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## GREEK BOXING.

[PLATES XII., XIII.]

THE boxing of the Hellenic world even in the fifth century B.C. could boast an antiquity and renown to which modern pugilism can offer no parallel. The 'noble art' was associated with some of the most famous names of the heroic age, including even kings and demigods, so that the opprobrium which has become attached, perhaps unjustly, to the term 'prize-fighter' was precluded from the titles of the Greek champions. The antiquity of the sport is shown by the vivid descriptions of Homer and the place assigned to it in the Funeral Games, while a fragment of a relief showing a boxer armed with *ιμάντες* discovered by Dr. Evans at Cnossus carries us back to a remoter past.<sup>1</sup> In historic times especially in the earlier period we find the Ionians were the chief boxers and supplied most of the champions.<sup>2</sup> The Dorians, especially the Spartans, do not seem to have looked upon pugilism with much favour, although some victors are known to have come from the Peloponnesus. In the fifth century, however, Rhodes, Aegina, Arcadia, and Elis secured the greatest number of victories at Olympia<sup>3</sup> in boxing and pancratium. This antiquity of boxing must have given the fighting men of the classical period the advantage of a rich store of accumulated experience and ringcraft, a fact which has great practical importance when we remember the different theories and tactics from which modern boxing has been evolved. The style of a well-trained pugilist is no more that which naturally suggests itself than the lunge of the modern fencer is the mode of attack instinctively employed by a novice. The Greek method of boxing, however, seems to have been surprisingly conservative: during historical times it changed in detail, especially in matters of equipment, but the Greeks having once chosen their style seem to have adhered to the same principles throughout and to have carried them to their logical conclusion. The reason of this is probably to be found in the fact that when the Greeks were first confronted with the practical difficulties of attack and defence in the ring they resorted to arti-

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<sup>1</sup> *Annual of British School of Athens*, 1900-1901, p. 95.

<sup>2</sup> *Krause*, ii. 766.

<sup>3</sup> See Oxyrhynchus papyrus, II. 222; C. Robert in *Hermes*, Vol. xxxv. Part I. pp. 141-195.

ficial remedies instead of learning how to use their fists. In the earliest contests of which we have any evidence strips of leather were wound round the knuckles and forearms of the combatants to prevent the fists from puffing and the arm from being broken, as it easily might be in round or downward strokes. These thongs, called simply *ἰμάντες* in Homer, and subsequently named *μειλίχαι* to distinguish them from the weapons of later days, can scarcely be regarded in the same light as modern boxing-gloves. It is true that they seemed mild in comparison with *μύρμηκες* or even the later *ἰμάντες*, but we cannot accept the assumption of Dr. Krause and others that they actually deadened the blow of the fist. Professional pugilists seem to agree that fights of the present day in which very light gloves are used are more severe than if bare fists were allowed: the gloves have not enough padding to make any appreciable difference, while they prevent the knuckles from swelling and deadening the blows. This must have been the case to an even greater extent when strips of leather were employed.

When once the *μειλίχαι* were officially adopted the practice of round hitting was confirmed and subsequent developments tended to make the thongs harder and heavier, till we find the *σφαῖραι* and *μύρμηκες*, and finally the disgusting cestus of the Roman amphitheatre. But the development was gradual. The Boxing contest was first held at Olympia in the 23rd Olympiad (688 B.C.) and the Boys' Boxing was added in the 41st.<sup>4</sup> Throughout the classical period it was an important event in all the chief athletic meetings.

The brutal *σφαῖραι*<sup>5</sup> were known in the fourth century and Plato<sup>6</sup> recommends them as a means for discovering *τόν τε εὖψυχον καὶ τὸν μῆ*, and even makes provision for freeing the combatants from responsibility in cases of death which must sometimes occur! But such instruments as these were apparently not used in the great national festivals. At any rate the vases do not show them. The *μειλίχαι* seem to have been used in early historic times, and certainly were worn in the fight between Creugas and Damoxenus at the Nemean Games.<sup>7</sup> During the fifth and fourth centuries the thongs were made harder and heavier, and towards the end of the fourth century and in Hellenistic times we find the type which is shown in the Panathenaic vase in the British Museum dated 336 B.C., and which is worn by the well-known bronze statue in Rome of a seated Boxer belonging to the Hellenistic period. Further than this we need not go in the evolution of the cestus, for nothing is gained from the contemplation of Roman methods of amusement: while it is unlikely that the gauntlets of the Roman poets were ever used in genuine Greek competitions. The Greek anthology, however, contains many epigrams on the terrible wounds inflicted by the *μύρμηκες*.<sup>8</sup>

The foregoing sketch shows that the conditions of Greek boxing seem

<sup>4</sup> Paus. v. 8. 9.

<sup>5</sup> Pollux, iii. 150.

<sup>6</sup> *Laws*, viii. 830.

<sup>7</sup> Paus. viii. 40. 3.

<sup>8</sup> The subject is fully worked out in *Antike Turngeräthe* by J. Jiithner.

to have remained much the same from the beginning of the sixth century to the end of the fourth, and that although the tendency was to make the fist-covering more severe yet nothing was introduced that necessitated a style of fighting different from that described by Homer. This alone would be enough to show that boxing had already passed through several stages before it reached the one that commended itself to the Greek mind, and boxing pre-supposes a fairly advanced stage of civilisation, to ensure fair play, and considerable experience to learn how to finish a man off by sheer hitting unassisted by kicking or strangling. It is difficult to account otherwise for the conservatism of Greek boxing, and in this connexion it is interesting to glance at the frequent and radical changes made in our own Prize-Ring, the number and importance of which are not perhaps generally realised. The father of English prize-fighting was Figg, whose portrait was painted by Hogarth, and whose name stands first on the roll of recognised champions.<sup>9</sup> His date is 1719. The period between that date and the Sayers-Heenan fight in 1860 covers the whole history of the genuine P.R. during which the science of fist-fighting was evolved and was brought as near perfection as is humanly possible. The attitudes and tactics of the Belchers were very different from those of Figg. During this period throwing was allowed as well as hitting, and a fall would often have more effect on the issue of a fight than a blow which might seem more effective to a spectator. A round came to an end as soon as either combatant went down, so that they varied greatly in length. In all these fights bare fists were used, which Englishmen feel to be the only true and correct style of boxing; 'all the rest are mere imitations—mere travesties of the original: to excel in them one has to abandon some of the elementary rules of the orthodox art.'<sup>10</sup> When, however, the exalted morality of the Victorian age had declared fist-fighting to be not only illegal but undesirable, boxing with gloves was introduced under a new set of rules in which wrestling was forbidden: a change which enables some men to win fame who formerly would have stood no chance of first-class honours. At the present time the abuse of the 'knock-out' with the right on the jaw, and the exigencies of glove-fighting are vitiating the style of all but the best boxers, professional and amateur. Thus in England much has happened in a comparatively short time. We must now find what were the Greek tactics and how far we can recover the regulations in force in different epochs and especially during the best days of Greece.

Unfortunately the evidence is mostly of a conventional nature, and so must be treated with caution. The literary accounts are either very early or very late, and most of the latter seem to be echoes of Homer. The vases on the other hand do not help us nearly as much as might be expected. The scenes on vases of a good period which are of any practical value are

<sup>9</sup> Badminton Library, *Fencing, Boxing, and Wrestling*, p. 135.

<sup>10</sup> Badminton, *Fencing*, p. 144.

very few, and even in these allowance must be made for the conventions of the vase painters.

Let us take the literary evidence first. We have the well-known descriptions of boxing-matches in Homer and Vergil,<sup>11</sup> which are admirably discussed in the Badminton Library,<sup>12</sup> though the account of the Homeric contest seems to include some misunderstanding of the Greek.<sup>13</sup> We also have the account by Theocritus<sup>14</sup> and one by Apollonius Rhodius.<sup>15</sup> Quintus Smyrnaeus and Statius also follow the established epic tradition. We need consider only those matches which were fought with *ἰμάντες*. In the later accounts the gloves were of such size and weight as to dominate the whole character of boxing and to make it more like fighting with clubs: accordingly the post-Alexandrine stories are of little intrinsic value as evidence for Greek boxing, though they occasionally throw a sidelight on earlier narratives. Even the *μειλίχαι*, however, make comparison with English boxing difficult, so we must be particularly thankful that Homer has described the fight with bare fists between Irus and Odysseus with a clearness and moderation very rare in the annals of the ring. It is clear that such encounters were of common occurrence from the readiness with which the challenge was given and taken, the easy but strictly orthodox manner in which the preliminaries were arranged, and the sporting spirit of the nobles, who evidently loved a fair fight for its own sake whoever the combatants might be. The two competitors presented a very different appearance. Irus was much the taller and heavier<sup>16</sup> and had also the advantage in age. Odysseus on the other hand was of medium height but broad-shouldered, deep-chested and muscular:<sup>17</sup> evidently a typical middle-weight: ten years earlier he had been one of the best runners and wrestlers in the Greek army, so that he had possessed that quickness on which a middle-weight must rely when pitted against a man heavier than himself.

The tactics he adopted were exactly those which a modern professor would employ against a heavier but unskilled opponent, namely, drawing and countering. His success was complete. Irus was much dismayed when he saw how big his opponent stripped and was probably more so when he met the eyes of the king. Anyhow he seems to have made a half-hearted lead off more as a feeler than a blow, as beginners often do when starting a round with an opponent with whom they are afraid to close at once. This blow contrary to the usual custom must have been delivered with the left for it hit the right shoulder of Odysseus. It may have merely fallen short, but when we remember the advantage in height and reach possessed by Irus, it is more likely that Odysseus saw the blow coming, ducked his head and raised his shoulder to guard the chin and then cross-countered heavily with a hook-hit:

<sup>11</sup> *Iliad*, xxiii. 651-699. *Aeneid*, v. 362-484.

<sup>12</sup> *Fencing, Boxing, Wrestling*, pp. 125-131.

<sup>13</sup> E.g. ἐπὶ δ' ὤρνυτο δῖος Ἐπειός is not 'Epeus made a rush at him,' but 'rose on tip-toe,' see below. ζῶμα = περὶζῶμα, which was

worn till 15th Olymp. see Paus. i. 44. 1. The belt proper = ζῶσθηρ, iv. 132.

<sup>14</sup> xxii. 107 ff.

<sup>15</sup> *Argonautica*, ii. 67 ff.

<sup>16</sup> *Od.* xviii. 4; also 50-100.

<sup>17</sup> *Il.* iii. 193-4.

otherwise it is difficult to understand the tremendous effect of this knock-out, especially as Odysseus purposely refrained from putting forth his full strength. This fight finds a close parallel in the description by Apollonius Rhodius of the fight between Amycus and Polydeuces.<sup>18</sup> Apollonius it is true often imitates Homer and is here describing a combat of the Heroic age, but late writers show no hesitation in ascribing to an earlier period the customs of their own time, so that the account may be regarded as a fairly trustworthy description of a Hellenistic encounter. The fight is much more stubbornly contested than that of the Odyssey, but the opening for the decisive blow is made in just the same fashion and the same knock-out is administered, except that the blow lands above instead of under the ear, probably because the men were more evenly matched in height.

Another account of great interest is the racy and graphic description in the XXII Idyll of Theocritus of the match between Amycus and Polydeuces, which contains all the essential features of a thoroughly sporting fight under recognised rules and familiar conditions.

First the spectators arrive and form a ring, and the principals bind on their thongs over fists and forearms, such as are shown on the Panathenaic vase No. B 607 (*M. d. I.* x. 48e, 2) in the British Museum. On entering the ring the two champions at once began to spar for position. He who could so place himself that the light fell in his opponent's eyes would naturally score a great advantage. The round, therefore, opened briskly and it was only after a hard struggle that Polydeuces gained the coveted place. Amycus, however, determined to turn the tables by a sudden onslaught and made a furious rush, always a risky proceeding against a strong opponent on guard. He received a blow on the jaw, which, had it been better aimed or Amycus less tough, might easily have ended the fight then and there. As it was it merely checked him for the moment, and in a short time he came on harder than before. Then there was much in-fighting and the spectators shouted in their excitement. Polydeuces watched his opportunity and at last knocked Amycus down with a blow between the eyes. This ended the first round, unless we count separately the preliminary struggle for position. There was of course no fixed time limit, but they wait to see if Amycus is capable of continuing the fight within a reasonable time, and after a little while he rises. In the next round there was some more quick work at close quarters, in the course of which Amycus played on his opponent's body while Polydeuces aimed more at the face. Finally, Amycus, who seems to have done most of the attacking but was having rather the worst of the encounter, tried to finish the fight by a device which would not have been allowed at Olympia. With his own left, that is with his guarding hand, he seized his adversary's guard, pulled it down and delivered a swinging round hit. Polydeuces ducked and countered just below the left temple with a similar blow which Amycus was not quick enough to avoid, and which knocked him out so completely that he was nearly killed.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> *Argonautica*, ii. 67 *sqq.*

<sup>19</sup> Mr. R. J. Chalmers in his edition of

Theocritus (Clarendon Press) gives a rather different version, and translates ἄμφο as 'straight

There is no need to describe the other fights in detail. They all tell the same story: two men take a firm stand and swing blows at each other's heads and flanks armed either with simple thongs or with the cestus. It is strange that the Greeks never learned to rely on straight hitting, for the principles of fist-fighting can be applied equally to fists covered with the thongs they used before Hellenistic times. The reason is probably two-fold:—First they never realised the paramount importance of foot-work. Even Vergil makes Entellus the famous champion miss his footing in a manner which judged by any standard is absurd. Accurate and quick use of the feet is necessary for the delivery of a really telling straight blow: if both men are standing still round hits are undoubtedly more severe, and it may be worth while to run some risk in order to bring off a knock-out sooner or later. This is in fact often done at the present time. Secondly they spoiled their chances of success in the infancy of the sport by invoking mechanical aid instead of studying its scientific principles; and so to compensate for their lack of skill, they condemned their fighters to wear *ίμάντες*, the swaddling clothes of boxing, which prevented its proper growth. The same spirit which evolved the Macedonian phalanx instead of the equally formidable but more mobile legion developed the cestus instead of the knuckle-duster. It took the British pugilist less than a century to find that a boxer should trust mainly to his left for the attack. In this lead-off the left fist is driven straight from the shoulder into the face or body of an opponent by a lunge forward with the left foot and a strong drive from the floor with the right leg; the feet whether in advance or retreat must never be crossed or even in a straight line, nor must the right foot ever be in advance of the left. Thus speed both in advancing and retreat is secured, while a firm basis is given against a blow from any quarter: when on guard the weight is distributed evenly on both feet so that it can be thrown in a moment on to one or the other.

Leads may be made with the right and hook-hits can be delivered by either arm as time and occasion require; but the underlying principle must always be observed that the blows travel by the shortest route possible and that especially in long range hits they should be driven home by all the weight of the body and force of leg-drive. At the same time firmness of position as well as speed of movement should be insured by the proper use of the feet. To the last the Greeks seem to have ignored both these facts, to have stood with the feet about level but well apart and then to have swung their bodies round from the hips to give impetus to the blow, often rising on the toes of one foot to increase the swing. This can be judged from their guards as well as from their hits as shown on vases: it agrees with the descriptions of all fights and explains the frequent references in literature to blows on the side of the head and body. Fortunately just where the

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from the shoulder, lit. with the weight of his shoulder.' The literal meaning makes excellent sense, while the derived interpretation seems to me to read into the account an entirely modern idea. The very fact that Amycus is considered

to have executed an unusual manoeuvre by advancing his left side instead of standing squarely (*δοχμὸς ἀπὸ προβολῆς κλιθεῖς*) shows how different was the orthodox Greek position from that of the English Ring.

literary evidence is weak, that is to say in the fifth and fourth centuries, the vases are helpful. The number of those which throw any light on the subject is limited: there are far fewer representations of boxing matches than of almost any other sport, which is strange considering the familiarity of the subject. The best series is in the British Museum. The first is No. B 295, a well-known amphora signed by Nicosthenes and dating from about 520 B.C. Not very much information is to be gained from it; the pose is conventional and the figures are ungainly; however it confirms the foregoing remarks in some important points. First, the impetus is gained not by a lunge but by swinging round from the hips; for in the larger group though the legs are in exactly the same position we see the back of one man and the chest of the other. The legs seem at first sight to indicate a lunge, but this is at variance with the rest of the composition, and Prof. E. A. Gardner considers this treatment to be a convention intended to represent the feet at about the same level but widely separated. Similar stylistic devices may explain why the combatants seem to be on different planes. The left fist and foot of the right-hand man are behind the right of his opponent. To make the scene more realistic the latter is bleeding profusely at the nose. Both wear light thongs woven closely round the entire hand but not above the wrist.

Next comes the Panathenaic vase B 140, on which one of the combatants is bearded and seems to be pressing the attack. It is difficult to understand the position of the feet unless they are intended to be approximately level: otherwise the elder man has thrust his right foot forward and the younger his left. The elder guards with his left hand, the fingers of which are extended, while his right arm is raised and bent to deliver a blow. The younger is also guarding with his left and the fist is closed to meet the blow: his right is contracted but lowered and he evidently intends to meet his opponent's attack with an upper-cut. The head is drawn back as though getting out of reach, instead of being sunk on one side, another sign of round hitting.<sup>20</sup> It is evident that the men are engaged in in-fighting, short arm and contracted blows are the only ones employed and there is no sign of a real lunge, or any attempt to employ the weight of the body or drive of the legs by a step forward. The *ἰμάντες* are of a light description and are indicated merely by lines drawn across the knuckles and wrist. The forearm is scarcely protected at all. To the left of the group is a referee with a large stick, and to the right an ephedros holding his thongs.

We are fortunate in possessing a fine kylix, B. M. *Vases* E 39, (Pl. XII.)<sup>21</sup> in the style of Duris (B.C. 480-450) showing four pairs of boxers. Three of these pairs represent Ephebi actually engaged, and one shows boys preparing for the contest. The same position of the feet is shown in a much more natural and pleasing manner by letting one of the competitors be seen partly from behind. The motive of most of the figures is the same: the left arm extended for guarding, the right contracted for hitting. Here,

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *Aen.* v. 427:

Abduxere retro longe capita ardua ab ictu.

Their heads held high are drawn back.

<sup>21</sup> *Wiener Vorlegeblätter* viii. 1.



however, the hand is not raised, but the elbow is drawn back in a horizontal line, so that the fist is on a level with the shoulder. At first it seems as though a straight hit were contemplated, but it is more likely to be a truer and less conventional method of showing a round hit, just as the feet are more artistically treated. This impression is strengthened by the position of one figure who is pressing the attack. He has raised his right foot almost off the ground and has swung his right arm back to gain impetus for the blow, thus leaving himself quite exposed to a straight hit. The central group is of great interest as it shows a knock-out. The blow landed probably on the jaw or the side of the head, for the man has fallen on his left knee in a position very different from that of one who had been knocked backwards. His opponent has swung his right back to give a final hit, but the vanquished holds up one finger to acknowledge his defeat.

The thongs shown on this kylix reach about a third of the way up the forearm.

Two more fine groups of boxers are shown on B. M. *Vases* E 78, (Pl. XIII.) a kylix of the best red-figured period, showing various athletic scenes. The first group is a good example of a familiar design. One combatant has swung back his right hand and raised himself on the toes of the right foot, while his left arm is raised and bent to ward off a counter stroke. His opponent, a heavier man whose face seems to have suffered, extends his left and contracts his right for a counter. At the same time he tries to get out of reach not by 'retreating in good order' but by thrusting back his right leg, bending his knee and leaning back, a most dangerous proceeding, should the attack be well followed up. The group seems to show sparring for practice only. The hands are open and the fingers separated. The attacker has thrust both hands forward but is not using the weight of his body. The other is guarding in the manner shown on the last kylix. The thongs in these groups reach about halfway up the forearm.

The large Panathenaic vase in the British Museum (No. B 607, *Mon. d. I.* x. 48e 2) supplies some valuable evidence as to the form of the cestus and the physical type which were most in favour at the great boxing matches at the end of the fourth century. In both respects there is a close resemblance to the well-known seated bronze boxer of the Museo delle Terme. The men are very powerful and thickset and the gloves are formed of heavy thongs which reach nearly to the elbow. Their tactics seem much the same as those on the previous vases. One is stopping an attack by thrusting out his left arm and at the same time drawing back his head. At first it seems as though he were making a forward lunge in the most approved modern style, but on closer inspection one sees that the left foot is not meant to be stepping forward but to be set apart from the other according to the usual convention; while the fact that instead of throwing the body weight into the blow the boxer is drawing his head and body back shows that defence and not attack is represented.

Another well-known Panathenaic vase (B 612) shows two boxers on guard wearing *μειλίχαι*. Both figures have the feet planted well apart, the

left arm extended with the fingers open, the right fist shut and the arm bent and drawn back and held on a level with the chest. The vase belongs to a late period and the drawing is poor, but it gives a good illustration of a recognised position.

Thus all the evidence shows that the Greek boxers of all periods relied mainly on a swinging blow with the right, and that they never appreciated the smashing force of a quick left lead driven straight from the shoulder, though left-hand blows were sometimes delivered. Some vase-paintings have, however, been considered to show that even if modern methods were not much in favour with the Greeks they were at least recognised. It is therefore necessary to examine the most important of them. The first (Stephani, *C.R.* 1876, 109) shows a pair of boxers, one of whom has hit his opponent in

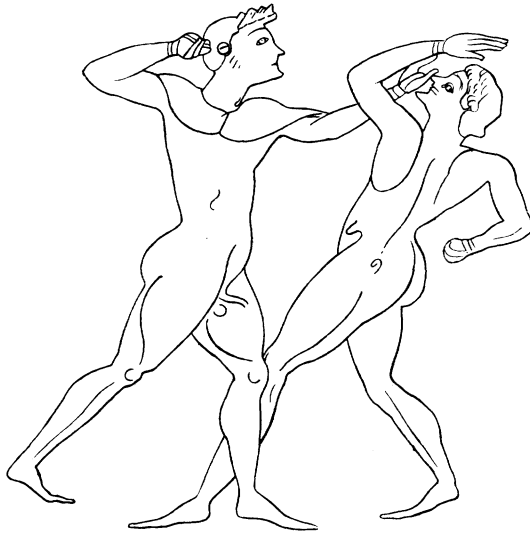


FIG. 1.—FROM A PANATHENAIC VASE. (Stephani, *C.R.* 1876, 109.)

the face with his left hand. The blow, however, in no way resembles a straight hit: the arm is not straight but 'hooked'; it has not been shot out but it has been swung round or down. The fist is not even clenched, only the flat of the hand is used. Again, the forward position of the left leg need not indicate a lunge, for the position of the legs of both combatants is exactly the same. If this be not a mere schematic device it may represent no more than that the feet are planted wide apart. Finally, though a blow has been scored with the left hand, the main attack is just about to be delivered with the right. Clearly, what has happened is this:—Both men were in the orthodox position with right fists drawn back and ready to strike, and left arms with the hands open extended to guard. Then A swung his right arm back and downwards to deliver a swinging blow, but at the same time left his head unguarded though within range: whereupon B without even shutting his fist has given him with his left or guarding hand a quick hit in the face

and is about to deal a decisive blow with the right before A can recover from the shock or regain his position.

There are other illustrations also, of doubtful value, such as Benndorf, *Gr. u. Sic. Vasenb.* xxxi. 2. a, and a kylix of Pamphaeus (*Mon. d. I.* xi. 24).



FIG. 2.—FROM A PANATHENAIC VASE. (Louvre, F 278.)

Much more important is a vase in the Louvre (Fig. 2; Pottier, *Vases antiques du Louvre*, vol. ii. Pl. 82) where it really does seem as if a knock-out blow on the jaw had been delivered by a straight left lead. This impression is confirmed if we contrast the position of the falling man with that on the Duris vase quoted above. But from the usual position of the hands it is probable that 'chopping,' or a tendency to strike downwards prevailed even in comparatively straight hitting. Thus, though it is clear that the left hand was sometimes used for attack, it is equally clear that the method of using it

differed radically from that employed in the English ring. Nothing proves this more conclusively than the way in which on all vases the body both in attack and defence is left exposed to straight hits. Contrast such positions with popular prints of prize-fighters on guard, or with the illustrations in any good book on boxing, and the difference will be seen at once. It is natural that hits should be given with the left as well as the right, when an opportunity occurs; but if the pride of the English ring, the straight left, is to be made really effective it must dominate the whole scheme both of attack and defence. It can be confidently stated that this was never the case with the Greeks.

The foregoing sketch shows that the evidence of the vases agrees with the literary tradition so closely that although some questions of procedure remain doubtful yet the main features of a boxing match at Olympia in classical times can be reproduced with tolerable certainty. Let us endeavour then to picture the probable course of such a contest in the fifth century.

According to Dr. C. Robert<sup>22</sup> the boxing came in the middle of the third day, that is to say exactly in the middle of the whole festival, and when we remember that the severer contests were held in the middle of the day with the express purpose of increasing the distress we may well wonder at the fortitude of the Greek athletes. Even for spectators the noonday sun at Olympia in July is a trying ordeal, while the languor caused by the heat in the valley of the Alpheus seems to preclude the possibility of such violent exertion. Especially would this be the case in boxing, which Homer truly calls *ἀλεγεινή*, 'causing distress,' a word which probably implies not so much the pain from the blows as that distress which causes the loss of most fights not decided by a knock-out. However, the competitors had passed through nine months of training on the spot and represented the survival of the

<sup>22</sup> *Loc. cit.* Diagram of the events.

fittest. When the pairs and byes had been decided by lot, the first pair entered the arena. We have no evidence that the size of the ring was defined exactly and there were certainly no ropes: thus some of the most familiar devices of the English ring such as cornering and slipping, which are due to the presence of a barrier, would be unknown. It seems rather that the science of advancing and retreating had not been encouraged and that the combatants were expected to stand their ground as far as was possible. Each was accompanied by his second, either a relative or a professional, whose first duty was to bind the *ἰμάντες* round the fist and forearm but leaving the thumb free.<sup>23</sup> Apparently the seconds, contrary to modern custom, were allowed to advise the principals during the actual progress of the struggle as well as between the rounds.<sup>24</sup> This is shown by the well-known tale of Glaucus the Carystian, one of the most redoubtable athletes of antiquity. When a boy he re-set a ploughshare which had become loose, using his fist as a hammer, whereupon his father, admiring his strength and hardihood, entered him at Olympia for the boys' boxing match. Then, when he was being hard pressed in the fight by his more skilful opponent, his father (who was, we may suppose, acting as his second) shouted '*ὦ παῖ, τὴν ἀπ' ἀρότρου,*' whereat with a mighty effort Glaucus felled his antagonist. It is interesting to note that this same Glaucus was one of the few who won at Olympia both as boys and men. He was also a *περιοδονίκης* having won at Isthmian, Pythian, and Nemean games as well. When the two competitors entered the ring there was no preliminary hand-shake; indeed, there seems to have been little of that mutual goodwill which forms an important part of what we call sporting feeling. On the contrary it was much more in accordance with Greek traditions to advance *δεινὸν δερκόμενοι*—looking daggers and meaning mischief—though it is most unlikely that they wasted their breath in the murderous boasts of Epic heroes. The first struggle was to obtain a good position,<sup>25</sup> which seems to show that there was not much idea of working round, although it is not necessary to suppose that a position once taken was rigidly adhered to throughout the contest. Then, when the men had determined their respective places, a firm stand against round hits was secured by planting the feet well apart and nearly on a level, with the body square so as to lead off with either hand after the manner of the earliest school of English boxing. The Greeks, however, differed from the worthies in the days of the early Georges by employing mainly round and not straight hits. The natural corollary is that they relied chiefly on a knock-out with the swinging right.

After the preliminary manœuvring for position and sparring for an

<sup>23</sup> Schol. Plato, *Rep.* i. 338 c, d ἀντίχειρ. οὐ συλλαμβάνει τοῖς δακτύλοις τὸ πληκτικόν.

<sup>24</sup> Schol. to Pind. *Ol.* xi. 19, p. 243 B λέγει οὖν τὴν Ἡρακλέους τροπὴν εἰς παραμυθίαν Ἀγησιδάμου ὀκλάσαντος μὲν ἐν τῷ τῆς πυγμῆς ἀγῶνι καὶ τὸν ἀντίπαλον ἂν παρὰ μικρὸν νικῆσαι ποιήσαντος, εἰ μὴ ὁ ἀλείπτῃς αὐτοῦ Ὑπλάς ἰδὼν θάρσος

ἐνέβαλε, διὰ καὶ ἐνίκησεν.

<sup>25</sup> Aristid. xiii. ; *Panath.* 160, quoted by Krause, p. 509 ὥσπερ οὖν οἱ πύκται περὶ τῆς στάσεως πρῶτον ἠγωνίσαντο. Also Aesch. *in Ctes.* § 206 Bekk. ὥσπερ οὖν ἐν τοῖς γυμνικοῖς ἀγῶσι ὁρᾶτε τοὺς πύκτας περὶ τῆς στάσεως πρὸς ἀλλήλους διαγωνιζομένους.

opening the work would begin in earnest, and terrible work it would be. Classifications according to weight would have been foreign to Greek ideas: a man came to Olympia to win the all-comers championship or nothing, and so the boxers were mostly heavy-weights. When two heavy-weights armed with *ιμάντες* box in the manner indicated, a slogging match of the most barbarous description almost necessarily follows. On the other hand wrestling, which played so important a part in the P.R., was not allowed, neither was clinching;<sup>26</sup> such devices were reserved for the pankration. The bout might be ended very quickly then as now by a knock-out from a lucky hit; but as a slow slogging hit is much more easily guarded than a straight drive, and as Greek athletes appear to have been capable of taking much punishment, the fights must often have been long-drawn. Glaucus, of whom mention has been made already, was especially famous for his skill in *χειρονομία* and was represented on guard in his statue which Pausanias saw. In a protracted battle the length of the rounds was determined much in the same manner as in our own P.R., that is to say, either by one of the combatants being knocked down, or by a lull in the fray occasioned by the simultaneous exhaustion of both.<sup>27</sup> The fight was to a finish,<sup>28</sup> and if not decided by a knock-out was ended by one of the combatants raising his finger in acknowledgment of defeat.<sup>29</sup> If a draw seemed otherwise inevitable it sometimes happened that an exchange of free hits would be agreed upon, a practice which must have given the first striker a great advantage.<sup>30</sup>

Throughout the meeting order was maintained, the rules enforced, and the awards made by the Hellanodikai. How far they tried to keep silence does not appear, but apparently the spectators shouted when they became unusually excited,<sup>31</sup> which must have embarrassed the seconds. If a modern pugilist could witness a fight of this description he would condemn the style of the Greeks on the ground that they wholly failed to recognise the two great principles on which the whole science of boxing rests:— good foot-work and straight hitting. There is no reason to doubt that the Greek boxers exhibited all the quickness of resource and power of endurance essential to the fighting man, or that they had reduced to a fine art the delicate operations of timing, countering, and getting out of reach.

They were also fully aware of the importance of utilising the weight of the body to increase the force of the blow; but their style of hitting must have been comparatively slow, like a sabre compared with a foil, and it is difficult to believe that any Greek could have stood up for long against a first-rate modern prize-fighter if both wore the *ιμάντες* that were used in the fifth century. It is to be regretted that the Greeks made the *ιμάντες* more

<sup>26</sup> τοὺς δὲ πύκτας οὐδὲ πᾶν βουλομένους ἑῶσιν οἱ βραβεύται συμπλέκεσθαι, Plutarch, *Symp.* ii. 4.

<sup>27</sup> Ἀρ. Rhod. ii. 86 στάντε δὲ βαίον ἄπαθεν.

<sup>28</sup> διαπυκτεύειν, Paus. vi. 10. 1.

<sup>29</sup> Plut. *Lycurgus*, c. 19 ἐν οἷς χεῖρ ἀνατίθεται.

<sup>30</sup> See Krause, p. 522, cf. Pausanias, viii.

40. 3.

<sup>31</sup> Plutarch, *De profect. in virt.* c. 8. At the Isthmian games Aeschylus remarked to Ion that while the spectators cried out whenever a blow was struck, the man who received the blow was silent.

and more severe. Fist-fighting is a noble art and it secures a decisive result without (as a rule) permanent injury to either combatant. But boxing with loaded gloves is spurious sport, in which those only would engage who made it their trade for the pleasure of a brutal populace. A sport which unfits one for everything else defeats its own object and justifies the attacks made on its devotees by Euripides<sup>32</sup> and Kipling. Both these authors, however, seem to have attacked the gentlemen athletes in a manner which has called forth considerable protest. It is likely enough that when actually in training the athletes, just as rowing men are fit for little except the river when training, were *ὑπνώδεις* and easily upset, but it does not follow that even in the fourth or third century the competitors as a class devoted themselves to athletics exclusively, although a certain proportion would naturally do so. On the other hand under modern conditions all the competitors at Olympia would be considered professionals. It is true that the wreath of olive or bay had no intrinsic value, but we are apt to forget the substantial prizes that fell to the victor's lot as well. Thus Solon decreed that 500 drachmæ should be paid to each Olympic victor,<sup>33</sup> and further that he should be maintained for life at the Prytaneum, roughly equivalent to giving a University Blue the perpetual right of dining at the High Table of his college: a very valuable privilege if he were to live all his life in Oxford or Cambridge as the Athenian would in Athens. Moreover the competitors at Olympia were necessarily the few who had already fought before their way to the top of their profession, from local athletic meetings upwards, and at these provincial competitions prizes of value were offered. Even Heracles says quite naturally in *Alceſtis* that he competed for the prize because it was *ἄξιον πόνου*. This being the case it is strange that Greek athletics suffered so little from the professional spirit and that gentlemen competed throughout the best period.

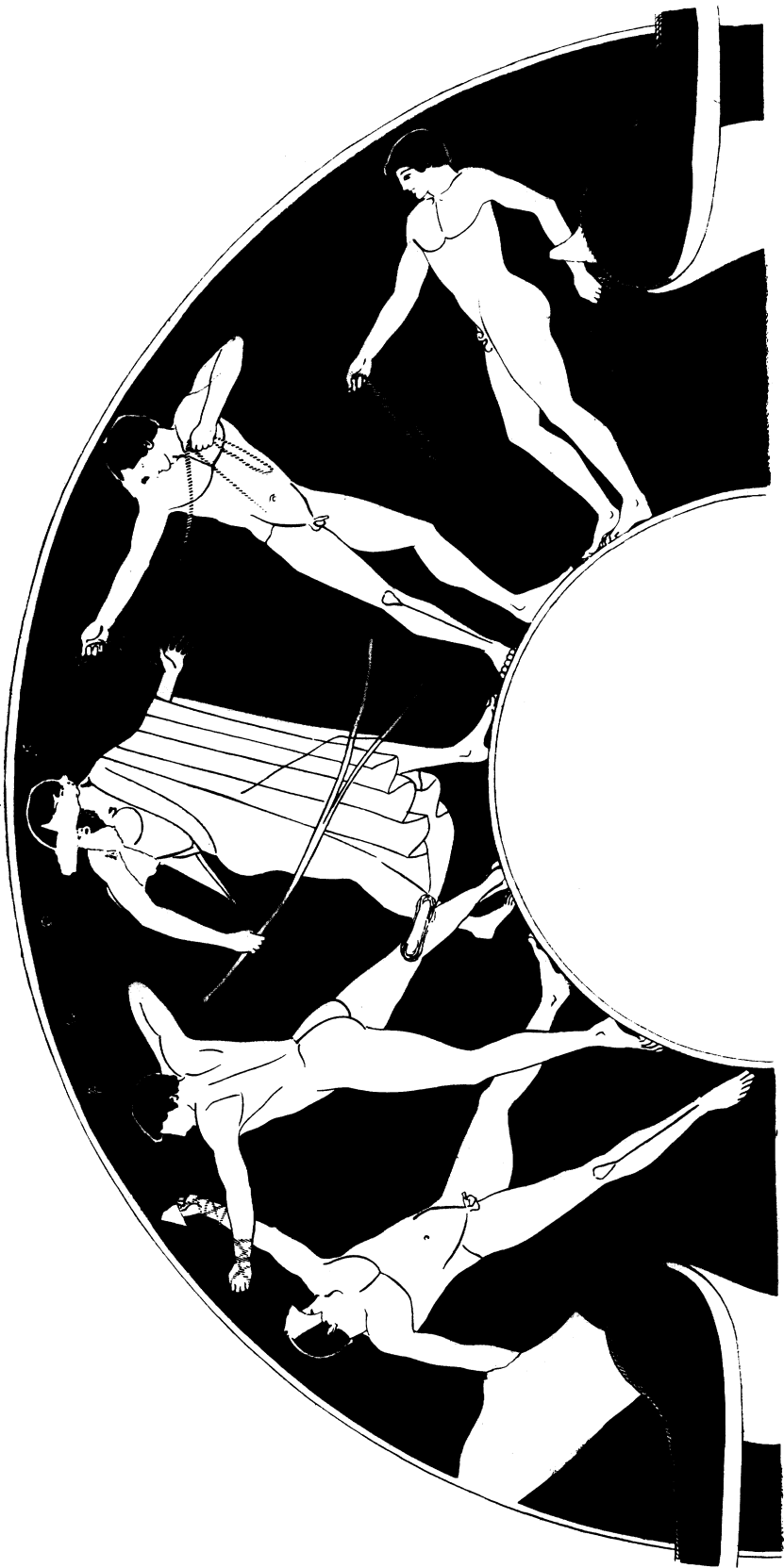
Perhaps the chief reason was that the honour of winning at Olympia outweighed any other inducement that could be offered, and this would be a more powerful safeguard against collusion than the vigilance of the judges. For although they had always a keen eye for material gain yet the spirit and environment of the Greeks in their own social intercourse and especially in regard to athletics resembled that of our own Public Schools and Universities more closely than any other institutions ancient or modern.

It must be acknowledged that the generosity and courtesy which we consider essential to sport were often lacking, especially in the treatment of the vanquished. But the fact remains that the Olympic festival retained its reputation for fair play for centuries, in spite of professionalism on the one hand and slavery on the other. No stronger proof could be given of the honour and vitality of Greek athletics.

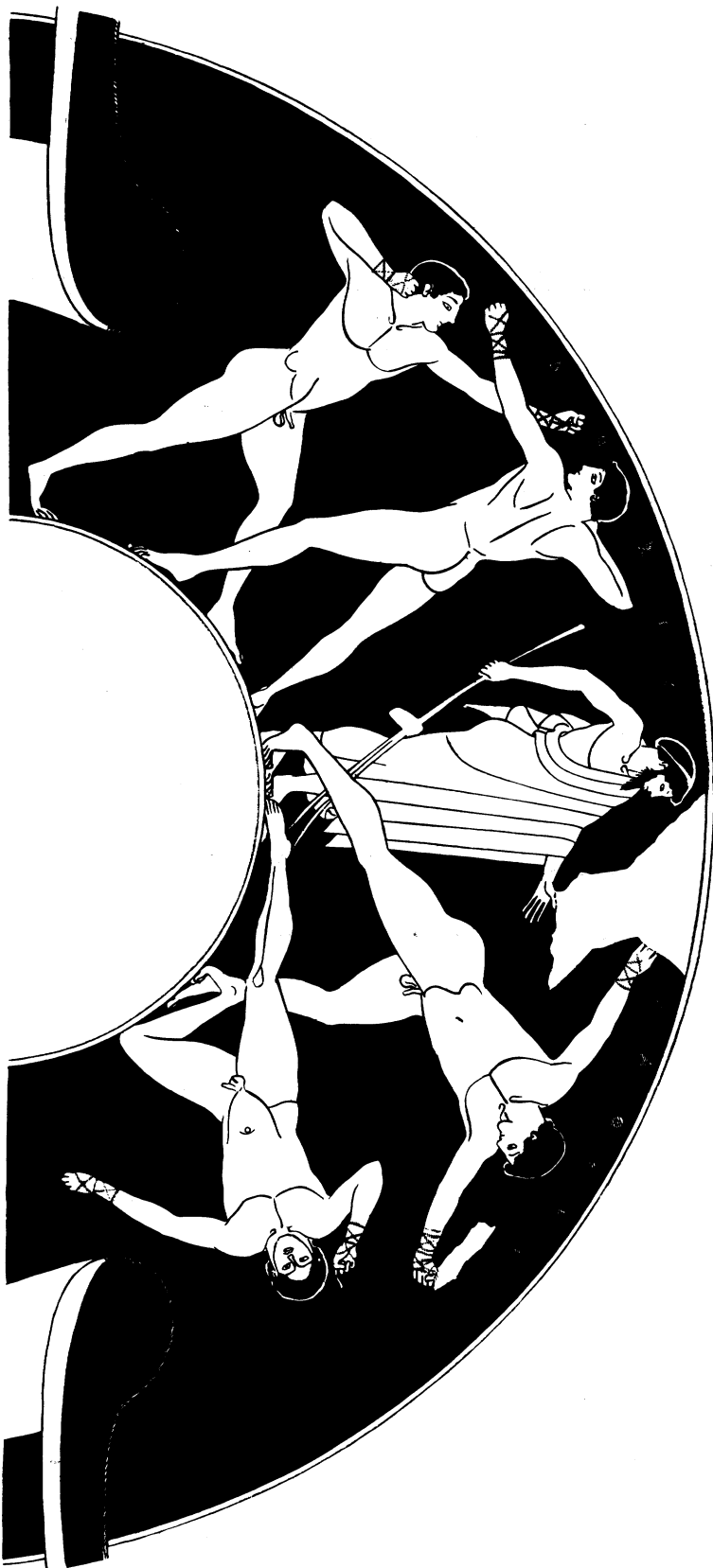
K. T. FROST.

<sup>32</sup> *κακῶν γὰρ ὕντων κ.τ.λ.* Athen. x. 413. The parallel between this and Kipling's tirade against flannelled fools is very close: one might almost be a free translation of the other.

<sup>33</sup> Also 100 drachmæ to a winner at the Isthmian and other games. Plutarch, *Solon*, c. 23. Krause, *op. cit.* ii. p. 765.

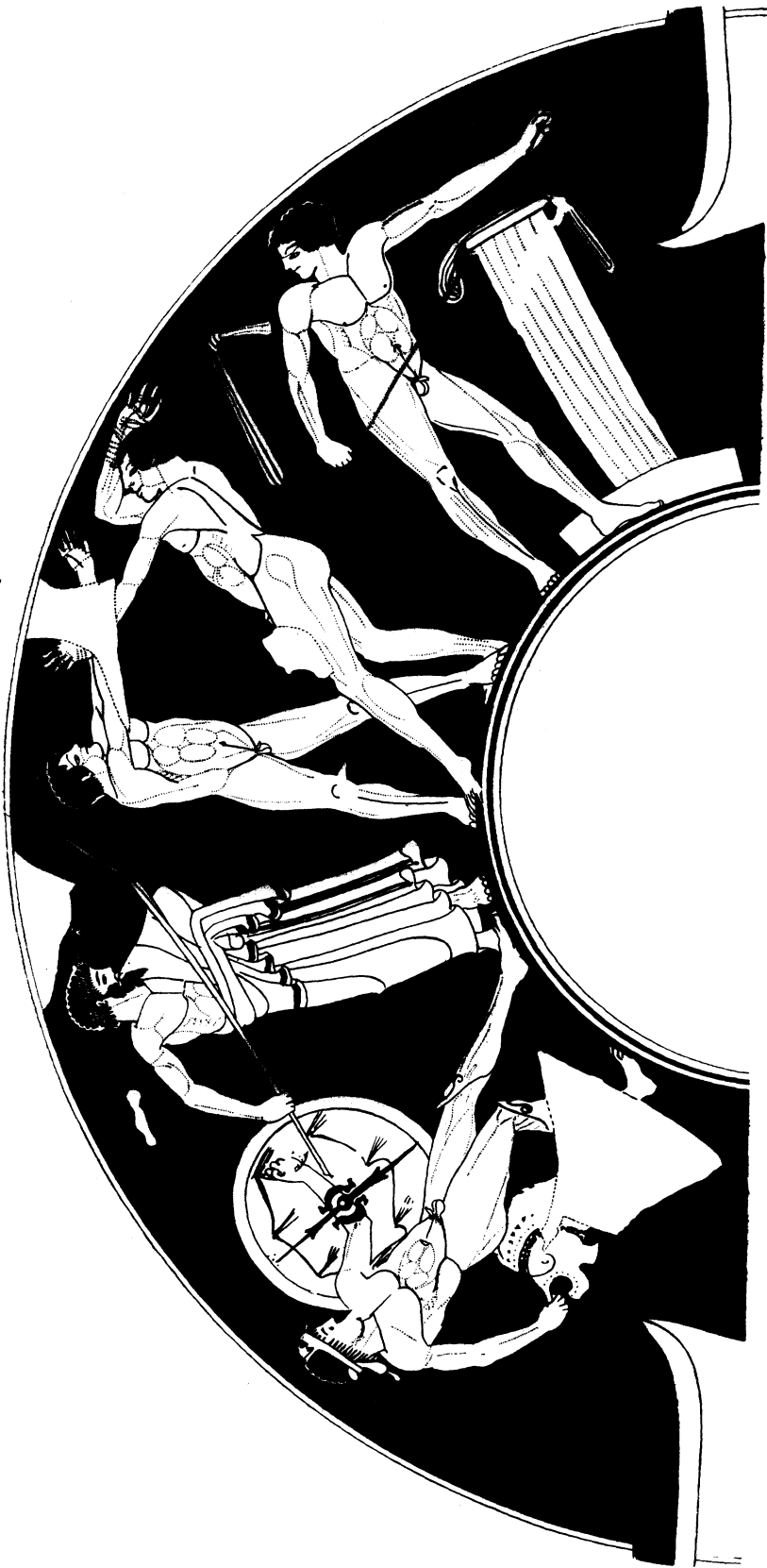


KYLIX BY DURIS

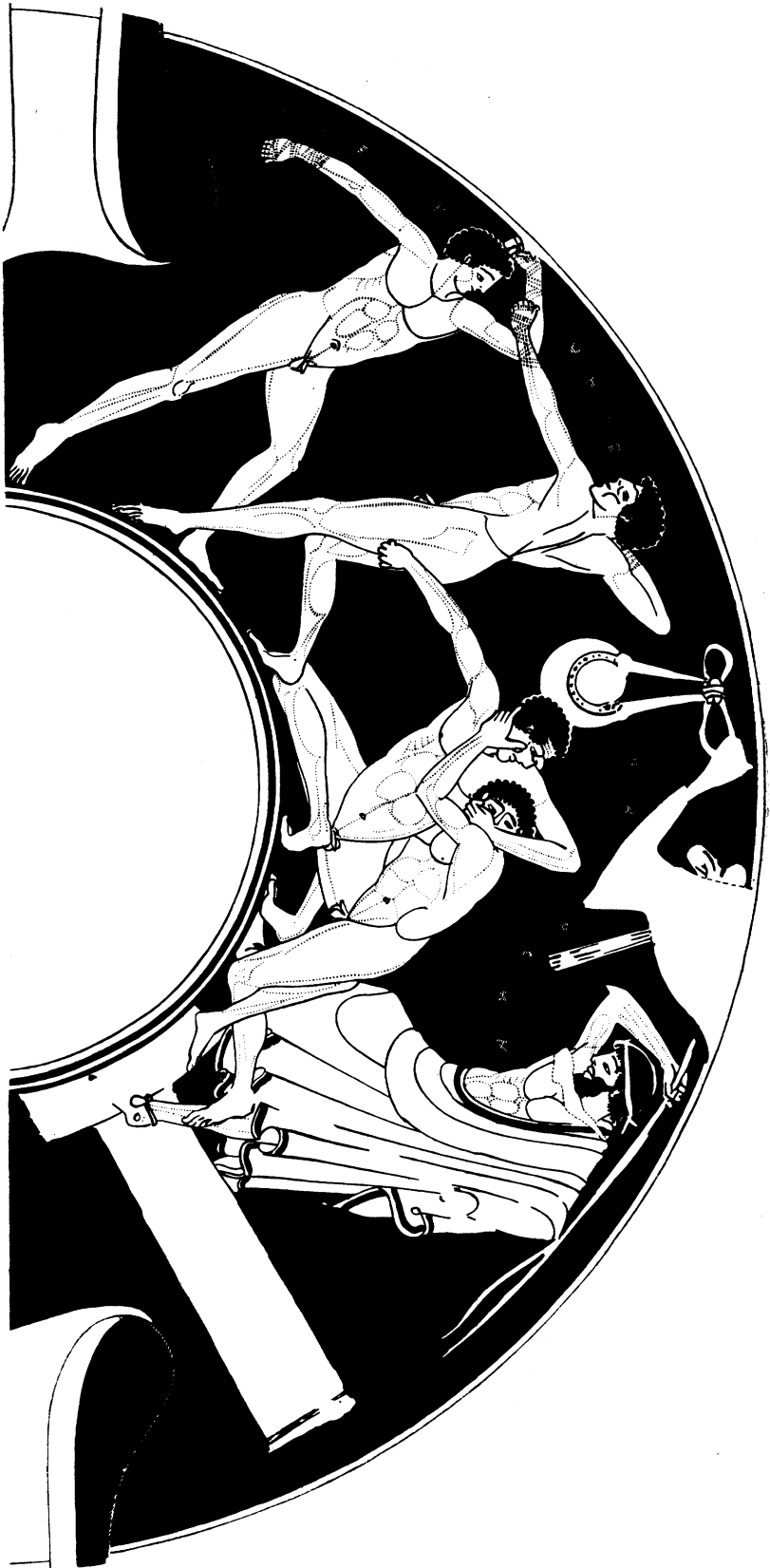


IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM (E 39).





RED-FIGURED KYLIX



IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM (E 78).