

GREEK TRIBAL SOCIETY.

On the Structure of Greek Tribal Society. An Essay. By H. E. Seebohm. (London: Macmillan and Co., 1895.)

IN this scholarly and modest essay, the author has collected some of the evidence relating to a certain stage in the development of Greek society, the existence of which runs some danger of being insufficiently recognised by students of ancient history. "Greek" society to most people means, in the first place, the society described in the Homeric poems; in the second, Athenian society from the fifth century downwards. These limitations of the field are the natural outcome of the paramount importance of Homeric and Athenian literature; information as to the structure of society in other parts of Greece and at other periods of Greek history can, with a few exceptions, only be gleaned from incidental references in Homer and the Attic writers, and from the data afforded by comparative anthropology. To a certain extent Mr. Seebohm's field of observation may still seem to be somewhat confined, and his work would have been more valuable had the few facts known of the life of the less civilised parts of ancient Greece been more extensively utilised. To this end we could, perhaps, have spared some of the detailed discussion of the better-known survivals of tribal institutions in Athenian society of the fourth century.

Within these limits, however, Mr. Seebohm's treatment of the subject merits little but praise. His employment of the comparative method is throughout judicious. Outside the Greek world, he has utilised three main sources of information—the Old Testament, the Ordinances of Manu (a code going back in its present form probably to the fifth or fourth century B.C.), and the Welsh law. The selection, as he admits, is arbitrary, particularly in the exclusion of the Roman system from the field of comparison. But the highly-organised character of the latter is a source of danger when it is used for comparison with the looser structure under consideration, and its exclusion is therefore somewhat of a relief.

Most investigations of the structure of ancient political systems must begin with Aristotle. His treatise on "Politics," however, deals with society in its highest stage, with man's activity *τοῦ ἐν ζῆν*, not merely *τοῦ ζῆν ἐν ἑκά*. It is with the previous stage that we are here concerned; in fact, with what he calls "village" life—the "village" being a convenient term for the union of families, whether living close together or not, just as the state, or political union, is the combination of "villages," whether within one city-wall or scattered about a district. This "village" life has four main characteristics. As society begins in the family, the first and most important, on which all the others depend, is the bond of kinship. Secondly, the body must be organised, and this necessitates a government. The permanence of the society is maintained in two ways—by the cultivation of the land, and by the worship of the gods; in the first place those of the family, in the second those of the community. As the village is merged in the state, which reproduces on a larger scale, and therefore in a less intense degree, the relations of early society, the order of things is reversed. But the old relations continue to exist within the larger group, and it is these still-

existing tribal elements that we have to trace in the complex political society.

Mr. Seebohm's work falls into two main parts, dealing with the nature of kinship, and the relation of the family to the land, thus approaching the subject from the point of view of the first and third characteristics mentioned above. Undoubtedly this is a more scientific method than that (identified with the name of de Coulanges) which commences with the religious union, or that which lays most stress on the system of government. Primitive man is not in the first instance religious; his religion is only one of the forces which he brings into play to preserve his family or tribal unity; and government is another such force. The cultivation of the land, again, is of the first necessity, unless the tribe subsists on plunder. Any properly historical investigation should therefore begin with these two matters.

With regard to the nature of kinship, a great deal of information can be extracted from the private speeches of the Attic orators. Into this part of the subject, as we have already said, Mr. Seebohm has gone very fully. Two points seem to be of special importance, the supremacy of the head of the family, and the limitation of the "inner-circle" or *ἀγχιστεία*, the group of blood-relations, "responsible to each other for succession . . . for vengeance and purification after injury received by any member, and for all duties shared by kindred blood." As regards the nature of the government of the group, there is one feature which might perhaps have been dwelt upon a little more than it has been; that is, the limitation of the supremacy of the head of the family. Every household was ruled by its oldest member; but at the same time a passage from Plato, quoted by Mr. Seebohm himself (p. 60), shows that certain measures, such as the disinheritance of a member of the family, could not be undertaken without the consent of the kindred: "He who . . . has a mind . . . to expel from his family a son . . . shall collect together his own kinsmen, extending to (first) cousins, and in like manner his son's kinsmen by the mother's side, and in their presence he shall accuse his son, setting forth that he deserves *at the hands of them all* to be dismissed from the family." This family-council is an important factor in tribal life, particularly as being the prototype of the council of the city-state, which, as already remarked, only reproduces on a larger scale the relations of the previous stage of society.

In limiting the *ἀγχιστεία* to the degree of great-grandson, Mr. Seebohm seems to be quite right, although there are authorities who interpret *παῖδες* in the crucial expression *ἀνεψίων παῖδες* as meaning not merely children, but descendants. The evidence afforded by the litigation between the members of the family of Bouselos, which is excellently described on pp. 62 ff., seems to make this clear.

The closeness of family relations in Greece gave rise to a curious state of things as regards the position of the illegitimate child. The position of the *νόθος* is perhaps not quite clearly stated by Mr. Seebohm. In one sense he had no place in the kindred. He could not be admitted to the phratría without the consent of the true son. The laws of Solon allowed no right of inheritance to the bastard, except in the case of failure of legitimate heirs. (It is true that the scholiast on the

passage of Aristophanes where this law is quoted thinks it is an invention of the poet's. But in any case the invention was probably founded on fact). In the text of the speech of Demosthenes against Makartatos is a law dating from Eukleides (403 B.C.), which seems to refuse to bastards even the limited right granted by Solon, as nothing is said of the case of legitimate children failing. But it is unwise to press the interpretation of the laws quoted in the speeches of Demosthenes, as they are notoriously in most cases interpolations of a later date. In any case it is clear that under ordinary circumstances the bastard could not be ἀγχιστὴς in his father's family. He could only claim as inheritance the νόθεα, which was a very limited sum. But this must not be interpreted in the sense that he was altogether an outcast. Politically he suffered little. Gilbert ("Greek Constitutional Antiquities," Eng. trans. p. 191, note 1) believes that νόθοι ex cive Attica were ipso facto citizens. When both parents were citizens, the bastard would probably belong to the Phyle of his mother, and when of age would be admitted to her Deme. The position of the bastard, however, brought into play the same device for evading the law as that suggested by our new death-duties, and wealth, as the scholiast already quoted informs us, was made over by the father by gift before his death. Greek society thus did something to alleviate the lot of the illegitimate son, whose position in the family, or rather out of it, might otherwise have been somewhat hard.

Mr. Seebohm is nervous lest, in ascribing to the structure of Athenian society a direct parentage amongst tribal institutions, he should meet with considerable criticism. It is improbable that any one will dispute his main conclusions. At any rate he is sensible of most of the difficulties attaching to his subject. There are many features in Greek society which seem foreign to the tribal system. The absence of Homeric evidence for regular ancestor-worship is not very satisfactorily explained by the suggestion that "the aristocratic tone of the poet did not permit him to bear witness to the intercourse with any deity besides the one great family of Olympic gods, less venerable than a river or other personification of nature." The Homeric poems, especially the Odyssey, are too full of the small details of daily life to permit us to accept this explanation—for Homer deals with swineherds as well as kings. Or take, again, the question of burial. De Coulanges ("La Cité Antique," p. 68) states roundly that the ancient custom was to bury the dead, not in cemeteries or by the way-side, but in the field belonging to each family. He adduces evidence for the survival of this custom even in the time of Demosthenes. But if this was the rule, what are we to say of the innumerable cemeteries dating from all periods, prehistoric downwards, which have been discovered all over Greece and on the islands and shores of the Aegean? In some parts, such as Lycia, we find the true tribal system of burial in use down to late times; but it is hardly an exaggeration to say that this is exceptional.

The essay before us touches on several questions of this kind, but space doubtless prevented the author from dealing with them at greater length. It is to be hoped that he will continue this line of study, and produce the volume dealing with Roman customs to which he alludes in his preface.

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A BIOLOGIST AS METAPHYSICIAN.

Mind and Motion and Monism. By the late George John Romanes, M.A., LL.D., F.R.S. Pp. vii. + 170. (London: Longmans, 1895.)

THIS little volume of Mr. Romanes' metaphysical writings possesses great interest. The type of philosophical theory which he represents has a singular fascination. He himself, it is plain, possessed genuine metaphysical powers, and he wrote at first hand, and with the acuteness and freshness of mind which are worth more than much learning. At the same time, he suffers for his disengagement from the work of other philosophers. The *naïveté* which forms the opening sentence of the book, that Hobbes is "the earliest writer who deserves to be called a psychologist," is a trifle. But there is no evidence that he had studied the father of monists, Spinoza; and though some points in his essay might have been modified if he had lived, it presents difficulties which, to a student of Spinoza, seem to be of the first magnitude. Yet, like the rest of his philosophical writing, even when it is unsatisfactory (and it seems to us unsatisfactory), it stimulates thought.

The volume consists of two essays, the Rede Lecture of 1885 on Mind and Motion, and a longer treatise on Monism, which amplifies and expounds the metaphysical ideas of the earlier essay, but makes many additions. Romanes holds with Clifford (who seems to have inspired his speculative thinking) that wherever there is matter there is mind in some form or other, and that mind and matter are everywhere but two aspects (two modes of apprehension he calls them) of one and the same reality. He makes admirably clear the truth that a physiological process which is accompanied by consciousness would not be what it is, if it were unaccompanied by consciousness, any more than we can separate the light and heat of an Edison burner. He shows that if we apply the idea of causality to mental action, we must apply it to the twofold reality, which is both physical and mental. But he throws no light on the difficulties raised by the phenomena of so-called unconsciousness. His disproof of spiritualism, as implying a creation of energy, is satisfactory; his disproof of materialism is less so. It is a shorter way with the materialists than even Berkeley's. To treat mind as a function of matter would be to treat it as a function of itself, since all that we know of the external world is our own mental modifications. Whereas Berkeley held matter to have no existence, save as an object of mind, Romanes goes further, and regards it as in some way mind itself. But if one fact is clearer than another, it is that we rarely have knowledge of our mental states, and that we primarily know objects. On the other hand, the simpler solution, that a physical process which is accompanied by consciousness cannot be merely physical, would afford no foundation for the theory of monism.

The most interesting portions of the essay are those in which he goes beyond Clifford. Clifford had stopped with attributing to each part of matter some portion of mind, mind-stuff, but said nothing of the universe itself. Romanes holds that we may regard the whole world of objects as itself an *eject* (i.e. an inferred subject), which we may regard as super-conscious. He founds himself on