

The Epicene Oracle concerning Argos and Miletus.

By J. B. Bury.

§ 1. The Argive campaign of Cleomenes.

It is now generally agreed that the decisive defeat which Cleomenes of Sparta inflicted upon Argos occurred at the time of the Ionic revolt. The main ground for this dating is the curious oracle quoted by Herodotus as having been delivered at Delphi "to the Argives and Milesians in common",¹⁾ though "the Milesians were not present",²⁾ apparently not long before the capture of the Ionian city.³⁾ The truth of this synchronism is corroborated by other considerations,⁴⁾ while there is nothing to be said in favour of the statement of Pausanias that the Argive campaign of Cleomenes belonged to the early years of his reign.⁵⁾

All that we know of the campaign can be told in a few words. Having instructed his Aeginetan and Sicyonian allies to send ships to the Cynurian coast, Cleomenes at the head of a Lacedaemonian army marched into Argolis as far as the banks of the river Erasinus, but did not cross it, forbidden by unfavourable diabateria. So he gave out; so the Argives believed, and, as they saw his army withdraw into Cynuria, imagined that the danger was over. But the demonstration at the Erasinus was only a feint,⁶⁾ and the unfavourable sacrifice served the strategy of the Spartan king. The Aeginetan and Sicyonian vessels were already waiting,⁷⁾ to transport his host across to Nauplia. The battle

1) Herod. 6, 77.

2) *Ib.* 6, 19.

3) This does not follow from the words of Herodotus (6, 18) *ἡνδραποδίσαντο τὴν πόλιν ὥστε συμπεσεῖν τὸ πάθος τῷ χρηστηρίῳ τῷ ἐς Μίλητον γενομένῳ*, for *συμπεσεῖν* need not mean "coincide chronologically", but simply "fulfil". But it is reasonable to infer that when the oracle was given Miletus was either besieged or menaced.

4) Cp. BUSOLT, *Griechische Geschichte* II² 561, note, and MACAN *ed.* of Herodotus, note on 6, 76, 2. — I may note here that I agree with the chronology of the Ionic revolt which sets the Battle of Lade in 494 B. C. (and not in 497 B. C. with BUSOLT).

5) Pausanias 3, 4, *init.* (followed by E. CURTIUS).

6) Cp. MACAN, *op. cit.*, on 6, 76, 11, and BUSOLT, *op. cit.* II² 562, note 4.

7) Herod. 6, 92. Perhaps they waited at Prasidae. They must have been stationed a good distance down the coast, to avoid the risk of being seen.

was fought at Sepeia¹⁾ near Tiryns, Cleomenes taking his foes unawares, and when some of the Argives fled into the sacred grove of Argus, the Lacedaemonians surrounded it and set it on fire. This overwhelming defeat in which the Argives lost the greater part of their male population should, it might be thought, have exposed their city defenceless to the victor, yet Cleomenes returned home without capturing it.²⁾ Such is the general outline of the campaign, stripped of all the problematical or clearly unhistorical details which beset the narrative of Herodotus.

§ 2. The epicene oracle: what was its motive?—

The epicene oracle on which our dating of the battle of Sepeia depends is, when one comes to consider it, extremely curious. I need not elaborate the point that it is quite inconceivable that a single joint answer should have been given to Argive and Milesian *θεοπρόποι* coming independently to consult the god, each about their own affairs; since Herodotus—although in the passage where he quotes the Argive part of the oracle he speaks as if this had been the case³⁾—expressly states, in the passage where he quotes the Milesian portion, that the oracle was given to the Argives and the Milesians were not present. In other words, it was the Argives only who consulted the Oracle; Miletus (as we might expect) addressed no inquiry to Delphi.

The matter of the Argive inquiry was *περὶ σωτηρίας τῆς πόλιος τῆς σφετέρης*,⁴⁾ when they were threatened by a Spartan invasion. According to Herodotus, the reply of the Pythia was as follows:

ἀλλ' ὅταν ἡ Θήλεια τὸν ἄρσενα νικήσασα
ἐξελάσῃ καὶ κῦδος ἐν Ἀργείοισιν ἄρῃται,
πολλὰς Ἀργείων ἀμφιδρυφέας τότε θήσει.
ὥς ποτὲ τις ἐρέει καὶ ἐπεσσομένων ἀνθρώπων
"δεινὸς ὄφρις ἀέλικτος ἀπώλετο δούρι δαμασθεῖς".
καὶ τότε δὴ, Μίλητε κακῶν ἐπιμήχανε ἔργων,
πολλοῖσιν⁵⁾ δεῖπνόν τε καὶ ἀγλαὰ δῶρα γενήσῃ,
σαὶ δ' ἄλοχοι πολλοῖσι πόδας νύκτουσι κομήταις,
νηοῦ δ' ἡμετέρου Διδύμοις ἄλλοισι μελήσει.

The oracle is not complete, for it could not have begun with *ἀλλά*.

1) *Ἡσίπεια* in the Mss. of Herod. 6, 77.

2) He was accused at Sparta of *δωροδοκία* and acquitted. The Spartan informants of Herodotus ascribed to Cleomenes an explanation, which is really no explanation (6, 82).

3) *ἐπίκοινα* ἔχρησε 6, 77.

4) 6, 19 *init.*

5) Oracularly vague. If any correction is required I suggest *πτηνοῖσιν*, which is (1) palaeographically better, (2) more oracular, than v. *HERWERDENS ὄφρυσιν*.

Herodotus has omitted the beginning¹⁾ and was apparently unconscious of the omission.

But how are we to explain the portion—the greater portion, undoubtedly—which he has quoted? What had Miletus to do with Argos? How was the fate of Miletus pertinent to the inquiry of the Argives about the safety of *their* city? So far as the Herodotean narrative goes, no connexion whatever is indicated. It seems to me quite outside the range of probability that the Pythian priestess and her prompters were ever in the habit of adding gratuitously to their official replies expressions of opinion or prophetic intimations concerning irrelevant affairs. Gods and their interpreters move doubtless in mysterious ways; but to suppose that the Pythia, consulted as to the safety of Argos, would have digressed upon the peril of Miletus, seems somewhat as if—it is hard to think of a modern illustration—, as if we were to suppose an “international” authority of the present day, say Professor Martens, when asked his opinion on the delimitation of Venezuela, turning aside to discuss a crisis in China.

Nor would the difficulty be lessened by the assumption that the oracle was compiled, or rather tampered with, after the event. The whole subject of oracles *post eventum* is extremely obscure, and, when this question arises in regard to Delphic *χορησμοί*, we have to do, so far as I can judge, less often with oracles entirely invented after the event than with interpolations in oracles actually delivered.²⁾ Now we might assume that the Argive portion of this oracle was original and genuine, and that the *παρενθήκη* (as Herodotus calls it) about Miletus was a subsequent addition. But if the Delphic priesthood, in order to strengthen the credit of their shrine, issued (in collections of Delphic *χορησμοί*, we should have to suppose) partially spurious oracles, it is highly unlikely that they would not have taken care that in point of *form* such oracles should be perfectly regular and beyond suspicion.

In the actual contents of the oracle which we are considering, there is nothing really inconsistent with the implication of Herodotus that it was given shortly before the Argive war and the capture of Miletus. The oracular utterance is ambiguous, there is no unequivocal indication of the event.³⁾ At the time when it was pronounced, Delphi was pro-

1) Which need not have consisted of more than two verses or conceivably one.

2) Thus the 3rd l. of the oracle to Cypselus in Herod. 5, 92, 5 (cp. MACAN *ad loc.*); the last 5 lines of the oracle to the Athenians, ib. 7, 141 (cp. WILAMOWITZ, *Aus Kydathen*, 97; BURY, *Aristides at Salamis*, in *Classical Review*, Dec. 1896 p. 417). On the other hand the oracle to the Spartans, ib. 7, 220, seems entirely a concoction *ex eventu*.

3) So MACAN rightly, note on 6, 19 (p. 282b): “nor does the oracle here given commit Delphi so deeply as to be beyond the resources of interpretation, whatever the event”. But one line may be an interpolation (see below, § 6).

bably convinced that the fall of the Ionian city was inevitable; but even if the unforeseen had befallen and Miletus had escaped, the veracity of the Delphian god would not have been compromised; there was a long capacious future still for the evil city to fulfil its destiny. As for the Argive portion, the phrases are so ingeniously obscure that they could cover any and every occurrence. Had the oracle been forged afterwards, there would assuredly have been some less equivocal reference to actual events. So far as internal evidence goes, the assumption of a *post eventum* origin is unnecessary, and therefore untenable. The problem is to discover the motif underlying the colligation of Miletus and Argos.

§ 3. Solution of the problem.

At the beginning of the fifth century the position of Sparta was this. She had failed repeatedly, and her failures had been humiliating, to control the developement of Athens. She saw that, before she could interfere effectually in the affairs of central Greece, she must rule with undisputed sway in the Peloponnesus; and to attain this object, the first and most important step was to bring to her feet her diminished but still independent and formidable rival, Argos. The words which Herodotus¹⁾ puts into the mouth of Aristagoras when urging Cleomenes to assist the Ionians: *χρεόν ἐστι ὑμέας μάχας ἀναβάλλεσθαι πρὸς τε Μεσσηνίους ἰόντας ἰσοπαλέας καὶ Ἀρκάδας τε καὶ Ἀργείους*, — these words (apart from the anachronism *ἰσοπαλέας Μεσσηνιοὶ*) express the situation. A war with Argos was imminent, and this circumstance was probably the reason which weighed most with the Spartan government when it declined to help Ionia.

When Aristagoras visited European Greece, probably in the first months of 498 B. C.,²⁾ did he apply for help only to Sparta and Athens? This is in the highest degree unlikely. We may be sure that he left no stone unturned, — that he sought assistance for Miletus (which, as the Milesians knew well, would soon be besieged by a Persian army) from all the more powerful Greek states on the Aegaeon side of Greece. Herodotus mentions only his visits to Sparta and Athens; but this is a case where the general circumstances and probabilities of the situation are far more weighty than the mere silence of a historian whose methods

1) 5, 49 *ad fin.*

2) The chronology of the first years, 499—8 B. C., presents little difficulty. Cp. MACAN, *op. cit.* II, App. V. 499 B. C. summer: failure at Naxos; autumn: *Τυράνων κατάπαυσις, ἐπόστασις Ἀρισταγόρου*. — 499—8 B. C. winter: Aristagoras in European Greece; spring: siege of Miletus, despatch of Athenian and Eretrian fleet; summer: burning of Sardis, relief of Miletus. The council held at Miletus, Herod. 5, 36, would fall in summer 499 B. C.

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and sources are such as those of Herodotus.¹⁾ We cannot doubt, for instance, that the Milesian ex-tyrant paid a personal visit to Eretria and moved the Eretrians to send their five triremes.²⁾ And we might be morally certain, a priori, that he could not have omitted to make an application for help to Argos. That he actually made such an application, the oracle under consideration seems to me to be the proof. For *this oracle is explicable only on the assumption that the Milesians asked Argos to send help.*³⁾

It would perhaps have been out of the question for Argos with the best goodwill in the world, to have acceded to the Milesian appeal, conscious as she must have been that at any moment she might be exposed to Lacedaemonian hostility. But the fact that Ionia had been partially colonised from Argolis was in itself sufficient to enlist sympathy, and, if Aristagoras visited Argos after the rebuff at Sparta, Argive sympathy would have been the more easily awakened. Argos then, we may take it, showed her goodwill by not summarily refusing the Milesian request, but promising to be guided by the counsel of the Delphic god. Her inquiry, Herodotus says, was *περὶ σωτηρίας τῆς πόλιος τῆς σφετέρης*. We may infer that the Argive *Θεοπρόποι* asked whether their city would be safe if a contingent were sent to the help of Miletus.

I will deal first with the verses concerning Argos, and then with those concerning Miletus. But I may point out here that the oracle presupposes that Miletus itself is directly menaced. Hence it might be thought that the oracle must have been given shortly before the battle of Lade, which (according to the only reasonable chronology, in my opinion) belongs to 494 B. C. But there was in 498 B. C. an earlier siege of Miletus,⁴⁾ which is entirely omitted in the superficial narrative of Herodotus, and the fact illuminates the obscure campaign of that year. The object of the Greek march on Sardis was to raise the siege. It was in fact inevitable that Miletus, the centre and leader of the rebellion, should be the first objective of the Persian generals. And Delphi, well informed, was quite aware of this at the beginning of 498 B. C.

1) The Spartan source of the Herodotean account of the visit of Aristagoras is reflected clearly in 5,39; Aristagoras sailed to Lacedaemon, *ἔδεε γὰρ δὴ συμμαχίης τινός οἱ μεγάλης ἐξευρεθῆναι*.

2) Herod. 5, 99.

3) It would, of course, be possible to suppose that at some later date in the course of the Ionic revolt (say 495 B. C.) the Ionians, hard pressed, made another appeal to their European brethren, and that on this occasion Argos consulted the oracle. But as no such appeal is recorded, it would be a violation of scientific method to multiply hypotheses.

4) Recorded by Plutarch, *De malignitate Herod.*, 24, probably on the authority of Charon of Lampsacus. The record was rightly accepted by Grote cap. XXXV.

§ 4. Argive interpretation of the oracle.

There is one remarkable sentence in the narrative of Herodotus, which commentators have omitted to explain. *Ταῦτα δὴ πάντα συνελθόντα τοῖσι Ἀργείοις φόβον παρεῖχε.*¹⁾ "The conjunction of all these things caused alarm to the Argives" then encamped close to Sepeia. *Ταῦτα πάντα* refers to the oracle just quoted and manifestly means that certain signs indicated therein had come to pass. Now the oracle indicates two signs. (1) It declares that many Argive women will be *ἀμφιδρουφές*,

*ὅταν ἡ Θήλεια τὸν ἄρσενά νικήσασα
ἐξελάσῃ καὶ κῦδος ἐν Ἀργείοισιν ἄρῃται,*

and (2) it implies a second *τέκμαρ* in

*δεινὸς ὄφις ἀέλικτος.*²⁾

How were these portents realised in the opinion of the Argives? Herodotus does not tell us, and as it is not like him not to explain such a matter, perhaps he missed the point; but his narrative enables us to discover. The portent of the *ὄφις* was discerned in the place of encampment, a place of snaky name, *Σήπεια*, which in very fact may been so called from local abundance of *σῆπες*. The *sêps* is a dangerous viper common in the eastern Peloponnesus and legend said that Aepytus was killed by its bite.³⁾ The place of snakes was in danger; that was one sign.

But in what sense could the Argives suppose that the female had expelled the male and won glory among them. The only glory that had yet been won among the Argives in this campaign, so far as the story tells us, had been won by the river Erasinus, which (by the unfavourable sacrifices) had turned the invader back. But Erasinus was male: what of the female? Herodotus, unconsciously as it seems, supplies us with the answer. He describes the Erasinus thus⁴⁾:

Ἐρασῖνον ὃς λέγεται ῥέειν ἐκ τῆς Στυμφαλίδος λίμνης · τὴν γὰρ δὴ λίμνην ταύτην ἐς χάσμα ἀφανὲς ἐκδιδοῦσαν ἀναφαίνεσθαι ἐν

1) 6, 77.

2) The epithet *ἀέλικτος* has not been rightly interpreted. It has been taken as simply equivalent to the inferior variant *τριέλικτος* (*ἀ-intensivum*). Not so. The natural meaning (*ἀ-negativum*) is the right one. *ὄφις ἀέλικτος* "Coilless snake", "snake not a snake", is a phrase of the same kind as *πῦρ ἀνῆφαιστον*, *βάκχη ἄθυρσος*, *ἄρδις ἄπυρος*, etc. — a metaphorical expression applicable to many things and suitable in an ambiguous prophecy. Of course, if the need arose, Delphi could interpret the prefix as intensive.

3) Pausanias describes it from his own observation, 8, 4. 7; compare FRAZERS note *ad loc.* Mount Sepeia in Arcadia probably got its name from the same cause. — MACAN (note on Herod. 6, 77. 13, p. 336 b) notes that "Sepeia or Hesepeia is another point of suggestion between the oracle and the event (*σῆψ* = *ὄφις*)", but should have added that it must have been this suggestion which contributed to the alarm of the Argives.

4) 6. 76.

*Αργεῖ, τὸ ἐνθελύτεν δὲ τὸ ὕδωρ ἤδη τοῦτο ὑπ' Ἀργείων Ἐρασῖνον
καλέεσθαι.*

The idea then was that the Erasinus, consisting of waters derived from the Stymphalian lake, was the male (ποταμός) driven forth by the female (λίμνη). Nor was this more farfetched than other interpretations of oracles.

That it was an interpretation not imagined at Delphi need hardly be said; and it is perhaps futile to speculate what meaning or meanings Delphi may have contemplated. But it is worth pointing out that the snake seems to have been an emblem or symbol of Sparta.¹⁾ If Sparta had been defeated, the ὄφις might have been thus interpreted.

§ 5. Legend of Telesilla.

This oracle may be partly responsible for the growth of a story unknown to Herodotus, which, if it were true, would explain the failure of Cleomenes after the battle of Sepeia. The story was preserved by the Argive historian Socrates in his *Περὶ ἡγήσεις Ἀργούς*, and was often cited as an example of female valour. It has come down to us through Pausanias, Plutarch, Polyænus, and Suidas.²⁾ According to this tradition, the Argive women, at the instigation of the poetess Telesilla, defended their city against the attack of the Spartans. Some historians have thought that there may be a measure of truth in this tradition,³⁾ but it seems quite improbable that such a remarkable achievement should not have been noised about Greece and come to the ears of Herodotus. It could not have been hidden, and any Spartan version of the campaign must have taken account of it. Those who regard it as a late invention are assuredly right.⁴⁾ There were perhaps three motives which determined the shape of the story. (1) It assigned an origin for the annual feast of Hybristika, at which the women dressed as men and the men as women.⁵⁾ (2) Pausanias states that the statue of Telesilla stood in front of a temple of Aphrodite,⁶⁾ and FRAZER acutely suggests that this

1) Apollodorus, Bibl. 2, 8. 5 (F. H. G. i. p. 150): ἐπὶ δὲ τοῖς βομοῖς οἷς ἔθυσαν εὔροιν σημεῖα κείμενα οἱ μὲν λαχόντες Ἄργος φρεῖνον, οἱ δὲ Λακεδαιμόνα λαχόντες δράκοντα.

2) Socrates fr. 4 (F. H. G. IV, p. 497) = Plutarch, *Mulierum virtutes*, 4, p. 425 (= II, pp. 204—5 ed. BERNARDAKIS). Also Plutarch, *Apophth. Lacon.*, p. 223, 4—5 (= II, p. 142 ed. Bern.). Pausanias 2, 20, 8—10. Polyænus, 8, 33. Suidas s. v. Τελέσιλλα.

3) CLINTON; MACAN. E. MEYER thinks that though Cleomenes did not actually attack the city, an attack was expected, the women were prepared to defend it, and Telesilla was active in the organisation; *Gesch. d. Altertums*, III 319, 321.

4) O. MÜLLER, GROTE, DÜNKER, BUSOLT etc.

5) Plutarch and Polyænus, *loc. cit.* Compare FRAZER, *Comm. on Pausanias*, III, p. 197.

6) Pausanias, *loc. cit.* FRAZER, *loc. cit.* and his note on 3. 15. 10 (ib. p. 338).

was the armed Aphrodite, which would explain Lucian's observation that Ares was regarded as a god of women at Argos, on account of Telesilla's victory,¹⁾ and Plutarch's statement that Telesilla and her fellows built a temple to Enyalios. (3) The oracle, which we have been discussing would have suggested the occasion.²⁾

§ 6. The relations of Miletus, Branchidae, and Delphi: a problem.

The Milesian verses still call for criticism. It seems possible that one of these verses, viz:

σαὶ δ' ἄλοχοι πολλοῖσι πόδας νύφουσι κομήταις,

may be an interpolation *ex eventu*, but there is not the slightest reason to suspect the rest.³⁾ The words ἄλλοισι μελήσει are typically oracular, being susceptible of opposite interpretations *secundum eventum*: (1) will be saved by others (than the Argives), (2) will occupy the attention of the Persians. Yet it is implied that the god is interested in the fate of his sanctuary, and the words are clearly intended to suggest that the temple of Branchidae will be a care to friends. It is difficult not to suspect that there is some allusion to measures which were being taken, with the cognisance of Delphi, for the benefit of Didyma. That Didyma looked up with respect to Delphi, we have evidence in the circumstance that the Branchidae derived their origin from the Delphian Machaereus;⁴⁾ while this χρησμός, at least *prima facie*, attests the goodwill of Delphi to Didyma.

On the other hand we find Miletus designated by a strong and almost startling phrase of censure, κακῶν ἐπιμήχανε ἔργων, which implies that Miletus had offended the god or his interpreters. But how? It is quite useless to take it for a condemnation of the revolt itself, though the revolt may have seemed to Delphi, as to Hecataeus (and to Herodotus *ex eventu*), unwise.⁵⁾ The phrase must refer to some special and serious offence. MACAN throws out the suggestion that the words are levelled at Hecataeus who proposed that the treasures of Branchidae should be

1) Lucian, *Amores*, 30 ἡ Σπαρτιάταις ἀνθωπισμένη Τελέσιλλα δι' ἣν ἐν Ἀργεὶ θεὸς ἀριθμεῖται γυναικῶν ἄρης.

2) Pausanias and Suidas associate the oracle with the story.

3) HILLER v. GAERTRINGEN dismisses it as "ein schnödes, ex eventu gefertigtes Orakel über das um 500 zerstörte Milet und Didyma" (Art. "Delphoi", in Pauly's Real-Encycl., IV 2550, cp. 2553). This is hasty criticism. [I do not understand the chronology. The date 494 for the destruction of Miletus is certain].

4) Strabo, 9. 3. 9. H. v. GAERTRINGEN (op. cit. 2546—7) puts together the evidence for the repute of Delphi in Ionia.

5) In 480 B. C. Delphi, doubtless, medized, like the rest of northern Greece, and saved itself thereby. (This view is adopted by E. MEYER *Gesch. d. Altertums*, III, p. 383; H. v. GAERTRINGEN *op. cit.* shirks the question). But this act of selfpreservation has no bearing whatever on Delphic policy in 499—5 B. C.

confiscated and used for the war.¹⁾ This conjecture may seem insufficient; for the proposal of one citizen would not involve the city in the offence, seeing that the city rejected the proposal. But nevertheless the suggestion supplies the clue. Though the Milesians rejected the idea of Hecataeus at the outset, yet the Branchid priests knew well that, as time went on and the Milesians were hardpressed, the temptation to forget their scruples and borrow the temple-treasures would become almost irresistible — especially as there was the cogent argument that, if they did not themselves use them, the precious things would fall into the hands of the enemy.²⁾ Certainly, it would have been surprising self-denial if the Milesians persisted in their resolution up to the final catastrophe. Hence it is a reasonable conjecture that, when the oracle was given to the Argives, it was known at Delphi that the men of Miletus contemplated, or the Branchid priesthood apprehended, a seizure or forced loan of Didymaeon treasures.

Now Herodotus records that, after the fall of Miletus, the temple and oracle at Didyma were plundered and burnt.³⁾ He adds that the Milesians who were taken alive *ἤγοντο ἐς Σούσα*, but says nothing of the fate of the Branchidae in particular. Strabo, on the other hand, states⁴⁾ that the temple was burnt by Xerxes and that the Branchidae delivered up the treasures to him (after Salamis) and went with him to Persia in order to escape punishment for their treachery.⁵⁾ As we have no other evidence, we must prefer the authority of Herodotus, general probability being entirely in his favour. Strabo's testimony (whatever his authority) is specially impaired by his statement that the other Greek temples of the Asiatic coast, except that of Ephesus, were burnt by Xerxes. This we must unhesitatingly regard as erroneous. Herodotus says⁶⁾ that the temples of the Greek rebels (the Samians excepted) were burnt by Darius. If the new temples, erected in the course of the ensuing fourteen years, had been burned by Xerxes in 480/79 B. C. the fact would assuredly have been known to Herodotus and noticed by him. But the act thus ascribed to Xerxes would in the circumstances have been so impolitic that it is quite incredible. We cannot doubt that Herodotus is right and that Darius burned the temple. Strabo's record confuses Darius with Xerxes.

1) *Op. cit.*, note on 6. 19. 3, p. 282 a. Herod. 5. 36.

2) Hecataeus used this argument.

3) 6, 19 *συληθέντα ἐνεπίμπρατο*. It seems to me hypercritical when ΜΑCAN says that Herodotus is not explicit about the date. His statement is clearly inconsistent with that of Strabo.

4) 14, 1. 5.

5) *Ib.* τοῦ μὴ τιῶσαι δίκας τῆς ἱεροσύνης καὶ τῆς προδοσίας.

6) 6, 25.

But there is one element in the record of Strabo which deserves attention and can hardly have been invented, — perhaps it rests ultimately on the authority of Hecataeus. It is the imputation of “sacrilege and treachery” to the Branchidae, and the implication that they feared the vengeance of Miletus. Here is an enigma; and its solution, if we knew it, might bear closely upon the matter in hand; for the offence of the Branchidae must have been prior to the fall of Miletus.

We have in fact a problem with three elements: (1) the alleged treachery of the Branchidae and the resentment of Miletus; (2) the hostile attitude of Delphi to Miletus; and (3) its protective attitude to Branchidae. Now consider the situation in which the priesthood of the Didymaeon were placed at the close of 499 B. C. On one hand, it had been proposed by an influential citizen of Miletus to tamper with the sacred treasures, and, although the proposal had not been adopted, there was only too good reason to fear that it might, under stress of circumstances, be adopted at any moment. On the other hand, there was the danger that when the Persians came, as they would presently come, and laid siege to Miletus, the sanctuary would be seized and spoiled. The priests were between the devil and the deep sea. Obviously it is a possible solution of our problem that, placed in a grave dilemma, the priests of Didyma formed the plan of removing the treasures secretly from the temple out of the reach of Milesian friends and Persian foes alike,¹⁾ and that they took the priests of Delphi into their confidence. By this hypothesis we can explain both the animosity of Delphi towards Miletus and the animosity of Miletus towards the Branchidae.

§ 7. An adventurous theory.

We shall never know the truth. But I must refer to an ingenious theory propounded by C. NIEBUHR,²⁾ which bears upon this question, though he approaches it from a different side. He points out that there is something very odd about the dedicatory offerings of Croesus which were shown to Herodotus at Delphi. Many of them, Herodotus says,³⁾ were uninscribed; that is in itself strange, as dedications usually bore the names of the donors. One of them, a gold perirrhanterion, was inscribed with the name of the Lacedaemonians; whereby, of course, hung a tale.

1) It is hardly necessary to remark that the *σκληρόντα* of Herod. 5, 19 cannot reasonably be pressed against this supposition. Herodotus, *ex hypothesi*, knowing nothing of the secret history of the treasures assumed that they were in the sanctuary when the Persians seized and burned it. Nor, if it comes to that, does the theory imply that all the things of value were removed.

2) *Einflüsse orientalischer Politik auf Griechenland im 6. und 5. Jahrh.* (Mith. der Vorderasiatischen Gesellsch. 1899. 3.)

3) 1. 51.

As to the others (the gold lion, the plinths, the crateres, the casks, the silver perirranterion) Herodotus does not say¹⁾ whether they bore the name of Cræsus or not. Now in another passage,²⁾ the historian makes the remarkable statement that the offerings of Cræsus at Branchidae were duplicates of his offerings at Delphi, equal in number and like in kind. This sounds in itself highly improbable, and the improbability would be greater if NIEBUHR is right in his conclusion "*dass Branchidä zur Mermnadenzeit als ein lydisches Reichsheiligtum gegolten haben muss.*"³⁾ At all events, the statement reflects a strange light on the Delphic account of the relations of Delphi with Cræsus. According to that account, when Cræsus tested the oracles and Delphi gave a true answer, Cræsus presented the rich offerings which Herodotus describes. Are we to suppose that at the same time he presented offerings of equal value to Branchidae, which had failed to stand the test? The only way out would be to suppose that he bestowed on Delphi a duplicate of every dedication he had offered at Didyma during the previous years of his reign. A fantastic supposition!

NIEBUHR'S theory is that the offerings which Herodotus saw at Delphi were indeed genuine offerings of Cræsus, but offerings dedicated to the Didymæan, not to the Delphian, Apollo. In other words, some of the treasures of Didyma had been conveyed surreptitiously to Delphi, and the inscriptions had been erased. I do not propose to discuss NIEBUHR'S speculation,⁴⁾ which involves Aristagoras and the Alcmaeonids in a conspiracy to plunder Didyma, and makes Delphi an accessory after the fact. The use of such divination is to illustrate and accentuate a problem, where there is no positive evidence. There is a mystery about the last days of Branchidae, which will probably never be cleared up, and NIEBUHR has done service in pointing it out, though his tissue of combinations hangs suspended in the air.⁵⁾

1) It cannot be inferred from the expression ἄλλα οὐκ ἐπίσημα πολλά, that the gold lion etc. were ἐπίσημα, for οὐκ ἐπίσημα need only distinguish the objects which it includes from the perirranterion "of the Lacedaemonians".

2) I. 92 ἴσα τε σταθμὸν καὶ ὁμοῖα. CURTIUS finds this quite natural (*Griech. Gesch.* I⁵ 564).

3) P. 23.

4) I may point out that he has omitted to observe that there is earlier evidence than Herodotus — earlier by more than 20 years — for the Delphic dedications of Cræsus, — the 3rd poem of Bacchylides 468 B. C.; and Pindar's somewhat earlier *Κροίσου φιλόφρων ἐρετὰ* in a Pythian ode (l. 94; 470 B. C.) must allude to them.

5) It is always instructive for students of Greek history to observe how problems strike orientalists. One of NIEBUHR'S points is that his theory accounts for the anger of Darius against the Athenians, the king regarding them as participators in the robbery of Branchidae, and the anger of Darius is explained by an inadequate motive in Herodotus. "*Die Motivierung des königlichen Zornes erregt bei jedem Kenner des alten Orients lebhaftes Kopfschütteln*" u. s. w. p. 41. But NIEBUHR, I think, has not

§ 8. **Summary.**

The results of this paper may be briefly expressed. During his mission to European Greece (499/8 B. C.), Aristagoras visited Argos, and it was on the occasion of his appeal that Argos consulted Delphi and elicited the epicene oracle touching the fortunes of Argos and Miletus. Hence the earliest year in which the Argive war of Cleomenes can be placed is 498 B. C.; on the other hand, it need not be as late as 494 B. C. I have shown how the Argive portion of the oracle was interpreted by the Argives (according to the implications of the Herodotean story) in connexion with the events of the invasion of Cleomenes; and I have suggested a hypothetical explanation of the more mysterious portion which concerns Miletus.

grasped the methods and mental attitude of Herodotus. It is a shot quite out of range when he describes that historian as a propagandist for Delphi. The truth is that when Herodotus was under the influence of a Delphic source, he was a propagandist for Delphi; when his source was Spartan, a propagandist for Sparta; when Athenian (as in the account of the Plataean campaign), a propagandist for Athens; but in each case unintentionally.