TWO SEPULCHRAL LEKYTHI.

(PLATE XV.)

MR. ARTHUR EVANS kindly allows me to publish two interesting white lekythi recently acquired for the Ashmolean Museum. The first was said by the vendors to come from the excavations at Eretria, the second from excavations at Athens itself. The particular source of them, however, is not a matter of great importance, since as yet no satisfactory proof has been adduced that the white lekythi found at Eretria were made in Euboea or elsewhere than at Athens. Both of our vases appear to belong to the regular Attic series. The plate and the cut which pertain to this article were both produced from photographs taken with the help of Mr. A. H. Smith's ingenious invention, the cyclograph (see above, p. 192). The plate was made direct from a photograph, the cut drawn by Mr. F. Anderson on the basis of a photograph.

VASE No. 1.—Height 15 inches (ctm. 38). (Pl. XV.)

On shoulder, three palmettes, leaves alternately red and black.

Over design, simple maeander.

Design in red: stele, bound with fillets and surmounted by a kind of capital which supports an elaborate double acanthus and palmette: two rosettes on face: at foot a box. On the right a youth clad in a red himation, extending his right arm. On the left, a winged Nike advancing towards the stele, clad in chiton with diplois, holding in both hands a flat tray containing wreaths.

The eyes of the figures are in profile, the eyelashes clearly marked; the style is of the latter part of the fifth century. On the surface of the vase is a hard yellow glaze.

The curious feature of the design is the presence of a winged figure, no doubt Victory, in place of the usual mourning woman. So far as I know, this is the only vase published with this peculiarity. It is true that in the Catalogue by M. Froehner of the vases and terracottas exhibited at the Burlington Club in 1888 it is stated that on the lekythus No. 124 a winged female figure appears on one side of a sepulchral stele. But those who turn to the photographic representation of that vase in the plates will easily convince themselves that this description is not altogether correct. There is on the shoulder of the girl by the tomb what appears at first sight to be

a butterfly wing, but on examination it is seen to be only the end of a small over-garment fluttering in the wind, like the flying chlamys so commonly represented in vase-paintings and sculptural reliefs. Mr. Bosanquet is good enough to inform me that among the vases from Eretria in the Museum at Athens is a small and conventionally drawn lekythus (No. 2013) on which a winged figure appears in the place of a female mourner. I know of no other instance.

We must briefly consider what meaning was probably attached to the design by the artist who painted it. I think we may decisively reject the notion which might suggest itself that the winged lady is the soul of the deceased. When souls are represented on these lekythi they are of very minute size. Moreover the winged figure is clearly bringing offerings, and can scarcely be the deceased person to whom offerings are brought. It is by no means impossible that the other attendant at the grave, the young man, may represent the occupant of the tomb. Several instances may be found in which the deceased is not seated on the steps of the stele, but standing beside it. But the winged figure is certainly not the soul of the dead.

It is in fact quite clear that she is, as I have described her, a Victory. Her attitude is charming, and her form well-drawn, in spite of a little clumsiness in the legs and feet. The position is not quite that of any of the Victories in the balustrade of the temple of Athena Nike; and in fact the vase is probably of somewhat earlier date than that balustrade. But the vase-painting and the relief belong to kindred schools of design, and alike indicate a tendency of Athenian art at the time. This is the tendency to bring in, wherever it may suitably be done, figures of Victory engaged in a number of the offices really carried out by mortals. In the balustrade, Victories lead a bull to sacrifice and erect a trophy in honour of some Athenian victory. The instances in which Nike in vase-paintings and reliefs brings the wreath to an athletic victor are too numerous to mention. It need not therefore in any way surprise us to find Victory bringing wreaths also to the grave of some distinguished person, very probably a winner in the games.

We may illustrate the substitution of Nike for an ordinary female figure by the comparison of another set of vases. On two vases of Berlin, one red-figured and one white,¹ we have the same design, a woman at a fountain, stooping to lift a hydria. On a lekythus at Athens² a similar figure appears in the same attitude, but with wings.

Before quitting this vase I must remove the fears of those who may suspect that some part of the design may be due to the ever increasing skill of the modern Athenian dealer in antiquities. At my request Mr. Evans has had the vase washed with water, and even in some parts touched with diluted acid, in order to make sure of the antiquity of the drawing: and the vase has sustained this treatment without suffering any injury, or losing a line of the design.

¹ *Arch. Jahrb.* 1895, *Anzeiger*, p. 40, Nos. 44 and 45.

² Benndorf, *Griech. u. Sicil. Vasenb.* xxiii. 2.

VASE No. 2.—Height $11\frac{3}{4}$ inches (ctm. 28·4).

On shoulder, three palmettes with leaves alternately red and black.

Over design, simple maeander.

Stele, drawn aslant, surmounted by acanthus. On the right, a youth clad in himation, drawn only in outline; his right hand rests on some object, apparently a distaff, which rests on the step of the stele. On the left a female figure clad in dark chiton bound with white girdle; she holds a small bier which contains the body of a dead child, the head disproportionately large, the eyes apparently closed. A fragment of the coverlet falls from the bier. A lyre hangs above in the background.

FIG. 1.

In several details of ornament this vase resembles the first, but the drawing is more careless. The date cannot be much later.

In this case also the interest of the vase arises from an unusual peculiarity of the design, the corpse of the child. The drawing of it is very unsuccessful, the head is too large, and the body unnaturally flattened. This latter peculiarity however may be seen in the drawing of many prothesis vases,³ though in not so extreme a degree. In our vase the bier is but little larger or deeper than the flat tray in which wreaths and lekythi are commonly brought to the tomb; yet the artist has made his purpose quite clear. It is no tray turned into a bier by slight modifications, but a bier which the hand of the draughtsman, evidently a very unskilful and careless workman, has made nearly in the likeness of the usual tray.

The meaning of this picture also must be briefly considered, although in this case it is not easy to reach a definite opinion. Is the grave, like so many

³ e.g. Dumont, *Cér. de la Grèce propre*, i. pl. 33 : *M.d.I.* viii. 4 : Heydemann, *Griech. Vasenbilder*, xii. 11.
32 : Benndorf, *Griech. und Sicil. Vasenbilder*,

Fig. 2.

A LEKYTHOS FROM ERETRIA.

at Athens, that of a young mother who died in childbirth? In that case no doubt it would not be unnatural that the infant for which she gave her life should appear by the stele. It may be supposed that the child which did not long survive its mother is brought to the grave by the nurse, while the young husband brings the distaff of his lost wife. Both infant and distaff may well have found a place in the grave, the place of which is marked by the stele: very appropriately therefore they may figure with the lyre as dedications or offerings at the tomb. I can suggest no better interpretation than this; to which the main objection seems to be that it supposes in the painter of the lekythus a special reference to the circumstances of the particular death, a thing somewhat unusual at Athens even in the case of grave-reliefs, and still more unusual in the case of sepulchral vases. Such reference is out of the lines of the higher Attic art. But the painter of our vase is evidently an ill-trained or inexperienced man, as the defects in his drawing clearly show; and such a man would be more likely to violate the ordinary rules of Athenian convention than an artist of more experience.

It is in fact the narrow limits of received conventions which make the large series of Athenian lekythi with white ground somewhat uninteresting in spite of the beauty of the drawing and the charm of the designs. It is pleasant to find, as in the two vases before us, that even at Athens the strict rules of artistic precedent were occasionally violated, and interesting variations introduced. These variations are in our two vases in diametrically opposite directions. The artist of the second vase varies in the direction of the admission in his design of circumstances peculiar to an individual case; the very much more highly educated artist of the first vase varies in the direction of unusual generalization and ideality, a human mourner being replaced by a figure which embodies rather the general principle of mourning, and of offerings to the dead.

PERCY GARDNER.