiseau, French consul at Adrianople, obtained a credit from his government, and began to excavate in March of that year. While the workmen were digging out the façade of the portico, M. Champoiseau strolled away until, about fifty metres to the southwest, he noticed a bit of white marble emerging from the brown earth. He scraped the soil, and discovered that the marble had the form of a woman's breast. Then he called some workmen, who cleared away the earth to a depth of some two feet, and brought to light the fragments of a statue of a winged female figure. Further excavations led to the discovery of several blocks of strange form, to which little attention was paid. The French despatch-boat the *Ajaccio* was sent to Samothrace in all haste; the fragments were placed on board, and subsequently conveyed to France by one of the ships of the Levant squadron; and at length, in 1866, three years after their discovery, these pieces were fitted together, and the statue of the Winged Victory of Samothrace was placed in the Louvre Museum, in a dark corner in the Salle des Cariatides, where its beauty was, nevertheless, remarked, while its claims to be regarded as one of the greatest treasures of Greek art were fervently asserted by artists and archæologists alike.

The attention which this statue attracted caused the French government to send a second mission to Samothrace, under the direction of MM. G. Deville and E. Coquart; but these gentlemen had no faith and no enthusiasm, and their excavations were abandoned before they had given any considerable result. Thereupon the first explorer of Samothrace, M. Conze, who had meanwhile become professor at Vienna, induced the Austrian Minister of Public Instruction to send an archæological mission to the island, and in 1873 M. Conze went out, accompanied by two architects, MM. Hauser and Niemann. In 1875 M. Conze again visited Samothrace, accompanied by MM. Hauser and Benndorf, and the result of these two series of excavations was the clearing and the reconstitution of the plans and architectural arrangement of the various temples and edifices already referred to, and the discovery of a few pieces of sculpture, and of a number of inscriptions. The Austrian *savants* have given an excellent account of their labors in two finely illustrated works, *Archæologische Untersuchungen auf Samothrake* (Vienna, 1875), and *Neue Archæologische Untersuchungen*, by Conze, Hauser, and Benndorf (Vienna, 1880).

After his return to Vienna, M. Benndorf conceived the idea that the blocks of strange shape which M. Champoiseau had left when he took away the statue of Victory, and which the two Austrian missions had also neglected because they did

not comprehend their use, formed the pedestal of the statue, and that when put together they would take the shape of the prow of a ship. This theory was at once suggested and confirmed by the figure to be seen on the obverse of the tetradrachms of Demetrius Poliorcetes, which represents Nike or Fame, standing on the prow of a galley, carrying a trophy stand and blowing a trumpet. The illustration forming the tail-piece of this article gives a reproduction of the obverse of one of these coins in the British Museum, while the figure of Neptune shown in the initial letter of these pages is copied from the reverse of the same coin.

It is only fair to state that there is a disagreement between M. Champoiseau and M. Benndorf, the former claiming the priority of the discovery of the nature of the pedestal. However, in the summer of 1879 M. Champoiseau returned to Samothrace, and brought away the blocks in question, which finally rejoined the statue in the Louvre. The various fragments were carefully adjusted, the wings were fitted together over a supporting iron frame, and at last the magnificent figure was placed on its pedestal at the head of the staircase in the Louvre, where it now stands, headless and armless, but still of dazzling splendor of form, and vibrating with the eternal life of art. Our engraving (frontispiece to this number) gives a front view of the statue alone, while the initial page of this article gives the profile of the statue and of the pedestal, the whole set in a frame of appropriate invention, due to the charming pencil of M. Luc Olivier Merson.

In presence of such an exquisite and fascinating object as this Winged Victory, it seems impertinent to detain the reader with eulogious phrases. It would be still more impertinent to make comparisons with a view to depreciating accepted masterpieces. One fine work does not annul the magnificence of another. Let us rather leave the reader to appreciate with such fulness as his temperament may permit the imposing grandeur of the silhouette, the suave and majestic movement, the charm of the clinging drapery, the whole sensuous yet awe-inspiring beauty of this Winged Victory; and let us continue on our side to summarize such facts and conjectures as may enable us to realize the archæological as well as the artistic interest of the work. Take, for example, the pedestal, which remained for so many years an inexplicable heap of stones. Thanks to a hint derived from the obverse of a coin, these stones have become a document of great importance for the better comprehension of Greek naval architecture; they form the prow of a trireme. The lower spur, or *embolos*, is missing; the upper spur, or *proembolion*, has lost its point; and of the curved ornament, or *stolos*, which surmounted the stem, only a fragment remains. On the other hand, the outer galleries or passages, *parodoi*, which run along the sides of the trireme and rest on the catheads, or *epôtides*, are well preserved and of clear signification. The statue stands in the middle of the forecastle deck, or *ikrion proras*, of which we read so often in Homer, where a square hole has been hewn out to receive the plinth.

The Victory is represented with the movement of rapid walking, as if she were accompanying the rowers, and eager to spring ahead of their speed, for her wings beat the air with impatient vehemence. The fresh sea-breeze presses the drapery against the body and the legs, and makes it float in rolling and rattling folds behind. The feet, the head, and the arms were carved apart, and fixed to the statue probably with iron braces: they are now lost. Nevertheless, we have only to observe the statue attentively in order to reconstitute the complete attitude. The late distinguished archæologist M. Olivier Rayet, in a monograph on the subject, says that the rising of the breast indicates that the head was erect and looking into the distance, and the movement of what remains of the shoulders enables us to establish with precision the direction of the arms. The right arm, raised and extended in front, doubtless held a trumpet; the left arm, thrown back and hanging down, carried one of those wooden crosses which formed the interior frame or stand for trophies. In the drapery, by the side of the right knee, may still be seen three holes that were drilled to receive the points by means of which the lower extremity of this cross was fixed to the statue.

The attitude suggested by M. Rayet is confirmed point by point by comparison with the coins of Demetrius Poliorcetes, one of whose gold staters is to be seen at Florence, while specimens of his silver tetradrachms exist in most of the great

European collections. These coins, we know, were struck in commemoration of a great naval victory gained by the fleet of Antigonus, under the command of his son Demetrius, over the fleet of Ptolemy, off the island of Cyprus, in B.C. 306. Now, if M. Benndorf is right in his conjecture that the figure on the obverse of these coins is a copy of the Winged Victory of Samothrace, we may go with him in further conjecturing that this statue was consecrated by Demetrius Poliorcetes himself, and consequently that it was executed in 306 or 305 B.C. This is only a hypothesis; we can bring forward no positive evidence; but the probability of the theory seems great when we recapitulate the elements of our reasoning process, namely, the similitude of the statue and of the obverse of the coin, the fact of the naval victory, the fact of the devotion of the Macedonian dynasty to the service of the Kabeiroi, the style of the statue, which is distinctly that of the sculpture of the fourth century B.C., and lastly, the slight but still noteworthy fact that one of the ports of the island of Samothrace bore the name of Demetrion, which is not necessarily a derivative of the name Demeter, but just as legitimately of Demetrius.

The next question that presents itself is, who made this Winged Victory? Mr. C. T. Newton, of the British Museum, says, in his *Essays on Art and Archæology:* "The bold and original treatment by which the flying folds of the drapery are made to express rapid movement has, perhaps, never been surpassed in sculpture. In the execution there is a subtle refinement which reminded me of the master-hands by whom the statues of the Mausoleum were carved. As Skopas is known to have worked in Samothrace, it is a fair conjecture to attribute this Samothracian Victory to some later artist of his school." Mr. Newton's opinion has been universally accepted, and the Winged Victory is classed by modern erudition as a production of the school of Skopas.

One of the most interesting results of the recent excavations undertaken by the German government at Olympia has been to call attention to the work of a sculptor, Paionios, a contemporary of Phidias, and hitherto supposed to have been a pupil and imitator. The Winged Victory signed Paionios discovered at Olympia reveals, on the contrary, a personal master, whose violent chisel has suggested to some archæologists a comparison with Michael Angelo. The figures of the pediment of the temple of Olympia, which Pausanias asserts formally to be the work of Paionios, have likewise qualities of vigor, and even of brutality, which justify this association of names. We note the obvious characteristics of the sculpture of Olympia, which are a strong sentiment of decorative effect, the desire to strike by energy and vivacity of expression, sincere realism which does not hesitate in presence of trivialities and even vulgarities which the Attic taste of Phidias would have effaced or attenuated. This Winged Victory of Paionios is more soberly and broadly modelled than the Victory of Samothrace; the drapery is less curiously and less amorously chiselled; but the two works have in common an intensity of life and of movement and a quality of sensuous beauty which incline us to imagine that the school of Skopas proceeded rather from Paionios than from any other master.

In the fourth century the mixture of races and the communion of thought and sentiments had produced a Hellenic people, a Hellenic civilization, and a Hellenic art, which was carried by various masters east and west to Asia Minor and to Italy. Amongst the most famous of these sculptors of the fourth century were Skopas, Praxiteles, and Lysippus, whose successors followed the successors of Alexander the Great to the new capitals of Europe and Asia, and produced the greater part of the works of sculpture that are now preserved in the museums of the Old World. The archaic sculpture, with its grimacing smile, does not express a state of soul; the gods of Phidias are impassible, and their faces wear an expression of sublime tranquillity; the athletes of Polycletes are fine muscular creatures of perfect proportions, but soulless, and of commonplace physiognomy. With Skopas, Hellenic art undertakes the expression of human passions and sufferings—the agony of Niobe, the terror of her servants, the torture of her children. The Winged Victory of Samothrace is a masterpiece born of the new ideal; it is the image of a woman resplendent with vigor, and exquisite in the vibrating rhythm of her movement—a figure in which the form and the function are in perfect harmony, a magnificent realization in marble of a vision of beauty, rendered by a great and skilful artist with

all the force and all the distinction of a temperament of the rarest refinement and the most delicate sensitiveness to the charms of feminine eurythmy. At the same time, in this body, whose suave effulgence seems to shine through the caressing folds of the transparent tunic, there is a sensuous fascination suggestive of Oriental influence. In no other monument of antique sculpture do we find combined such strength, and at the same time such delicacy and subtlety of touch. It has the severe and grand charm of the age of Phidias, and at the same time it has a more modern grace, which suggests that smile of line and that intelligent and winning material physiognomy which we find in the figures of Botticelli, of Leonardo, and, in a less degree, of Watteau.

ON THE SOUTH SHORE.

BY MARGARET CROSBY.

IT was fortunate that Dr. Alden happened to be passing the school-house at West Antioch just at the moment that Miss Main fainted. Every morning he drove by the small square house on the top of the treeless hill. In winter the wind shook the little building until it seemed in momentary danger of escaping from the ground altogether, and flying away on the wings of the storm. In summer the sun shone upon it so fiercely that the paint on its walls cracked and broke off in leprous patches.

It was on one of the hottest of these days that the doctor, driving slowly by, glanced at the windows of the school-house. For two years at the same hour his eyes had grown accustomed to seeing the small figure of the teacher at her desk. But to-day she was not to be seen. At the door crowded a group of children with scared faces. They beckoned to him. The doctor stopped his horse and got out.

"Teacher's dead!" said one of the children as the doctor approached them, and then began to sob loudly.

The doctor brushed them out of his way and went into the house. The school-room was hot to suffocation. Two or three large flies buzzed on the upper panes of the windows. On the platform beside the desk lay the teacher, just as she had slipped helplessly from her chair. The doctor leaned over her and looked at her white face.

"Miss Main has fainted," he said, briefly, to the awe-struck children. "One of you get some water. Be quick about it."

When Miss Main's consciousness came back to her, she found her head resting on one of the doctor's carriage cushions, and the doctor himself gravely regarding her. She put one hand up to her head, and then turned aside from his questioning look.

"I cannot bear my life," she said.

The direct consequence of this event