PAN piper

the Bull of Minos

XP35 ILLUSTRATED

LEONARD COTTRELL

the story of
the great archaeological
discoveries
in Crete and Greece

CHAPTER I

HOMER AND THE HISTORIANS

I AM going to assume that not all readers of this book will be specialists in Greek epic poetry or the prehistoric civilizations of the Aegean. Many perhaps will be in that vague but happy state of half-knowledge which I enjoyed before I was drawn down into the vortices of Homeric research. This is, they may know their Homer, either in the original or in one of those excellent modern translations (such as that made by Mr. E. V. Rieu and published in the Penguin series), they may have a working knowledge of Greek classical history and may recall that at some time in the last century someone dug up "Homer's Troy" and "Homer's Mycenae", and thus proved to everyone's delight that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were "true". If only the facts were as simple as that! But, alas, they are not.

On the other hand, even readers who have not yet read the great epic poet of Greece will be familiar with the stories, be they history or legend, which Homer wove into his poems. They will have heard how the Trojan Prince, Paris, stole the lovely Helen from her husband, Menelaüs of Sparta, of how Menelaüs and his brother Agamemnon, "King of Men", led the Achaean host to Troy and laid siege to it for ten years. The wrath of Achilles; the slaying of the Trojan hero, Hector; the stratagem of the Wooden Horse, planned by the cunning Odysseus, which led to the sack of Priam's city; the long return home of the much-enduring Odysseus, the Wanderer—all these are part of Europe's rich heritage of legend. In England alone poets from Chaucer to Louis MacNeice have drawn upon the Homeric themes and characters, as no doubt will writers yet unborn. For Homer, father of European literature, has entered to some extent into the thought and speech of every one of us, even those who have never consciously read a line by him.

Less than 100 years ago the only knowledge—if it could be called such—of the early history of Greece was that obtainable from Greek mythology, and especially from the great epic poems of Homer, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Practically everything before about 800 B.C. was regarded as legend. The historian George Grote, whose monumental *History of Greece* was published in 1846, could write in his Preface:

> "I begin the real history of Greece with the first recorded Olympiad, or 776 B.C. . . . For the truth is, that historical records properly so called, do not begin until after this date; nor will any man, who candidly considers the extreme paucity of attested facts for two centuries after 776 B.C., be astonished to learn that the state of Greece in 900, 1000, 1100,1200, 1300, 1400 B.C., etc.—or any earlier century which it may please chronologists to include in their computed genealogies—cannot be described to him with anything like decent evidence . . .
>
> "The times which I thus set apart from the region of history are discernible only through a different atmosphere—that of epic poetry and legend. To confound together these disparate matters, is, in my judgement, essentially unphilosophical."

Thus sternly wrote Mr. Grote, and justly, too, in the light of what was known at that time. For though the classical Greeks (600–300 B.C.) regarded much of their epics as literal history, there was nothing in them which a modern historian would be justified in regarding as evidence. True, the epics sometimes described individuals who *could* have been credible historical figures, whose actions often took place in a precise geographical setting; yet they were so intermixed with obvious myths and supernatural happenings as to make it almost impossible to recognize where legend ended and reality began. For instance, Odysseus, the Wanderer, during the earlier part of his journey home from Troy, follows a route which can be traced, island by island, on a modern map, and which proves Homer's knowledge of Aegean geography. But after a while the Wanderer wanders off the map into fairyland, to the island of Circe, to the home of the hideous Lestrygonians and the land of the Cyclopes, even to Hades itself, where only our imaginations can follow him.

Of course the *Odyssey*—the "first novel of Europe"—being an obvious romance, might be expected to contain many elements of fairy tale. But even the sterner *Iliad*, which tells of the siege of Troy, and which the Greeks of classical times regarded as authentic history, has its mythical ingredients. The gods take sides in the war, appear to the heroes and fight in both armies—though usually disguised as human warriors. Some of the heroes are god-descended. Achilles is the son of Thetis, the sea-nymph; Helen is the daughter of Zeus himself. Xanthus, one of Achilles' horses, has the power of human speech and warns his master of his impending death. But admittedly these are subordinate elements in the story, which in the main is grimly and brilliantly realistic, and could only have been written by one who was personally familiar with the Trojan plain.

Who was this great poet, whose works were thought by the classical Greeks to embody their early history? The historian Herodotus, who lived between *c.* 484 and 425 B.C., believed that Homer lived about 400 years before his own time, that is, in about the ninth century B.C., though later authorities placed his date far back in the twelfth century (present-day opinion on the whole favours Herodotus' date). No real histories of his life existed, though many legends grew up around his name. Several places competed for the honour of being his birthplace—Smyrna, Argos, Athens, Salamis and Khios—but the last has the strongest claim. Tradition is insistent that he was an "Ionian" Greek—that is, that he belonged to those Greeks who were driven out of the mainland by the invading Dorians (*circa* 1000 B.C.) and founded the Ionian colonies on the west coast of Asia Minor.

One fact is certain: that Homer, whether he created his epics of the eighth, ninth or tenth century before Christ, was making use of much more ancient material—a store of myths, legends and folk-tales which had come down to him from a remote past. We also know that much of this epic material which Homer used survived, side by side with the Homeric poems, into classical times. This can be proved by the fact that several legends and stories which Homer only glanced at were used by later poets and dramatists as fully developed epics or plays. Historians call this material, on which both Homer and later Greek poets drew, the *Epic Cycle*.

Although I would not dare attempt to summarize the whole of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, I think it might help those who have not read these epics to describe briefly those episodes which have a bearing on Schliemann's discoveries.

The *Iliad*, which is generally supposed to be the earlier poem, deals with an episode in the Trojan War—the Wrath of Achilles—and its tragic consequences. Its opening is tremendous:

> "The Wrath of Achilles is my theme, that fatal wrath which, in fulfilment of the will of Zeus, brought the Achaeans so much suffering and sent the gallant souls of so many noblemen to Hades, leaving their bodies as carrion for the dogs and passing birds. Let us begin, goddess of song, with the angry parting that took place between Agamemnon, King of Men, and the great Achilles, son of Peleus."

Notice that Homer calls his Greeks "the Achaeans". This is the name he most often uses to describe them, though occasionally he calls them Danaans. Often they are described by the name of the district or island from which they come, e.g. the Locrians, from Locris; the Arcadians, "from the lands where Mount Cyllene lifts its peak", and so on.

When the *Iliad* opens, the Achaeans are encamped beside their ships on the edge of the Trojan plain. Before them lies King Priam's city of Troy, or Ilium, which they have unsuccessfully besieged for nine years. (Troy can easily be identified on a modern map of Turkey. It lies on the coast of Asia Minor, near the entrance to the Dardanelles.)

Agamemnon, "King of Men", is the leader of the Achaean host. He is comparable to a feudal overlord of the Middle Ages, exercising a loose suzerainty over his subordinate chiefs (though they also are called Kings), but not having complete authority. In fact his authority is challenged in the very first book of the *Iliad*, when Achilles, King of the Myrmidons, and the greatest warrior in the Achaean host, heaps abuse on him for threatening to take from Achilles his slave-girl, Briseis, part of his legitimate spoils of war.

> "You shameless schemer [he cried], always aiming at a profitable deal! How can you expect any of the men to give you loyal service when you send them on a raid or into battle? It was no quarrel with the Trojan spearmen that brought *me* here to fight. They have never done *me* any harm. They have never lifted cow or horse of mine, nor ravaged any crop that the deep soil of Phthia grows to feed her men; for the roaring seas and many a dark range of mountains lie between us. The truth is that we joined the expedition to please you; yes, you unconscionable cur, to get satisfaction from the Trojans for Menelaüs and yourself—a fact which you utterly ignore."

Menelaüs, King of Sparta, was Agamemnon's brother, and the ostensible cause of the war was the outrage offered to Menelaüs by Paris (sometimes called Alexander), son of King Priam of Troy. Entertained in Menelaüs's home at Sparta, Paris had seized the opportunity of his host's temporary absence to steal the affection of his wife, the lovely Helen, daughter of Zeus, and to take her with him to Troy. The legendary cause of this, though Homer only glances lightly at it, was Aphrodite, who, having been chosen by Paris as the most beautiful of the goddesses, promised him as a reward the loveliest woman in the world—Helen of Sparta. Agamemnon, determined to avenge the insult to his brother and his family, called upon the Achaeans from many parts of Greece, and from the islands, to sail under his leadership to Troy and win Helen back.

The Second Book of the *Iliad* contains the famous Catalogue of Ships, describing in considerable detail where the Achaean contingents came from; a long and, to our minds, rather tedious list, though to Homer's hearers it was of great importance. But there is an interesting point concerning this catalogue, one which puzzled an earlier generation of scholars. Most of the towns and citadels which Homer describes as of great wealth and power were in his own day, and in classical times, mere ruins, if they existed at all. For example:

> "The citizens of Argos and Tiryns of the Great Walls; the men of Hermione and Asine, towns that embrace a deep gulf of the

> sea; and those from Troezen, from Eionae, and from vine-clad Epidaurus, with the Achaean youth of Aegina and Mases, were led by Diomedes of the loud war-cry."

And most important of all

> "The troops that came from the great stronghold of Mycenae, from wealthy Corinth and the good town of Cleonae."

These, and others, the poet tells us,

> ". . . in their hundred ships, King Agamemnon son of Atreus led. His following was by far the finest and most numerous. He was a proud man as he took his stand with his people, armed in gleaming bronze, the greatest captain of all, in virtue of his rank and as commander of by far the largest force."

Yet in the ninth century, when Homer wrote, Mycenae was of little importance, and in later classical times, when every Greek schoolboy knew and recited Homer, it was a ruin. So was "Minyan Orchomenos", and "Tiryns of the Great Walls", and many another city which, according to the legends, was once rich and great.

This fact puzzled some scholars, because there were, in support of the legend that Agamemnon had lived at Mycenae, great walls which a later generation thought had been built by giants —the Cyclopes; similarly at Tiryns there were these Cyclopean walls. Nevertheless most scholars inclined to the belief that the Homeric stories were folk-myths and nothing more.

To return to the *Iliad*: the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles ends in bitter rancour. Agamemnon, determined to assert his authority, takes Achilles' slave-girl to replace the girl Chryseis, whom he has been forced to return to her father Chryses. This aged man was a priest of Apollo, who had let loose a plague on the Greeks because Agamemnon had stolen Chryses' daughter. Achilles, whilst refraining from a direct attack on Agamemnon, retires with his Myrmidons to their tents and refuses to take any further part in the battle.

> "That day is coming [he tells Agamemnon] when the Achaeans one and all will miss me sorely, and you in your despair will be powerless to help them as they fall in their hundreds to Hector, killer of men."

In the Third Book the armies advance to meet each other, but Hector, principal warrior on the Trojan side, steps forward and proposes that his brother Paris should meet Menelaüs in single combat, whoever wins being entitled to Helen. A truce is declared and the two armies sit down opposite each other to watch the duel. Paris is defeated, but his guardian goddess Aphrodite saves him in the nick of time and spirits him back to the city, much to the disgust of both sides, since Paris is as unpopular with his own countrymen as he is with the Greeks.

But the gods are adamant and, tempted by the goddess Athene, Pandarus, one of the Trojan allies, shoots an arrow at Menelaüs, wounding him and so breaking the truce. This time fighting breaks out in earnest. The gods themselves join in the battle, and the valiant Diomedes, an Achaean hero, even succeeds in felling the war-god Ares, besides wounding Aphrodite when she tries to rescue her son Aeneas. Hector and Paris return to the battlefield, and again Hector issues a challenge to any Greek to meet him in single combat. The great Telamonian Aias accepts the challenge, but the fight is indecisive, though tough, and ends with the combatants chivalrously exchanging gifts. Meanwhile Achilles continues to sulk in his tent.

It is worth bearing in mind the *methods* of fighting described in the *Iliad* because they have a considerable bearing on the archaeological discoveries to be described later. In the period of classical Greece, e.g. in such battles as Marathon (490 B.C.) and Thermopylae (480 B.C.), the typical Greek soldier was the *hoplite*, clad, as Professor Gilbert Murray says,

> "in solid metal from head to foot; helmet, breastplate, and back-plate, small round shield, and greaves, all of metal".
>
> (*Rise of the Greek Epic.*)

Now it is true that the *Iliad* is full of references to the round shield "plated in bronze", to "the clash of men in bronze breastplates", and "the flashing of bronze, men slaying and men slain". The Greeks of classical times, hearing such descriptions, would imagine the typical heavy armour of the *hoplitai*, such as you can often see represented on classical vase-paintings or groups of classical statuary. Not only that, but, as Murray points out, some, though not all, of the tactics described suggest the close-formation, tightly disciplined manœuvres of the fifth-century warriors.

> "The Trojans came on, like lines of waves on the sea, line behind line, flashing in bronze, together with their commanders."

But there are other descriptions of methods of fighting which bear no resemblance to those of classical times, or even to those of Homer's own period, so far as these can be ascertained. For example, when the Greek hero, Telamonian Aias, goes to meet Hector in the above-mentioned duel he carries a shield

> "like a tower, made of bronze and seven layers of leather. Tychius, the master-currier, who lived at Hyle, made this glittering shield for him with the hides of seven big bulls, which he overlaid with an eighth layer of bronze. Holding this shield before his breast, Telamonian Aias went right up to Hector before halting to defy him."

Evidently this shield "like a tower" covered the entire body, and was quite unlike any type of shield depicted in classical times, or even in the ninth century, when Homer lived. Where did the poet get his description? Scholars were puzzled. Nor was this the only reference to a leather body-shield. In Book IV there is a passage describing Hector walking back from the battlefield to the town.

> "As he walked, the dark leather rim of his bossed shield tapped him above and below, on the ankles and on the back of the neck."

Obviously this would have been impossible if the hero had been carrying an ordinary round shield with an arm-band. Evidently he was wearing a large body-shield slung over his shoulders by means of a leather baldric.

And to take one final example, there is a scene in Book XV when Hector and his followers have forced the Achaeans right back to their ships, and are threatening to storm the wall which the besiegers have built to protect themselves. Here Hector slays many Greeks, among them one Periphetes, a Mycenaean.

> "He had just turned to fly when he tripped against the rim of his shield which he carried to keep missiles off and which came down to his feet. Thrown off his balance, he fell backwards, and as he reached the ground his helmet rang loudly on his temples, at once attracting Hector's notice."

Which was too bad for Periphetes. If he had been carrying a small round shield of the classical type or even of the ninth-century pattern, such an accident could not have happened.

Where, asked the scholars, did Homer get the idea of these big cumbersome leather shields? And why were references to them mixed up with much more frequent references to shields of the more familiar type?

There were other anachronisms too. For instance, in Homer's time and afterwards, weapons, whether swords or spears, were almost invariably of iron. In the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, with one or two insignificant exceptions, weapons are of bronze. Iron is known, but is used almost entirely for tools. Again, the Homeric heroes use chariots, which do not seem to have been widely used in Homer's day and had passed out of fashion in classical times.

To complete our very rapid review of the story, Agamemnon, worried by the Trojan success, sends an embassy to Achilles. It consists of the wily Odysseus, King of Ithaca and hero of the *Odyssey*, the aged Nestor, King of Pylos and "elder statesman" among the Achaeans, and the redoubtable Telamonian Aias, he of the great shield. They convey Agamemnon's promise to return Briseis, together with an enormous gift, as compensation for the insult Achilles had been offered, but the hero returns a contemptuous answer. It is not until the Trojans threaten the ships that Achilles takes notice. Even then he only permits his beloved friend and squire, Patroclus, to borrow his armour and go out to the assistance of the hard-pressed Greeks. But Hector kills Patroclus and strips him of his armour.

Only then does Achilles realize the tragic result of his own intransigence. In bitter rage, and re-equipped with dazzling new armour made by the god Hephaestus himself, he returns to the fight with his Myrmidons. The Trojans are hurled back, Achilles meets Hector in single combat, slays him beneath the walls of Troy and then drags the body in the dust behind his chariot. Every morning he drives the chariot, with its burden, round the pyre on which lies the corpse of Patroclus. He honours his dead friend with a great funeral, after which games are held. The heroes contend with each other in running, boxing, duelling with the spear, chariot-racing, archery, wrestling and javelin-throwing.

The greatest moment of the *Iliad* is undoubtedly the end, when the aged King Priam comes at night to the Achaean camp to ransom the body of his dead son. It is one of the most moving passages in the literature of the world, and I make no apology for quoting from it again, in Mr. Rieu's effective translation. Kneeling before Achilles, the slayer of his son, Priam says:

> "Achilles, fear the gods, and be merciful to me, remembering your own father, though I am even more entitled to compassion, since I have brought myself to do a thing that no one else on earth has done—I have raised to my lips the hand of the man who killed my son.
>
> "Priam had set Achilles thinking of his own father and brought him to the edge of tears. Taking the old man's hand, he gently put him from him; and overcome by their memories they both broke down. Priam, crouching at Achilles' feet, wept bitterly for man-slaying Hector, and Achilles wept for his father, and then again for Patroclus. The house was filled with sounds of their lamentation."

The other great epic, the *Odyssey*, describes the long-delayed, arduous return of the "much enduring" Odysseus to his home after the sack of Troy. In the *Odyssey* we also learn what happened to some of the other Achaean heroes who figure in the *Iliad*. We meet Menelaüs, back again at his palace in Sparta, with the repentant Helen beside him. No longer the *femme fatale*, she is now the perfect housewife:

> "Helen with her ladies came down from her lofty perfumed room, looking like Artemis with her golden distaff. Adreste drew up for her a comfortable chair; Alcippe brought a rug of the softest wool; while Phylo carried her silver work-basket, a gift from Alcandre, wife of Polybus, who lived in Egyptian Thebes, where houses are furnished in the most sumptuous fashion. This man had given Menelaüs two silver baths, a pair of three-legged cauldrons, and ten talents in gold; while in addition his wife gave Helen beautiful gifts for herself, including a golden spindle and a basket that ran on castors and was made of silver finished with a rim of gold."*

It is in the *Odyssey* that we learn what happened to Agamemnon, King of Men, on his return to Mycenae. Old Nestor, speaking to Telemachus, son of Odysseus, describes the treachery of Aegisthos, Agamemnon's cousin, who seduced Clytemnestra, the King's wife, while he was away at Troy.

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* Of this passage a sceptical archaeologist friend writes: "I know people often say that Helen in the *Odyssey* is reformed and domesticated, but she seems to need an awful lot of handmaidens to bring in her knitting."

"While we that were beleaguering Troy toiled at heroic tasks, he spent his leisured days right in the heart of Argos where the horses graze, besieging Agamemnon's wife with his seductive talk. At first Queen Clytemnestra turned a deaf ear to his dishonourable schemes. She was a sensible woman, and beside, she had a man with her, a minstrel by profession, to whom Agamemnon when he left for Troy had given strict orders to watch over his queen. But when the fatal day appointed for her conquest came, Aegisthos took this minstrel to a desert isle, left him there as carrion for the birds of prey, and carried Clytemnestra off to his own house, fond lover, willing dame."

In another part of the *Odyssey*, Menelaüs completes the tale of his brother's doom.

"Agamemnon set foot on the soil of his father with a happy heart, and as he touched it, kissed his native earth. The warm tears rolled down his cheeks, he was so glad to see his land again. But his arrival was observed by a spy in a watch tower, whom Aegisthos had had the cunning to post there. . . . Aegisthos set his brains to work and laid a clever trap. He selected twenty of his best soldiers from the town, left them in ambush, and after ordering a banquet to be prepared in another part of the building set out in a horse-chariot to bring home the King, with his heart full of ugly thoughts. Agamemnon, never guessing that he was going to his doom, came up with him from the coast, and Aegisthos feasted and killed him as a man might fell an ox in its manger. Not a single one of the King's following was left, nor of Aegisthos' company either. They were killed in the palace to a man."

The classical poet Aeschylus, whose superb tragedy *Agamemnon* is based on the same theme, makes the guilty Queen even less sympathetic. According to his version, Clytemnestra was herself the slayer of the King, Aegisthos merely her accomplice. Such was the tragedy enacted at Mycenae.

Before ending this chapter I must apologize to all lovers of Homer for making such a scanty offering from the great man's table, though I hope it may at least tempt others to enjoy the full Homeric feast. Nor shall I attempt at this stage to discuss the so-called "Homeric Problem"—whether the poems are the conscious and deliberate creation of one man, or represent the work of generations of poets working within a common tradition. All I wish to emphasize now is the extraordinary realism of Homer, and the problem which this set the scholars of the last century. Although the epics, especially the *Odyssey*, contain much that is magical and supernatural, yet their descriptions of everyday life, of houses (from palaces to a swineherd's hut), of farming and seamanship, of warfare, of the domestic occupations of women, of clothes and jewellery and works of art, are so intensely *real* that even the most sceptical professors of the early nineteenth century found it hard to understand how the poet could have imagined them all.

Homer's topography, too, shows a detailed knowledge, not only of mainland Greece, but also of the Aegean islands, of capes, harbours and sea-routes, of Syria and Asia Minor. In describing the Trojan plain, he makes the reader *see* its physical features: the winding River Scamander and its companion, the Simois; the two springs near the city, one warm, one cold; the fig-tree near the Scaean Gate and, dominating it all, towering Mount Ida,* where Zeus sat, watching the battle.

Yet the fact remained that when George Grote published his *History of Greece* in 1846, there was, apart from these topographical details, not a scrap of material evidence—not one fragment of a building, piece of pottery, jewellery or armour—to prove that the world which Homer described had ever existed outside his imagination. And the academic world nodded their heads approvingly when they read Grote's grave summing-up of the Trojan War.

> "Though literally believed, reverentially cherished, and numbered among the gigantic phenomena of the past, by the Grecian public, it is in the eyes of modern enquiry essentially a legend and nothing more. If we are asked whether it be not a legend embodying portions of historical matter, and raised upon a basis of truth . . . if we are asked whether there was not really some such historical Trojan war as this, our answer must be, that as the possibility of it cannot be denied, so neither can the reality of it be affirmed. We possess nothing but the ancient epic itself without any independent evidence."

But in the year Grote's book appeared there was a young man working in a shipping office in Amsterdam, who was destined to make the great scholar's words irrevocably out of date.

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* Not to be confused with the other Mount Ida in Crete.

CHAPTER II

SCHLIEMANN THE ROMANTIC

A SEVEN-YEAR-OLD boy, in the dress of 1829, sits at a table in a heavily-furnished room. A large book lies before him, in which he is completely absorbed. It is a Christmas gift from the boy's father, the Protestant parson of a little town in Mecklenburg, North Germany. The work—Jerrer's *Universal History*—is almost as heavy as the child, but that does not worry him, as he pores over an engraving which shows the walls of burning Troy. Through the Scaean Gate comes Aeneas, bearing on his back his aged father Anchises. The boy turns to *his* father, half-dozing by the fire, and says:

"Father, did you tell me that Troy had completely gone?"

"I did."

"And that there's nothing of it left at all?"

"Nothing at all."

"But Jerrer must have *seen* Troy, or how could he have drawn it here?"

"Heinrich, that is simply a fanciful picture."

The boy looks more closely at the drawing. Still he is not satisfied.

"Father, did Troy have great walls like these on the picture?"

"Probably."

"Then" (triumphantly) "they can't *all* have gone. Some must still be there hidden under the ground. I'd love to dig them up. Father, some day shall I go and dig them up?"

The elder Schliemann, a disillusioned man, nods wearily.

"I shouldn't be surprised. And now be quiet. I want to sleep."

Anyone who is inclined to regard that incident as too fanciful need only turn to page three of Schliemann's *Ilios*, where they will find it described by the great man himself. There is no need to doubt its essential truth, for it has the unmistakable Schliemann characteristics which reveal themselves throughout his life: a romantic preoccupation with the past, inflexible determination and complete literal-mindedness. He seems to have inherited the first trait from his father.

> "Though my father was neither a scholar nor an archaeologist he had a passion for ancient history. He often told me with warm enthusiasms of the tragic fate of Herculaneum and Pompeii, and seemed to consider him the luckiest of men who had the means and the time to visit the excavations that were going on there."

But Schliemann the elder was also a drunkard, a sceptic and a lecher, who took only a sporadic interest in his six children, and although he taught Heinrich Latin, the boy had to leave school at the age of fourteen and become an apprentice in a grocer's shop in the small town of Furstenburg.

> "I was engaged," he wrote, "from five in the morning until eleven at night, and had not a moment's leisure for study. Moreover I rapidly forgot the little that I had learnt in childhood; but I did not lose the love of learning; indeed I never lost it, and, as long as I live, I shall never forget the evening when a drunken miller came into the shop. . . ."

The miller, whose name was Niederhoffer, was a failed Protestant clergyman who had taken to drink, which, however,

> "had not made him forget his Homer; for on the evening that he entered the shop he recited to us about a hundred lines of the poet, observing the rhythmic cadence of the verses. Although I did not understand a syllable, the melodious sound of the words made a deep impression on me. . . . From that moment I never ceased to pray to God that by His grace I might yet have the happiness of learning Greek."

Troy and Homer became an obsession with him.

> "What weighs upon our heart, be it joy or sorrow," he writes in his portentous way, "always finds utterance from our lips, especially in childhood; and so it happened that I talked of nothing else to my play-fellows, but of Troy and of the mysterious and wonderful things in which our village abounded. I was continually laughed at by everyone except two young girls, Louise and Minna Meincke, the daughters of a farmer in Zahren, a village only a mile distance from Ankershagen" (Schliemann's home).

With one of these girls, Minna, he carried on a curious childhood romance which seems to have consisted mainly of visits to all the antiquities in the neighbourhood, such as the medieval castle of Ankershagen, where a robber knight named Henning von Holstein was said to have buried treasure.

> "Minna showed me the greatest sympathy and entered into all my vast plans for the future. . . . It was agreed between us that as soon as we were grown up we would marry, and then at once set to work to explore all the mysteries of Ankershagen; excavating . . . the vast treasures hidden by Henning, then Henning's sepulchre, and lastly Troy; nay, we could imagine nothing pleasanter than to spend all our lives in digging for relics of the past."

Fantastic childhood ambitions are common enough, even among ordinary men who forget them as they grow older. But to Heinrich Schliemann they remained real and permanent. At fourteen, when he left Ankershagen to work in the grocer's shop, he met Minna again after an absence of five years and the extraordinary couple (both only fourteen) burst into floods of tears and fell into each other's arms.

> "I was now sure that Minna still loved me, and this stimulated my ambition [he wrote]. Nay, from that moment I felt within me a boundless energy, and was sure that with unremitting zeal I could raise myself in the world and show that I was worthy of her. I only implored God to grant that she might not marry before I had attained an independent position."

This would have been sheer rhodomontade in most men. Schliemann meant every word of it. And though he lost his childhood Minna, he spent more than half his life looking for a substitute; nor could he begin his great archaeological work until he had found one, thirty years later.

In the meantime he lived a life of fantastic adventure such as only a romantic novelist could have invented. His father's never-ending amours and his outbreaks of drunken violence made life at home impossible. Heinrich broke away and got a job in Hamburg as a grocer's assistant at £9 per annum, but his weak frame was unequal to the work. One day, endeavouring to shift a heavy cask, he injured his chest and spat blood. He tried another job, but his weak lungs forced him to give it up. Still determined not to return home, he next became a boy on a small sailing-brig, the *Dorothea*, trading between Hamburg and Venezuela, but the ship was wrecked off the Dutch coast.

After tossing for nine hours in a small open boat in a fierce storm, Heinrich and his eight companions were thrown by the surf on to a bank close to the shore of the River Texel.

In Amsterdam, exhausted and starving, he feigned illness and was taken into hospital, and while there wrote to a shipbroker friend, Mr. Wendt in Hamburg, explaining his situation. The letter arrived when Wendt was entertaining friends. A subscription was immediately raised and the delighted Schliemann received the sum of 240 florins (£20). Soon after, through the help of the Prussian Consul-General, he found a situation in the office of an Amsterdam merchant, F. C. Quien, stamping bills of exchange and carrying letters to and from the post office. From Quien he joined the office of an old-established firm of merchants, B. H. Schröder & Co., as "correspondent and book-keeper".

From the moment he entered Schröder's office his fortunes began to improve. Before he had been stumbling and floundering; now he had two valuable assets—a post in which he could exercise his talents, and an employer who had the wit to perceive and make use of them. For the shy young amateur antiquarian from Ankershagen, the Homer-loving grocer's assistant, discovered that he had a brilliant flair for business.

He did not come to Schröder's unprepared. While working as a messenger-boy for Quien he had applied himself to the study of modern languages. Out of his annual salary of £32, he devoted half to payments for books and lessons, and lived on the remaining half "in a wretched garret without a fire, where I shivered with cold in winter and was scorched by the heat in summer". He learned each language by a unique method of his own, which consisted in reading a great deal aloud, without making a translation, taking a lesson every day and constantly writing essays on subjects which interested him, correcting these under the supervision of a teacher, and repeating in the next lesson what was corrected on the previous day.

When he applied for a post with B. H. Schröder & Co. they were astonished to find that this pale, awkward youth of twenty-two, with his large head perched on his small body, had command of seven languages. Oddly, however, the seven did not include Greek. Deliberately he left that to the last, for fear lest "the powerful spell of this noble language might take too great a hold on me and endanger my commercial interests". First he must make money. Afterwards he would be free to pursue the passion of his life.

Within a few months of his arrival Schröder saw that young Schliemann had all the makings of a first-class merchant. He was shrewd, tireless in pursuit of business and endowed with a prodigious memory and great capacity for detail. Behind these qualities, supplying the driving-force, was a consuming ambition to become rich. Riches he must have, he saw clearly, not for their own sake, not for ostentatious display, but because they could give him security, leisure and freedom to pursue his chosen interests. And, of course, once he had acquired wealth he could return to Mecklenburg and marry Minna.

He was promoted rapidly. At the age of twenty-four he decided to learn Russian, and within six weeks was writing business letters in that language and was able to talk in their own tongue to Russian indigo-merchants visiting Amsterdam. Schröder's did a large trade as indigo exporters, especially with Russia. Schliemann, no longer a clerk, was sent by his employers to St. Petersburg and later to Moscow as their representative. In Russia he throve so successfully that within two years of his arrival he was registered as a merchant in the First Guild and the banks had advanced him credits amounting to 57,000 roubles. Elated with his success, he wrote to a friend of the Meincke family requesting him to see Minna on his behalf and ask for her in marriage.

> "But to my sorrow, I received a month later a heartrending answer, that she was just married. I considered this disappointment at the time as the greatest disaster which could have befallen me, and I was for some time utterly unfit for any occupation and sick in bed. . . . I now saw such a brilliant chance before me; but how could I think of realizing it without her participation?"

It was fourteen years since he had seen her.

To a man of Schliemann's type there was only one way of dealing with such an emotional wound—by work, which, while it could not kill the pain, would at least deaden it. Soon he had become a merchant in his own right, and was approached by one of the richest business men in St. Petersburg, who offered to put his nephew into partnership with the German, with a backing of 100,000 roubles. For the moment Schliemann declined. He could afford to bide his time.

He continued to amass money, travelling from capital to capital—Berlin, Paris, London—always staying at the best hotels (though in the cheapest rooms), fascinated by the new industrial age which he saw growing up around him. He loved machines and speed fascinated him, though even the new railways were too slow for his restless, impatient spirit. Occasionally he sought solace in the past. While in London on business he would take a few hours off to visit the British Museum. "I saw the Egyptian things, which interested me more than anything I have ever seen." Then back to indigo shipments and order books, and the life of hotels, packet-boats and railways. By the time he was thirty he had acquired a huge fortune, and began to consider marriage.

But though shrewd and practical in his business affairs, Schliemann was extremely awkward in his relations with women. He feared—with good cause—that women might now seek to marry him for his money; he was conscious of his plainness, jealous of the handsome young officers who danced attention on the women whom he favoured. He was always imagining himself in love—then doubting his judgment. "I only see the virtues and never the failings of the fair sex," he wrote to his sister. And when, finally, he married Katherina, a niece of a business acquaintance, the marriage soon proved a failure. She was intelligent, but practical and unimaginative, quite incapable of understanding his impetuous, romantic nature, in which there was still so much of the ardour of a boy. "You do not love me, and therefore have no sympathy for my good fortune, nor do you share my joys and sorrows, but think of nothing but the gratification of your own desires and caprices," he wrote to her only eighteen months after the marriage. Yet this unfortunate union survived fifteen years of quarrels, partings, reconciliations and violent outbursts of hatred; and Katherina bore him a son and two daughters.

By thirty-three he was master of fifteen languages; in addition to the seven with which he had equipped himself ten years earlier, he now had Polish, Swedish, Norwegian, Slovenian, Danish, Latin and modern and ancient Greek. Yet he despaired of ever enjoying the life of scholarship and learning which he had longed for as a very young man. "I am lacking in the grounding and fundamentals of learning," he wrote despairingly. "I can never become a scholar." Yet after the week's work in his office he would sit up, on Sundays, from early morning till late at night translating Sophocles into modern Greek. And now at last he could read his beloved Homer in the original.

The vision of his childhood never left him; he was still determined to dig at Troy, and believed that there he would find Homer's city. To this end he studied and memorized the great epics, reading them as history rather than as poetry. Schliemann approached Homer with the same unquestioning faith with which the literalist regards the Bible. If Homer said so, it *was* so. But many years were to pass before he could put his beliefs to the test.

Meanwhile in 1851 he paid his first visit to America, acquired American citizenship, opened a bank in California during the gold-rush, bought gold-dust and casually scooped another fortune, almost without meaning to. His main purpose in visiting the United States was to settle the financial affairs of his brother Louis, who had died of typhus in Sacramento; the gold-dust fortune was incidental. Schliemann also caught typhus, and directed the affairs of his bank from a bed in the back room, while the prospectors queued up with their bags of dust in the front. Although his life was despaired of, he recovered and returned to Europe.

Seven years later he made an extensive tour of the Middle East, travelling across the desert from Cairo to Jerusalem, visiting Petra in Trans-Jordan and learning yet another language—Arabic. On this journey he is believed to have visited Mecca disguised as an Arab, and even had himself circumcised as an extra precaution.

His second visit to America was in 1868, when he was forty-six and already thinking of giving up his business affairs. On his return he made yet another attempt to be reconciled to his wife, after one of their periodic estrangements, even buying and furnishing for her a magnificent house in Paris. But it was in vain. Her family disliked him, and supported her in opposing his plan to give the children a German education. Katherina stayed in Russia and sent only bitter replies to his pleading letters. In despair, the unhappy homeless man set off on another of his restless journeys across Europe, journeys which were yielding him less and less delight. But this time he turned to Greece, and set foot for the first time on Homeric soil, on the rocky island of Ithaca, home of Odysseus, the Wanderer.

Peace and delight came to him then. Although he had come to Ithaca at the height of summer, so great was his enthusiasm that, in his own words, "I forgot heat and thirst. . . . Now I was investigating the neighbourhood, reading in the *Odyssey* the stirring scenes enacted there, now admiring the splendid panorama."

And, being Schliemann, of course he had to dig. Visiting the so-called "Castle of Odysseus", he hired workmen and dug up vases containing human ashes, together with a sacrificial knife and a few clay idols. He went away quite happy, believing he had found the ashes of Odysseus and Penelope and their descendants. From Ithaca he went on to the Peloponnese, paid a brief visit to Mycenae, then crossed over to the Dardanelles and rode across the Plain of Troy. These visits, though brief, had been enough to whet his appetite. From then onwards he began to make plans to retire from commerce and devote the rest of his life to excavation. He had the money, the leisure and the opportunity. But something very essential was missing—the companionship of the woman with whom he "could imagine nothing pleasanter than to spend all our lives in digging for relics of the past".

When he returned to Paris at the end of the year he had at last made up his mind to obtain a divorce. To do so, he decided, it would be best to go to America, where the divorce procedure was simpler than that obtaining in Europe. But in that winter of 1868, surrounded by gay company but lonely at heart, he remembered an old friend, a priest named Vimpos who had taught him Greek in St. Petersburg, and was now Archbishop of Athens. To Vimpos Schliemann opened his heart in what must have been the strangest and most moving letter that reverend gentleman ever received. For in it, Schliemann, the forty-six-year-old millionaire, asked the Archbishop to find him a Greek wife.

> "I swear to you, by the bones of my mother, that I will direc my whole mind and energies to making my future wife happy.... Here I am constantly in the company of witty and beautiful women, who would be very willing to heal my sufferings and make much of me if they knew I was thinking of a divorce. But, my friend, the flesh is weak, and I am afraid to fall in love with a Frenchwoman, lest I should be unlucky once again.
>
> "Therefore I beg of you to enclose with your answer the portrait of some beautiful Greek woman. . . . I entreat you; choose for me a wife of the same angelic character as your married sister. She should be poor, but well educated; she must be enthusiastic about Homer and about the rebirth of my beloved Greece. It does not matter whether she knows foreign languages or not

But she should be of the Greek type, with black hair, and, if possible, beautiful. But my main requirement is a good and loving heart."

In the spring of the following year, while Schliemann was in Indianapolis waiting for his divorce, Vimpos' reply arrived, enclosing a photograph of a classically beautiful girl of sixteen named Sophia Engastromenos. The German was entranced, but under no illusions. There is a lovely humility in the letter he wrote to his sister concerning his plans:

> "I intend, if everything goes well, to go to Athens in July. . . . I shall, however, only marry her if she is interested in learning, for I think that it is only possible for a beautiful girl to love and honour an old man if she is enthusiastic about learning, wherein he is much farther advanced than she."

But in August, when he arrived in Athens, any such doubts were set at rest. Not only was Sophia more beautiful than her photograph had suggested, but she was also modest and sweet-natured, besides being able to answer satisfactorily his catechism, which included such questions as: "In what year did the Emperor Hadrian come to Athens?" and "What passages of Homer have you by heart?" They were married, and on his honeymoon the bridegroom wrote:

> "Sophia is a splendid wife, who could make any man happy, for, like all Greek women, she has a kind of divine reverence for her husband. . . . She loves me as a Greek, with passion, and I love her no less. I speak only Greek to her, which is the most beautiful language in the world."

After forty years the dream which had haunted Schliemann at Ankershagen, and which he had wanted to share with his childhood sweetheart, Minna Meincke, was coming true. In the following spring he was making preliminary excavations at Troy, and a year later his eighteen-year-old wife had joined him at his camp near the hill of Hissarlik. Their joint adventure had begun.

CHAPTER X

A CHALLENGE ACCEPTED

CRETE is a long, narrow island much wider from east to west (160 miles) than from north to south (35 miles at its broadest point). The country is ribbed by bare, almost treeless mountains of great magnificence—the highest is 7,882 feet—which run approximately east and west, in line with the island's longest dimension. But here and there deep gaps break the mountain-chain from north to south. They begin as shallow troughs near the coast, and become progressively deeper as they cut into the mountains. In one of these valleys, at a point near the north coast a few miles from Herakleion (formerly called Candia), lies Knossos.

When Evans began to dig there in the first year of our century he saw before him:

(*a*) a valley, fairly shallow, and running roughly north and south, with the town of Herakleion behind him—to the north;

(*b*) a modern road following the western, i.e. the right-hand side of the valley (looking south);

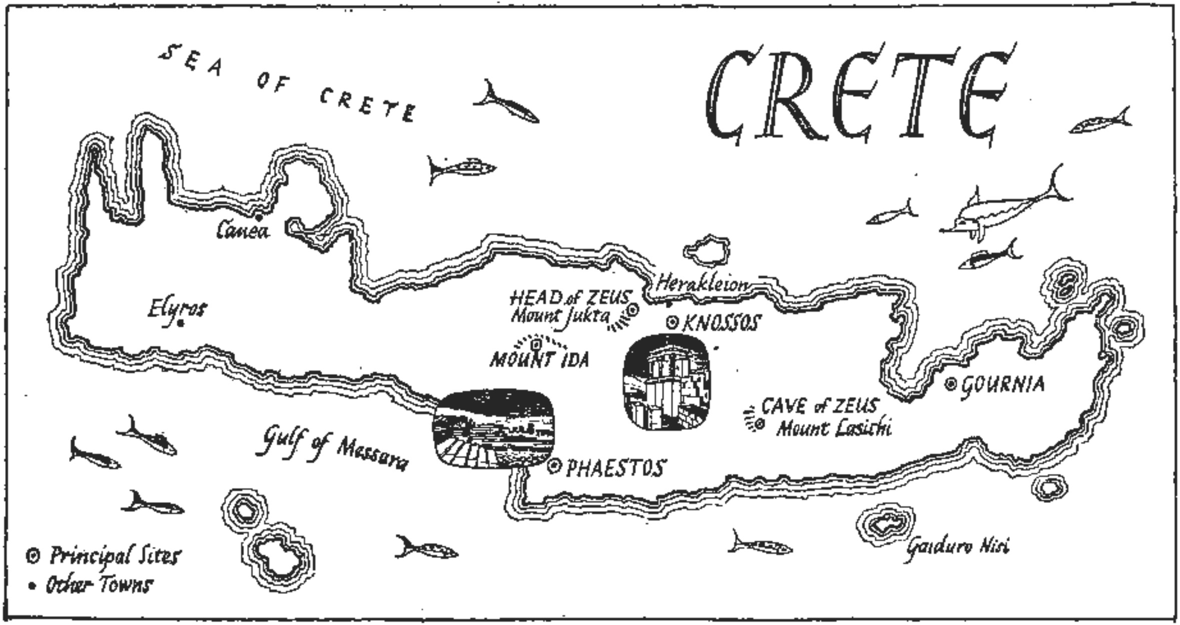
(*c*) to the east, left of the road, a large, fairly level-topped mound caled *Kephala*, falling away steeply on the eastern, i.e. the left-hand side, into a deep gully at the foot of which ran the River Kairatos;

(*d*) ahead, to the south, another steep-sided gully cutting off the mound of Kephala from the valley road to the south, which crossed the gully by a bridge.

Thus one must think of the site of Knossos as roughly a quadrangular mound, bounded on two sides—the east and south—by steep downward slopes, the remaining sides being more or less on a level with the surrounding terrain. It must *not* be imagined as a lofty citadel crowning a steep hill, as at Mycenae. (To all who find topographical description as boring as I do, may I plead that if they grasp the orientation of the site—steep-sided to the south and east, flatter to the west and north—they will find the following chapter more comprehensible and, I hope, enjoyable.)

Virchow, writing of Schliemann's discoveries at Troy thirty years earlier, had stated: "Here begins a new science". Now Evans, who at forty-nine was almost of the same age as that of Schliemann when he dug at Troy, was to make another tremendous contribution to that science. Yet when he and his Scots assistant and their original thirty workmen sank the first shaft into the mound, they had only a vague idea of what it might hold. They knew that substantial walls existed at one point—the Cretan amateur, Minos Kalokairinos, had struck them years before. There were also, they knew, some huge jars of baked clay, called *pithoi*—rather like those in which Ali Baba found the Forty Thieves. Apart from these facts there were only myths and legends from the dim beginnings of European history.

Yet almost from the start of the excavations the great mound began to reveal its secrets—not material treasures of gold and precious stones such as Schliemann found at Mycenae, but evidences of a mature, sophisticated art, a skill in engineering and an architecture of such splendour, subtlety and refinement


CRETE
SEA OF CRETE
Canea
Elyros
Herakleion
HEAD of ZEUS
Mount Jukta
KNOSSOS
MOUNT IDA
GOURNIA
CAVE of ZEUS
Mount Lasithi
Gulf of Messara
PHAESTOS
Gaiduro Nisi
⊙ Principal Sites
• Other Towns

as could only have been produced by a civilization of great age. The style was, in the main, that which had hitherto been called "Mycenaean" because at Mycenae had been found the first objects of that strange pre-Hellenic style, neither Egyptian nor Oriental—which had so fascinated Evans when Schliemann showed him his treasures. And yet there were differences. There was a suavity of style, an assurance, even a hint of decadence in Cretan art. Above all, there was an impression of tremendous age, and of long-continued, uninterrupted development which just did not fit with the stern citadel of Mycenae—that baron's stronghold frowning from its hilltop.

And yet, here at Knossos were the familiar "Mycenaean" features—the bell-like crinoline skirts of the women depicted on seals and frescoes, even the now famous 8-shaped shield which Schliemann had triumphantly declared to be Homeric. But Homer (between 700 and 900 B.C.) now appeared almost modern compared with these people! The treasures of the shaft-graves of Mycenae dated from some 1600 years B.C. Yet it now became increasingly clear that those kings and queens with their golden breastplates and rich jewellery must have come long *after* the builders of the first Palace of Knossos. . . . Evans and his companions patiently followed Ariadne's thread, but each discovery seemed to bring with it new, unsolved mysteries. The Labyrinth seemed to have no end. . . .

It gradually became clear that the mound of Kephala concealed a great palace, some six acres in extent—or rather the remains of several palaces, not neatly stratified one beneath another, but to some extent jumbled together, as later builders had utilized some of the buildings of their forefathers, while completely gutting and rebuilding others. But everything testified to long and comparatively uninterrupted habitation. Human beings had lived continuously on that spot, and on the surrounding hillsides, for more than a score of centuries. Meanwhile Arthur Evans, perhaps at first a little bewildered by the magnitude of his discovery, continued to search for his hieroglyphics, and found them.

> "We have found [he announced in a letter written at the time] a kind of baked clay bar, rather like a stone chisel in shape, though broken at one end, with script on it and what appear to be numerals. It at once recalled a clay tablet of unknown age that I had copied at Candia, also found at Knossos . . . also broken. There is something like cursive writing about these."

Evans had found what he had come to find. More men were engaged, until over one hundred were digging into the mound under the careful direction of Evans, Duncan Mackenzie and a new arrival, Theodore Fyfe, architect of the British School of Archaeology at Athens. Evans was one of the first archaeologists to employ a professional architect always on the site; others usually contented themselves with bringing one in at the end to make plans. But Evans kept a series of first-class architects in constant attendance; first Theodore Fyfe, then Christian Doll, and finally Piet de Jong.

Although the architectural revelations of Knossos astonished Evans, his main interest, at first, was in the prehistoric picture-writing which he had come to find. As more of these precious clay tablets came to sight, bearing the same mysterious hieroglyphic writing which he had recognized on the tiny seal-stones, he wrote delightedly to his family:

> "The great discovery is whole deposits, entire or fragmentary, of clay tablets analogous to the Babylonian but with inscriptions in the prehistoric script of Crete. I must have about seven hundred pieces by now. It is extremely satisfactory, as it is what I came to Crete seven years ago to find, and it is the coping-stone to what I have already put together."

Later, he wrote to his father:

> "With regard to prehistoric inscriptions, 'the cry is still they come'. I have just struck the largest deposit yet, some hundreds of pieces."

And the Athens correspondent of *The Times* wrote on August 10th, 1900:

> ". . . the most important discovery is the prehistoric Cretan script, which proves that writing was practised. . . ."

This was also Evans's view at first. But gradually, as the full glory of the palace was unveiled, he began to realize that whether or not he succeeded in deciphering the mysterious script, there had come to him an opportunity which had never before been granted to one man, the opportunity of writing, almost single-handed, the history of the first 2,000 years of European civilization. He accepted the challenge, and was equal to it.

On April 5th came a remarkable discovery—the finding of the first picture of a "Minoan", one of the mysterious people who had inhabited the Palace of Knossos more than 1,500 years before Christ. (It was Evans who invented the name Minoan, after Minos, the legendary ruler of Crete.) This was a great day for the discoverer, and his diary reveals his excitement.

> "Early in the morning the gradual surface uncovering of the Corridor to the left of the *megaron* near its south end revealed two large pieces of Mycenaean fresco. . . . One represented the head and forehead, the other the waist and part of the figure of a female" (later recognized to be a male) "figure holding in her" (his) "hand a long Mycenaean *rhyton* or high, funnel-shaped cup. . . . The figure is life size, the flesh colour of a deep reddish hue like that of figures on Etruscan tombs and the *Keftiu* of Egyptian paintings. The profile of the face is a noble type; full lips, the lower showing a slight peculiarity of curve below. The eye is dark and slightly almond shaped. . . . The arms are beautifully modelled. The waist is of the smallest . . . it is far and away the most remarkable human figure of the Mycenaean age that has yet come to light." (Plate 13.)

How Schliemann would have loved to have seen that fresco!

The discovery of this figure—the first example of a well-preserved painting of a man of that far-remote age, contemporary with the Middle Empire of Egypt—caused a great sensation in Crete and beyond. The world's press printed news of its finding, and the local inhabitants of Knossos were equally impressed, though they were convinced that the figure was that of a Christian saint. At night a guard was set.

> "At night [wrote Evans in his diary] Manoli set to watch the fresco, believed by him to be Saint with halo. Has troubled dreams. Saint wrathful. Manoli wakes and hears lowing and neighing. Something about, but of ghostly kind."

The figure seemed to have formed part of a mural representing a procession of young men, each carrying a tall, conical *rhyton* in some ceremonial observance. The figure, with its broad, bronzed shoulders, curling black hair, artificially slim waist encircled by a tight girdle, and muscular thighs, was stylized; yet here, clearly, was the first representation of a young Cretan of the prehistoric age which human eyes had seen for at least 2,000 years. Egyptologists were particularly excited, for here, in his own *locale*, was represented one of the so-called

Keftiu, the "people of the islands", which can be seen on the walls of Ancient Egyptian tombs bearing tribute to the Pharaoh or his officers. Those familiar with Egyptian inscriptions had known for many years of the "Island People" from the "Great Green Sea" with whom the Pharaohs were alternately at war and at peace. Their pictures had been seen in Egyptian tombs, recognizable by their blue-and-gold loin-cloths of non-Egyptian shape, and by the handsome vessels they carried—vessels of a recognizably non-Egyptian type. Now, for the first time, these *Keftiu* were revealed in their own land—and sure enough, among the pottery which Evans and his assistants dug up from the depths of Kephala were fragments of vases, *rhytons* and other ritual vessels such as could be seen depicted in the tomb paintings of Egyptian Thebes.

Were these, then, the mysterious *Keftiu*? . . . Were they Cretans?

Then came the dramatic discovery of the so-called "Room of the Throne". Evans had begun excavating on the west side of the mound. First he had discovered, on what was evidently the ground floor of the palace, a long corridor off which led a series of magazines or store-chambers, each containing great earthenware storage jars for oil (the *pithoi*), and under the floor beneath, narrow, stone-lined *cysts*—small chambers, like modern safe-deposits, which, from the fact that fragments of gold-foil were found among them, seem to have been used for the storage of precious objects. All the lower part of this west side of the great, rambling building seems to have been used, at any rate during the later period of the palace's history, as official quarters; one imagines a kind of Cretan Whitehall, full of clerks and civil servants of varying degrees of importance; here was kept the royal wealth (of which oil formed an important part) and here lived those responsible for its collection and safe keeping.

Then there lay, to the east of the corridor and magazines, a large central courtyard, on top of the mound. Buildings of varying sizes surrounded it, but it was much longer on its east and west sides than on the north and south. On the west side of this courtyard was what seemed at first to be the eastern entrance to the Palace (though it was not). And here, quite early in the excavations, Evans and his friends found the Room of the Throne.

They thought at first that it was a bath-chamber. First there was an antechamber opening on to the central court. Beyond that was a further chamber, with seats on three sides, overlooking a rectangular pit, with broad steps leading down into it. At first it looked very much like a bath, until it was discovered that there was no provision for the escape of waste water. But it was the room above and overlooking the so-called "bath" which most interested Evans and his colleagues, Duncan Mackenzie and Theodore Fyfe. Here is Sir Arthur's diary entry for April 13th, 1900:

> "The chief event of the day was the result of the continued excavation of the *bath chamber*" [my italics]. "The parapet of the bath proved to have another circular cutting at its east end, and as this was filled with charred wood—cypress—these openings were evidently for columns. On the other side of the north wall was a short bench like that of the outer chamber, and then separated from it by a small interval a separate seat of honour or Throne. It had a high back, like the seat, of gypsum, which was partly embedded in the stucco of the wall. It was raised on a square base and had a curious moulding below with crockets (almost Gothic)."

This room, which, in his report to *The Times*, Evans named "The Council Chamber of Minos", was recognized later to have had a religious purpose. But there in its original position stood—and still stands—the noble throne of Minos: the oldest in Europe by 2,000 years (Plate 10).

The more Evans and his staff explored the site the more extensive and complicated it became. "Discovery followed discovery," wrote Joan Evans. "An Egyptian statue of diorite, a great paved area with stairways, a fresco of olive sprays in flower, another of a boy" (later discovered to be a monkey) "gathering saffron, a fresco of people in solemn procession, *a great relief painted in stucco of a charging bull. . . .*"

It was this later discovery which gave Evans the greatest excitement. Already he had seen, among the objects which Schliemann found in the Mycenaean shaft-graves, a fine silver head of a bull, with a rosette between its horns (see cover). Now, at Knossos, here was the animal again, in a magnificent stucco relief, which had evidently once adorned the north portico of the Palace. Not only there, but in other places, in frescoes and reliefs and frequently on seals, appeared the bull. Inevitably the legend of Theseus and the Minotaur returned to Evans's mind. "What a part these creatures play here!" he wrote. ". . . Was not some one or other of these creatures visible on the ruined site in Dorian days, which gave the actual tradition of the Bull of Minos?"

Later came the most remarkable of all the discoveries made at Knossos: the remains of a spirited fresco depicting—without a shadow of doubt—a young man in the act of *somersaulting over the back of a charging bull*, while a young girl, similarly dressed in "toreador's" costume, waited behind the animal's flank to catch him. Soon other examples of the same scene came to light, proving that among these ancient people there had undoubtedly existed a form of sport in which the bull played a prominent part. In none of these scenes was any contestant shown carrying a weapon, nor was the bull killed. But again and again—in wall-paintings, on seals, in a delicate ivory statuette—the same incredible scene was repeated: the slim agile figure of the youthful bull-leaper in the act of somersaulting over the horns of the charging beast. Had there been, after all, some kind of ritual sacrifice? Were these young men and girls the Athenian hostages who, according to tradition, were sent each year as tribute to the Minotaur?

Who were these people? Were they "Mycenaean", contemporary with the people whose bodies Schliemann had found in the shaft-graves at Mycenae? Or were they even older? Although the civilization revealed at Knossos was akin to that of Mycenae, every indication pointed to it being far more ancient, and that what had been regarded hitherto as "Mycenaean" was in fact derived from Crete (although the Mycenaeans were not necessarily of Cretan stock). In an attempt to establish just how long civilization had existed at Knossos, Evans sank test pits deep into the mound of Kephala. The strata thus revealed proved beyond doubt that there had been almost continuous human settlement at Knossos from the Neolithic period (i.e. the New Stone Age—which ended at about 3000 B.C.) up to and including the penultimate development of Cretan civilization—the period to which Evans later gave the name Late Minoan III: it ended in approximately 1200 B.C. There were evidences of one or two breaks, but none of long duration. Civilization had not been a primitive beginning, a long process of growth, a blossoming and a decay. Then Evans understood why this had been possible. In that remote age when sea-power did not exist, Crete, isolated in a waste of waters, had been safe from invasion. The nearest power, Egypt, had no great naval strength. Contact between Egypt and Crete had been cultural and commercial.

Gradually Crete had built up naval power. Everywhere Evans and his associates found evidence of the close ties between the lords of Knossos and the surrounding ocean. On walls and pillars, on painted frescoes and engraved seals, appeared the trident—emblem of sea-power. The makers of the lovely Cretan pottery, especially in its middle and late stages of development, repeatedly used marine emblems and as decorative motifs: the sea creatures such as the octopus, the dolphin, the sea-urchin and the starfish. The Palace of Knossos itself, unlike the grim fortresses of Mycenae and Tiryns, was almost unfortified. It did not need walls—the ocean was sufficient protection. Again it seemed that the ancient tradition was true, of King Minos—founder of the first great naval power in the Mediterranean. Was Crete, then, the starting point of Aegean civilization? Was this the answer to the riddle to which old Heinrich Schliemann had sought an answer?

Arthur Evans believed that it was, and determined to prove it. Already, in one of those bold imaginative flights which distinguished him from the mere scholarly pedant, he had written to *The Times* in August of that year:

> "The realms of the legendary Minos, the great conqueror and law-giver who at the close of his temporal reign took his seat on the dread tribunal of the netherworld, the abode of Daedalus, the father of architecture and plastic arts, the haunt of the mysterious Dactyls, the earliest artificers in iron and bronze, the refuge of Europa, and the birthplace of Zeus himself, Crete was in remote times the home of a highly developed culture which vanished before the dawn of history . . . among the prehistoric cities of Crete, Knossos, the capital of Minos, is indicated by legend as holding the foremost place. Here the great law-giver (Minos) promulgated his famous institutions, which like those of Moses and Numa Pompilius were derived from a divine source; here was established a . . . maritime empire, suppressing piracy, conquering the islands of the Archipelago, and imposing a tribute on subjected Athens. Here Daedalus constructed the Labyrinth, the den of the Minotaur, and fashioned the wings—perhaps the sails—with which he and Icarus took flight over the Aegean."

It was fortunate for the world that this great opportunity—of digging down to the very roots of European culture—came to a man who combined with a scholar's patience and devotion to truth, intuition, sensibility and poetic imagination. Partly by chance, but chiefly through good judgment, Evans had found in middle life a task for which he was supremely fitted. But—he knew well—he must tackle it in his own way, unhampered by committees and official bodies, and responsible to no one but himself. At first the excavations had been partly financed by the "Cretan Exploration Fund", but the expense of excavating such a site was very great, and now that the South African War had broken out there was little money to spare for archaeology. There was a suggestion of making a fresh appeal for funds under the direction of George Macmillan, of the famous publishing house, hereditary friends of the Evans family. But Arthur Evans made his own views quite clear when he wrote to his father in November, 1900

> "The Palace of Knossos [he wrote] was my idea and my work, and it turns out to be such a find as one could not hope for in a lifetime, or in many lifetimes. That the Fund should help me is another thing. It you like to give me the money personally that also would be quite acceptable. But we may as well keep some of Knossos in the family! I am quite resolved not to have the thing entirely 'pooled' for many reasons, bnt largely because I must have sole control of what I am personally undertaking. With other people it may be different, but I know it is so with me; my way may not be the best but it is the only way I can work."

John Evans knew his son's temper and agreed. Fortunately he was a rich man. From this point onwards the cost of the monumental work of excavation, reconstruction and publication of the Palace of Knossos, work which continued intermittently for more than thirty years, was borne first by John Evans, and afterwards entirely by Arthur Evans himself, from his private fortune. It is difficult to arrive at an accurate estimate of the total cost, but it was probably in the region of a quarter of a million pounds.

But it was not only Evans who was making great discoveries in Crete in the spring of 1900. While Evans dug at Knossos, another British archaeologist, working on the other side of the island, succeeded in penetrating into one of the most awe-inspiring sanctuaries in the world—the birth-cave of Zeus.

CHAPTER XI

THE BIRTH-CAVE OF ZEUS

> "But Rhea was subject in love to Cronos and bore splendid children, Hestia, Demeter, and gold-shod Hera and strong Hades, pitiless in heart, who dwells under the earth, and the loud-crashing Earth-Shaker, and wise Zeus, father of gods and men, by whose thunder the wide earth is shaken. These great Cronos swallowed as each came forth from the womb of his mother's knees with this intent, that no other of the proud sons of Heaven should hold kingly office amongst the deathless gods."

So the poet Hesiod had written, some 700 years or more before Christ, setting down in stirring verse the traditions which he had inherited from a far earlier age.

Some years before Arthur Evans had finally obtained the concession to dig at Knossos he had explored the mountain of Lasithi, called by the ancients Dicte, where, it was said, Zeus was born. Now, in the spring of 1900, although Evans was absorbed in his new-found Palace of Knossos, he had not forgotten the great cavern in the mountainside, far up on the heights of Lasithi. There, in 1896, he had discovered an inscribed libation table, although fallen rocks had prevented him from penetrating deeply into the cave. But now there arrived on the scene the redoubtable D. G. Hogarth, then Director of the British School of Archaeology in Athens, and well-seasoned (as Evans was not) in excavation in the Middle East. In May 1900, while Evans and Mackenzie worked on the mound of Kephala, Hogarth made a determined attack on the Dictean Cave, or, as it is sometimes called, "the cave-sanctuary of Psychro". He had every advantage on his side, for at last peace had come to the island, and the local inhabitants, who had previously been suspicious of foreigners, were now favourably disposed to the British, who had helped to deliver them from the Turks. Hogarth, like Evans, was a man of imagination and sensibility. When he began to explore the birthplace of Zeus he was zestfully aware of its mythological associations. In his articl the *Monthly Review*—January to March 1901—he wrote:

> "Thither the pregnant Queen [Rhea] was sent by the kindly Earth Mother at the first, and thence she set forth by night to lay her new-born babe on the neighbouring hill. That babe grew to be the Immortal One [Zeus] before whom old Time himself was forced to bow, and in later days still resorted to his birth cave. For thither, as Lucian tells us in his best manner, he led the maiden Europa, flushed and half-suspecting, and there the son [Minos] whom she conceived that day, sought his Father, when, another Moses, he would give a Law to the Cretans. While the Cretans waited above, so runs the story, Minos descended into the grot, and, reappearing at last with the Code, gave out that he had got it from the hands of Zeus himself."

This was the sacred cave, never fully explored, which Hogarth and his assistants were now to examine. He knew how privileged he was, for, as he wrote:

> ". . . the upland fastnesses of Crete have not, these many centuries past, been any place for the scholarly explorer; and the Lasithi region, which excluded the Venetians and only once admitted the Turks in arms, has remained less known than any part of the classic world. Indeed, jealous and nervous officials on the coast, jealous and arrogant hillmen in the inner country, have kept most of Crete virgin soil to our own day."

He had had predecessors, of course. Frederico Halbherr, the great Italian archaeologist and friend of Evans, and Dr. Joseph Hazzidakis, the head of the *Candiote Syllogos* (Cretan Archaeological Society), had made tentative attempts to penetrate the cave. They had recovered, from the local peasants, certain bronze objects, such as miniature "double axes" (the symbol of Zeus), knives, and other weapons, but inside the cave they could do little or nothing, so deep was the cumber of fallen rocks in its upper hall.

Then at last came the liberation of the island, and, as Hogarth writes "in May, 1900 . . . I left Mr. Arthur Evans to his fortunate labours in the Knossian Palace of Minos, and betook myself to Psychro with a few trained men, stone-hammers, mining-bars, blasting powder and the rest of a digger's plant."

Then he describes the cave:

> "There is a shallow hall to the right and an abysmal chasm to the left, the last not matched in Crete for grandeur, nor unworthy of a place among the famous limestone grottoes of the world. The rock at first breaks down sheer, but as the light grows dim, takes an outward slope, and so falls steeply still for two hundred feet into an inky darkness. Having groped thus far, stand and

burn a powerful flashlight. An icy pool spreads from your feet about the bases of fantastic stalactite columns on into the heart of the hill. Hall opens from hall with fretted roofs and the same black, unruffled floor, doubling the torches you and your guides must bear. An impassable labyrinth before, where rock and water meet; behind and far above a spot of faintly luminous haze. Fit scene for Minos' mysterious colloquy with his father Zeus, and the after-cult of a Chthonian god. . . ."

To me one of the most engaging qualities of the great nineteenth-century archaeologists such as Hogarth is their vigorous literary style. Hogarth, Petrie, Evans, Breasted; they could all *write*. But they were also men of action and decision, as Hogarth makes clear in his next paragraph:

> "Our blasting charges made short work of the boulders in the upper hill, and luckily the threatening roof held good. Crowbars and stone-hammers finished the powder's work. . . . Then the real dig began."

He is very amusing on labour recruitment. He believed in mixing the sexes because, he states, "the men labour the more willingly for the emulation of the women". But this method, applied successfully in Cyprus and Turkey, seemed at first to be a failure in Crete.

> "At first the Lasithi maidens were very coy, watching from a distance two girls, already trained at Knossos, diligent at their sieves. But, on the third morning, a more cosmopolitan villager, who had fought—or looted—as a volunteer on the French side in 1870, sent up an aged wife and daughter to help his son, and the ice was broken. The laughing mob brandished grain-sieves and demanded all to be written (recruited) at once, and with their sisters, cousins, and aunts, who brought up the mid-day meal, they made the terrace before the Cave the gayest spot in Lasithi."

With this picturesque labour force Hogarth made one of the most sensational discoveries in Crete. There were, as he described, two chambers within the sacred grotto. In the Upper Hall, part of which had already been plundered by the local peasantry, there were found small objects of bronze, such as small "double axes", knives, bracelets and so forth, and remains of Hellenic pottery, all originally proffered as votive offerings to the god. But these were fairly late in date—i.e. they belonged to "classical" Greek or Roman times, from about 500 B.C. onward. But then came the exploration of that abysmal chasm to the left" which had been inaccessible until Hogarth arrived with his blasting powder and mining-bars.

> "The men clambered down [he writes] unwilling and not expectant, to their final task in the dank abyss, regretting the warm sunshine into which they could often emerge from the shallower upper wall; and the girls moaned not a little at the sight of the clammy mud in which they must now stand and search."

The reluctant diggers worked lower and lower into the darkness, till their distant lights showed like glow-worms to the men above, and began to grope in the mud left exposed by the water. And then something wonderful happened.

> "A zealous groper, wishing to put both hands to his work, stuck his guttering candle into a slit of a stalactite column, and therein espied the edge of a bronze blade, wedged vertically. Fished out with the fire-tongs from the camp above, this proved a perfect 'Mycenaean' knife. But, except by human agency, it could hardly have come into the crevice."

Quickly the word was passed round, and the workers, men and girls, ceased groping in the mud of the pool and began to search in the crevices of the stalactites—those pendulous columns of glistening limestone which hung from the roof of the cave, the products of aeons of natural growth. And there they found, wedged in the crevices, hundreds upon hundreds of votive offerings, knives, miniature double-axes, women's ornaments, *fibulae*—all offerings to the god, placed there by worshippers who had penetrated to that gloomy hall 2,000, 3,000, perhaps 4,000 years ago. It was the Holy of Holies. It was the innermost sanctuary of Zeus himself, unseen by man for perhaps two millennia:

> "In this most awful part of the sacred grotto [wrote Hogarth] it was held most profitable to dedicate, in niches made by Nature herself, objects fashioned expressly for the God's service, like the axes or statuettes, or taken from the person of the worshipper, as the knives, pins, and rings. The fact does honour to the primitive Cretan imagination. In these pillared halls of unknown extent and abysmal gloom undoubtedly was laid the scene of Minos' legendary converse with Zeus. For the lower grot suits admirably the story as the rationalizing Dionysius tells it—the primeval king leaving his people without and descending out of their sight, to reappear at last with the credit of having seen and talked with God himself. That here is the original Birth Cave of Zeus there

can remain no shadow of doubt. The Cave of Ida, however rich it proved in offerings when explored some years ago, has no sanctuary approaching the mystery of this. Among holy caverns in the world, that of Psychro, in virtue of its lower halls, must stand alone."

CHAPTER XII

"AND STILL THE WONDER GREW"

HOGARTH had proved that yet another of the ancient traditions had a solid basis. Meanwhile, Evans and Mackenzie continued to dig at Knossos until, on June 2nd, 1900, they had to cease. The weather had become unbearably hot, and, besides, the valley had proved malarial. However, by February 1901 Evans was back in Herakleion (then called Candia), where he rented a Turkish house as a permanent base. Every day, writes Joan Evans,

> "Evans, Mackenzie and Fyfe used to ride out to Knossos on mules, through a tunnel-like gate over the town moat, past the lepers congregated to beg outside. . . . Arthur Evans loved to go fast, even on a mule, and was always envious of Halbherr's fine horse, until he finally acquired a fast Turkish cob of his own."

By this time Evans had begun to realize the magnitude of the task ahead of him. Here was the work of a lifetime, something which could not be hurried or scamped. He was also conscious of the world publicity which had been focused upon him since his first report in *The Times*. Old John Evans, an antiquarian himself, was almost overjoyed at his son's achievement, and in that year, 1901, managed to get out to Crete himself, although he was then seventy-seven years of age. Together father and son made a strenuous and adventurous journey across the island to Cortyna, where Frederico Halbherr, the Italian archaeologist who had always been a staunch friend of Arthur Evans, warmly welcomed them. Halbherr was beginning to excavate another Minoan palace at Phaestos, in the south, second only to Knossos in size and beauty, and even superior to it in the splendour of its site. Farther to the east, at Gournia, two American scholars, Miss Boyd and Mr. R. B. Seager, were excavating a Minoan town. Later, Halbherr unearthed the beautiful "Royal Villa" of Hagia Triadha, and French scholarship was to make its contribution by excavating the small but very rich Palace at Mallia.

But Arthur Evans's greatest discoveries in 1901 took place after his father had returned to England in April. He began to find tiny clay seals which his phenomenal eyesight enabled him to interpret.

> "Out of five different impressions, but overlapping one another in design, I have been able to reconstruct a wonderful religious scene; a goddess on a sacred rock or peak with two lions in heraldic attitudes on either side of it, her temple behind, and a votary in front."

Even the layman can appreciate the fascination of this discovery, for the two lions on this tiny seal are identifiable with those flanking the Lion Gate at Mycenae, and the goddess in her typical Minoan flounced skirt and bare breasts stands above them. It is not impossible that originally such a figure surmounted the central pillar between the Mycenaean lions. Later, as we shall see, Evans was able to make a profoundly imaginative interpretation of Minoan religion and its Mother-Goddess, who may well have been Rhea, the mother of Zeus.

It was also in the early part of this second season that he discovered the beautiful inlaid gaming-table, set with crystal and ivory mosaic, and gold settings, which may once have whiled away the leisure hours of King Minos himself. "It gives," wrote Evans, "an extraordinary idea of magnificence."

Architecturally the Palace continued to reveal fresh marvels. Evans now began to excavate the east side of the central courtyard where the ground fell away steeply towards the River Kairatos. And here he revealed the Grand Staircase, the most impressive architectural achievement of that 4,000-year-old civilization which has come down to us. More important still, he not only revealed it, but, by the most skilful and imaginative restoration, saved it from inevitable destruction.

> "It is evident [he wrote] that we are only just coming to the real centre of the Palace buildings. We have now a hall with two column-bases approached by a quadruple flight of stairs. Two of these, under the others, have had to be tunnelled out. A gallery with a wooden colonnade ran round the west side of this room in two stages. Beyond the hall is a larger room, only partly excavated, with more column bases. It will probably prove to be the principal *megaron* (hall) of the Palace. . . . Above the stairs

are traces of a further higher flight having existed, and in parts we find evidence of two storeys above the basement. It is altogether unexampled and unexpected."

It now became clear to Evans that, while the buildings around the upper courtyard, on top of the mound, were used mainly for official purposes, the spacious domestic quarters of the Royal Family were built much lower down—on a platform cut out of the steep eastern slope, overlooking the river valley. Hence the need for this monumental staircase, originally of five flights, of which three still exist. The Grand Staircase, as Evans named it, and the suite of noble apartments to which it leads, are themselves a monument to the skill of Evans and his architectural team. As they dug into the shelving hillside they had to support, strengthen and partially restore these high, toppling walls which otherwise would have collapsed into a heap of rubble. How they did this will be described later.

As the work went on more and more fragments of painted frescoes came to light, but most were so small that restoring the original picture was like solving a complex jig-saw puzzle—with the added complication that much of the puzzle was missing and had therefore to be guessed. Yet this was just the kind of imaginative reconstruction which Evans loved, and he also had the wisdom to engage a remarkable Swiss artist, M. Gilliéron, who possessed an extraordinary gift for patiently fitting together the tiny fragments, sensitively and accurately restoring what was missing, and then making accurate reproductions, which were then hung, as nearly as possible, in the position of the originals. The latter were removed to the doubtful security of the Candia Museum. All the objects found were, of course, the property of the Cretan authorities, except for a few articles of which duplicates existed. These Evans was able to take to England; they can be seen, with some of Gilliéron's lovely fresco reproductions, at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

Evidently, during the period of its greatest glory, the corridors, porches and rooms of state of the Palace of Minos had glowed with rich and sensuous colour, delicate blues and greens and russet painted on smooth plaster. The Minoans may have copied this method of decoration from the Egyptians, but in style there is no resemblance between the stiff, highly conventionalized art of most Egyptian wall-paintings and the refined, fastidious naturalism of the Minoan frescoes. I say "with *most* Egyptian wall-paintings" advisedly, because there is one—and only one—period of Egyptian art which does show remarkable similarity to that of Crete. This was the famous "heresy period" under the Pharaoh Akhnaten, when for the first and only time the rigid, hierarchical conventions of Egyptian art suddenly broke down, and the royal artists (it is believed under the direct guidance of Akhnaten himself) painted human beings, birds, beasts and flowers as they saw them, and not according to an accepted religious tradition.

The significance of this departure is that it occurred round about the year 1400 B.C., the generally accepted date on which final disaster—earthquake or foreign attack, or both—struck the palaces of Crete, including Knossos. It is tempting to believe—though it is by no means proved—that refugee Cretan artists may have fled to Akhnaten's Court round about this period.

Some of the frescoes represented human scenes; others were charming decorative motifs, often drawn from nature—flowers and grasses, with butterflies flitting among them. The symbol of the double axe, which we have already encountered among the Mycenaean grave-treasures, occurred frequently, and so did our old friend the figure-of-eight shield. At Mycenae Schliemann had found it represented on tiny seals and signets, but here it was employed, full size, as a wall decoration. It was now possible to recognize clearly how the shield was made—of a bull's hide, just as Homer said—and strengthened with cross pieces, presumably of wood. In one of the rooms of state, which Evans named "The Hall of the Double Axes", he believed that actual shields had hung on the wall as part of the decoration; so he had replicas made—of painted metal—and hung in place. They can be seen in Plate 20.

But the most fascinating of all these coloured frescoes were those representing Minoan men and women, especially women. When these were first discovered and restored by Gilliéron they caused astonishment throughout the world. And no wonder—for they were quite unlike the classical Greeks, unlike the Egyptians, unlike the Babylonians, unlike any ancient people whose painted or sculptured representations had survived from the remote past. As far as the Minoan women were concerned, in their dress, manner and style of hair-dressing, the nearest comparison which the astonished scholars could make was to the fashionable beauties of their own time—1900! One *savant*, on first seeing them, broke into the incredulous exclamation: "*Mais, ce sont des Parisiennes!*"

These highly-bred Minoan ladies are evidently attending some Court function—perhaps the reception of some foreign ambassador, or, more likely, a display of that strange, sinister sport in which the young bull-leapers exhibited their desperate skill. The figures are shown on what seems to be a grandstand, and in the background are sketched, in the economical method of a modern cartoonist, a tightly packed crowd of faces, with black hair, white dots for eyes and white collars. The prevailing colours are rust-red and buff. In the centre of the grandstand is what Evans believed to be the shrine of the Minoan goddess, distinguished by the "horns of consecration" which decorate its roof (another allusion to the Bull). But on either side of this central shrine are groups of ladies, much more carefully drawn and it is these which form Plate 14.

Here is Evans's detailed analysis of these scenes:

> "On either side of the miniature shrine are groups of ladies seated and chattering, gaily dressed in the height of fashion, with elaborately coiffured hair, engaged apparently in gay chit-chat and ignoring what is going on before them. . . . At a glance we recognize Court ladies in elaborate toilet. They are fresh from the coiffeur's hand with hair *frisé* and curled about the head and shoulders; it is confined by a band over the forehead and falls down the back in long separate tresses, twisted round with strings of beads and jewels . . . the sleeves are puffed, and the constricted girdles and flounced skirts equally recall quite modern fashions. A narrow band appears across the chest which suggests a diaphanous chemise, but the nipples of the breasts are indicated beneath these . . . give a *décolleté* effect. The dresses are gaily coloured with bands of blue, red and yellow, showing white stripes and at times black striations. . . ."
>
> "The lively nature of the conversation between No. 3 (the lady to whose coiffure the net belongs) and her neighbour at once strikes the eye. The latter points her statement by thrusting forward her right arm so as almost to lay her hand on the other's lap while her confidante raises hers in amazement—'You *don't* say so!' . . . These scenes of feminine confidences, of tittle-tattle and society scandals, take us far away from the productions of classical art in any age. Such lively genre and rococo atmosphere bring us nearer to quite modern times."

As one by one these marvels were told to the world in Evans's vivid reports to *The Times* and various periodicals, and were supplemented by the comments of other visitors, the full grandeur of Evans's achievement—and the immensity of the task which lay ahead of him—became apparent. When he returned to England in June 1901 recognition of the importance of the Cretan discoveries was general and immediate: Fellowship of the Royal Society (June 6th, 1901), honorary degrees at Edinburgh and Dublin (also in 1901), and diplomas from foreign societies.

Then, following this up, Evans announced, in an address to the British Association in Glasgow, his proposed solution to the difficult problem of dating the successive Knossian strata. It was a bold, masterly solution, and though in later years Evans himself had to modify and extend it, in the main his principle of dividing Minoan culture into three broad periods of development—Early, Middle and Late Minoan, synchronous with the Old, Middle and New Empires of Egypt, is still accepted today. To devise such a system was in itself no small achievement for one man, but Evans recognized that in the years ahead of him it would be his task to build a structure of sound knowledge from an amorphous mass of stone, pottery and fragmented frescoes; and, like an honest builder, he had first to see that his foundations were firm.

CHAPTER XIII

INTO THE LABYRINTH

In 1902, when Evans returned for his third season's digging at Knossos, trouble arose over finances. Already he had spent some £4,500, more than half of which was his own money, but the rest of which had been raised by the Cretan Exploration Fund. For the benefit of those unfamiliar with the financing of archaeological work, it should be said that it is usual for funds to be raised by a society or group of societies interested in the project; most of the subscribers are people of moderate means, but there are also universities, museums and other learned institutions with more ample resources. But these people naturally want to see that they are getting value for their money, especially the museums, which, in the early days, could sometimes expect a proportion of the finds for their own collections.

At this point a sharp disagreement broke out between D. G. Hogarth, Director of the British School at Athens, who had excavated the cave-sanctuary of Zeus, and Evans, with whom Hogarth was now working in close collaboration at Knossos. Hogarth, as a professional archaeologist, naturally took a salary and expenses. Evans, who was "comfortably circumstanced"—to put it mildly—could not understand this; to him it seemed like making money out of religion. On Hogarth's side—and they were both men of strong character—there was irritation at Evans's *de luxe* methods of excavation, especially the expensive reconstruction of buildings, which, while greatly benefiting the lay visitor to the site, went far beyond what was archaeologically necessary. There was plain speaking on both sides, of which the following letter from Hogarth must serve as example:

> "These expensive methods are yours in digging, as in collecting and in ordinary life. You are a rich man's son, and have probably never been at a loss for money. At the other pole to you stands Petrie—I see advantages in the methods of both. If you spend much more in proportion than Petrie, you produce far worthier results in published form, and one feels that nothing has been spared to obtain expert accuracy. One can't feel that with Petrie's rough plans and illustrations; *nor again does he leave a site so that it is a gain for the spectator.**
>
> "The drawback of your method is that it does not appeal to people's pockets. All P.'s 'cave-man' plan of life has been deliberately adopted to convince the subscriber that every penny goes into the earth. There is no doubt that unless you sue *in forma pauperis* public subscription will not follow you. That you cannot do. You are well known as a collector of rare and costly things, and as your father's son, and the public will not be convinced. I am not talking in the air, for I am continually chaffed about the 'princely' way things are done in Crete, and I have lately heard that reports of our Cretan houses, brought back I suppose by the big tourist parties, have decided some old subscribers not to pay up again. For those houses I am, I know, as much responsible as you. . . . In a less degree the same difficulty dogs me—I and my wife do not look like P. and his wife. But to live by public subscription we should have to!"

In the same letter from Hogarth occurs a passage which sums up the whole problem, and explains why Evans eventually decided to shoulder the whole financial burden of excavation himself, to the lasting benefit of all visitors to Knossos.

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* Our italics.

> "Restorations like the Throne Room are not a question of methods, *but of the gratifying of a desire to reconstruct tangibly what must otherwise only be imagined.* But you justly admit that it is a luxury which everyone cannot pay for, and perhaps others (the subscribers to the Excavation Funds) can hardly be expected to pay for."

From that date—1902—onwards for thirty years, Arthur Evans devoted his life to the excavation and, in part, reconstitution of the greatest Minoan Palace in Crete; and he also produced, over a number of years, a work of literary scholarship which, in the long run, will probably outlast even the stronghold of Minos himself. For in this fevered world which we have inherited (and how Evans hated it!) no monument of stone, however ancient, beautiful or revered, is safe; all, equally, are at the mercy of "a boy in a bomber". But perhaps even after the holocaust of an atomic war there may survive, in some remote place, the great volumes of Evans's *Palace of Minos.* And if that should happen, our surviving descendants can, if they wish, know as much about the prehistoric civilization of the Aegean as we do, though not one stone of the Palace itself should remain.

In a book of this scope it would be impossible, and, indeed, impertinent, to try to explain in detail all that Evans and his professional colleagues on other sites—such as Halbherr, Hogarth, Boyd, Seager, Marinatos—achieved in Crete during the first twenty years of our century. All I can hope to do is to direct the reader's attention to the books which tell the whole story and, in a few brief extracts, to give a taste of their quality. The full list will be found at the back of this book, but as a starting-point for anyone wishing to learn more about the Minoan civilization, there are four outstanding works which have given me pleasure—not only for the information which they contain, but also because they are extremely well written. First of course, comes Evans's own *Palace of Minos*; but this is monumental, and before approaching it I would recommend three smaller works. These are John Pendlebury's *The Archaeology of Crete*, Joan Evans's *Time and Chance* (especially useful for Evans's family background and early years) and *Crete, the Forerunner of Greece*, by B. M. and H. W. Hawes.

Without reflection it is easy to fall into the mistake of imagining that only one archaeologist—Evans—discovered the prehistoric civilization of Crete. True, he was the master-discoverer; he had the finest site, and most money to spend on excavation, but from 1900 onwards, when peaceful conditions made investigation possible, a succession of scholars explored and excavated in the island. Soon it became clear that there were many scores of Minoan sites only awaiting the spade. Halbherr, at Phaestos in the south, excavated a palace second only to Knossos in size and grandeur.

Nearby, at Hagia Triadha, he revealed a "Royal Villa" with superb frescoes, and here some of the finest examples of Minoan art were found, including the famous "Harvester" vase, a fine sarcophagus, and the steatite *rhyton* with boxers.

Miss Boyd and Mr. R. B. Seager found at Gournia, in the east, the extensive remains of a Minoan town. Here Evans had given the clue. He had told Miss Boyd that there were Iron Age tombs on the heights, 2,000 feet above the isthmus, and while excavating them in 1900 she became convinced that there had once been a Bronze Age settlement somewhere in the vicinity. A year later, with the help of Cretan peasants, she and her colleague Miss Wheeler found the site. . . .

> "Within twenty-four hours thirty men were at work . . . cutting down the carobs and digging trial trenches. . . . In less than three days they had opened houses, were following paved roads, and were in possession of enough vases and sherds, bearing octopus, ivy-leaf, double-axe, and other unmistakably Minoan designs, to make it certain that they had found an important settlement."

Gournia is especially interesting because, unlike the princely palaces of Knossos and Phaestos, it seems to have been an artisans' town where, perhaps, were produced the superb examples of pottery and faience which have been unearthed in the Palaces. To quote just one paragraph from the Hawes book, *Crete, the Forerunner of Greece*, originally published in 1909:

> "In a well-built house on the top of the ridge a whole carpenter's kit lay concealed in a cranny. Was it deliberately hidden under the corridor floor by its owner, when the ships of the destroyers hove in sight? In an adjoining room a horizontal black streak in the earth showed where there had been a wooden

board, now long burned or rotted away, and on this housewife's shelf fourteen loom-weights of clay and stone were ranged in order. Other houses contained vats for washing oil, standing on stone benches, with the amphorae and stamni before them to catch the liquid, just as they were left 3,500 years ago."

An interesting contrast to the Court ladies of Knossos. . . . Boyd and Seager at Gournia, Halbherr at Phaestos, Carr, Bosanquet and Dawkins at Praesos and Palaikastro . . . Hazzidakis and Zanthoudides, at point after point the rich soil of Crete yielded its archaeological treasures to the questing Edwardian scholars. Articles appeared in newspapers and learned journals, theories were propounded, supported and demolished. Meanwhile Evans, securely possessed of the finest archaeological site on the island, became the leading authority on Minoan civilization, to whom other workers gladly came for advice and help.

It is very important to understand his dating system, which was sound and scholarly. To the layman it is usually difficult to appreciate how an archaeologist can "date" a site when no written records or positively dated monuments are available. We have already seen how at Troy, Mycenae and Tiryns, Schliemann and his successors had not been able to fix even an approximate date to their discoveries; they knew that the lowest layers or strata of a long-occupied site must clearly be the oldest; but that was about all. This gave ammunition to those who wished to discredit the German's discoveries—one "authority", for example, even claimed that the Mycenaean graves were post-Christian. Yet without positive proof of date it was impossible to disprove even such absurd theories as this.

How, then, were Evans, Hogarth, Halbherr and the other archaeologists in Crete able to establish accurate dates? The answer is—through the *Egyptian* objects found on the sites.

It was fortunate for archaeology that the Minoans had had cultural and commercial contact with the Egyptians from very early times—Evans believed from the pre-Dynastic period. Those who have read something of Ancient Egyptian history will know that it is divided into thirty dynasties, beginning in about 3200 B.C. and ending with the start of the "Graeco-Roman period" in 332 B.C. The period of 2,500 years from the First to the end of the Twenty-fourth Dynasty (712 B.C.) is divided for convenience into three main periods of development, the Old, Middle and New Kingdoms; it is worth while trying to memorize these, as they help in understanding how Evans dated the Minoan civilization.

At the beginning come the First and Second Egyptian Dynasties (*circa* 3200–2780 B.C.). The almost legendary figure of Menes was the founder of the First Dynasty; he combined for the first time the hitherto separated kingdoms of Upper and Lower Egypt. There were, however, Egyptian kings before him, as Amelineau and Petrie discovered, but the period before 3200 B.C. is called for convenience *Pre-Dynastic*.

Then came the first of the three great epochs into which Egyptian history is divided—the *Old Kingdom* (2780–2100 B.C.). This period includes that of the great Pyramid builders who ruled from Memphis in Lower Egypt. It covers eight dynasties, from the Third to the Tenth.

Next comes the *Middle Empire* (2100–1700 B.C.) covering the Eleventh to the Thirteenth Dynasties. This has been called Egypt's "Feudal Age", and was one of considerable expansion both to north and south. At the end of this period a time of weakness and anarchy was followed by an invasion and occupation of Egypt by Asiatic monarchs known as the *Hyksos* or Shepherd Kings, who controlled Egypt for about 150 years until thrown out by a resurgent Egypt.

Then followed the period of Egypt's greatest imperial expansion, the first part of the so-called *New Empire* (1555–712 B.C.). Only the first three dynasties, from the Eighteenth to the Twentieth, need concern us, as after that the ancient civilization of Crete passed into oblivion. But this was the period of Egyptian history of which most is known. It was the age of Tuthmosis III, the " Napoleon of Egypt", who raised its military glory to its highest point, of the powerful Amenophis III, and his fascinating, enigmatical son Akhnaten, who began a religious revolution, nearly lost an empire, and may well have welcomed Cretan artists to his Court. The following two dynasties, the Nineteenth and Twentieth, saw a succession of powerful kings, several of whom bore the famous name Rameses, one of whom, Rameses III, is recorded on Egyptian temples as having won a great victory over the "sea-peoples" who tried to invade Egypt round about the year 1200 B.C. It was to have been a land invasion supported by naval forces. The land-armies moved down from Syria, while their navies accompanied them along the coast; but somewhere between Syria and Egypt Rameses met and defeated both, and the invasion never took place. This episode, as we shall see, has great relevance to the history of the Aegean civilization—especially of Mycenae. After 1090 B.C.—the end of the Twentieth Dynasty—the rest of the history of Egypt does not affect our story.

In an early stage of the excavations Evans had discovered in the Knossian Palace "an Egyptian statue of diorite" which was identified as belonging to the Twelfth Dynasty, and as the work went on, at Knossos and at other Minoan sites, other examples of undoubted Egyptian manufacture were discovered. In themselves these little objects—a clay statuette, perhaps, or a tiny bronze figure of the god Amun—were valueless, but their importance to the scholars was inestimable. Why? At the certain risk of being accused by scholars of vulgarity, I am going to compare these Egyptian *trivia* with the vital clues which the hero discovers in a detective story: the few threads from the suit of the murderer, detected under the nails of the dead man, or—an even more exact parallel—the fact that, when Mr. X was seen leaving the victim's house, Mr. Y happened to notice that it was *exactly* eleven-thirteen p.m. . . .

Let us suppose that Evans finds—as he did—an Egyptian statue of the Twelfth Dynasty (2000-1790 B.C.) embedded in one of the strata of the Palace of Knossos. He then *knows*—beyond a shadow of doubt—that no object found in that stratum—pottery, faience, architectural remains—can possibly be *earlier* than 2000 B.C. Of course the statue might be—by some odd chance—a survival from an earlier age, so that the closing date of the Twelfth Dynasty (1790 B.C.) might not be the latest possible date for the archaeological strata in which the clue was found. But if at Knossos, or at another Minoan site, other Egyptian objects of the same dynasty are found in strata containing Minoan objects of similar type—then it is safe to assume that such objects belong to a period between the years 2000 and 1790 B.C. As the work went on, at Knossos, Phaestos, Gournia, Mallia, other dateable Egyptian objects came to light, and with each of such discoveries it became possible to establish earliest and latest dates for the Minoan pottery and other objects among which the Egyptian articles were found.

A moment's reflection will make clear the tremendous significance of such finds. If, for instance, Eighteenth Dynasty Egyptian objects were always accompanied by Minoan pottery, faience, painted frescoes and architecture of a particular kind, then, logically and naturally, *all* Minoan objects of a similar type, wherever they were found—in Cyprus or in the Cyclades—must belong broadly to the same period (allowing for the fact that time must elapse before a fashion, originating in Crete, could spread to the outer fringes of the Minoan Empire).

By such methods Evans and other archaeologists in Crete were able to establish that some of the Minoan deposits dated as far back as the pre-Dynastic period of Egyptian history (i.e. before 3200 B.C.).

Then the Egyptologists came to the aid of their colleagues working in Crete. In Egyptian tombs it was customary to bury numerous articles needed by the dead man in the Underworld—furniture, clothing and vessels for food and drink. (We have already noted the pictures of the mysterious *Keftiu* on the walls of Egyptian tombs.) Now Egyptologists began to examine afresh the objects found in Egyptian tombs, *especially pottery*. Among them was pottery, not of Egyptian provenance, which could now be identified unmistakably with the Minoan ware now being brought to light in Crete. So another check on dating could be made. And as these finds both in Egypt and Crete were examined, re-examined, discussed and co-related, so, gradually, Arthur Evans was able to draw up his Grand Design—his chronological system of dating Minoan objects and similar objects found in the other islands of the Aegean and the mainland.

For as the work proceeded archaeologists came to recognize that this civilization, which Evans believed originated in Crete, spread to other Aegean islands and even farther eastward to Cyprus, and the coast of Asia Minor, and northward to the mainland of Greece. In all these areas pottery was found similar to, though not identical with, that found in Crete. Whereas at the beginning of Evans's digging his finds were regarded as Mycenaean, progress showed that there were real differences from what was found at Mycenae. A need arose for a set of terms which would differentiate the characteristic cultures of the different areas of the Aegean. Hence "Minoan" came to be used to describe prehistoric Cretan objects, "Cycladic" for the islands and "Helladic" for the mainland. I introduce these technical terms only so that readers who wish to follow this subject further (as I hope they will) will not be confused by the varying names used by scholars to describe this prehistoric civilization of the eastern Mediterranean.

Incidentally, non-archaeologists sometimes laugh at the attention which experts pay to what appear to be uninteresting fragments of pottery. But the archaeological value of pottery is precisely that *it has no intrinsic value*. Objects of gold and silver, or even of bronze and iron, will be stolen. But who cares about heaps of broken fragments of pots, vases and cups? They remain scattered, unheeded, on ancient sites for thousands of years—as I have seen them in Egypt as well as Greece. But to the modern archaeologist they provide a definitive method of dating a site. One no longer needs intuition or judgment to achieve this; any young student who has gone through his course can do it. Even I—amateur as I am—reached a stage when I could pick up a fragment of a Mycenaean goblet and say nonchalantly, "Ah—Late Helladic III", without causing raised eyebrows among my archaeological friends.

Evans's achievement was to mark off the *three great periods of Minoan civilization which could be correlated with the three great periods of Egyptian civilization*: the Old Kingdom, the Middle Empire and the New Empire. He wrote in *The Palace of Minos*:

> "For this considerable space of time, extending over some two thousand years, the divisions here adopted into three main sections, the 'Early', 'Middle' and 'Late' Minoan, each in turn with three periods of its own, will not be thought too minute. It allows, in fact, for each period an average duration of nearly two centuries and a half, the earlier periods being naturally the longer. This triple division, indeed, whether we regard the course of Minoan civilization as a whole or its threefold stages, is in its very essence logical and scientific. In every characteristic phase of culture we note in fact the period of rise, maturity, and decay. Even within the limits of many of these periods are such distinct ceramic phases that it has been found convenient to divide them into two sections (*a*) and (*b*).
>
> "The three main phases of Minoan history roughly correspond with those of the Early, the Middle and the earlier part of the New Kingdom in Egypt."

Now, at last, it was possible to establish dates for the discoveries of Schliemann and Dörpfeld at Troy, Mycenae, Tiryns, Orchomenos and elsewhere. For it was recognized that some of the pottery, arms, jewels and ornaments, etc., found in the shaft-graves at Mycenae, and at Tiryns, were demonstrably Minoan in type, though some were pretty certainly made by mainland craftsmen following a Cretan model. Thus it was established that the treasures found in the Mycenaean shaft-graves were dated from a late period of Minoan civilization, *circa* 1600 B.C.—proving that they were far older than the Trojan War, and could not possibly have belonged to Agamemnon and his companions.

And yet in the scale of Minoan civilization they were *late*—very late; only 200 years before the final catastrophe which overtook Knossos in 1400. Yet Crete could boast a highly developed civilization more than a thousand years earlier than that. . . . Deeper and deeper went the bewildered but fascinated archaeologists, groping among the very roots of European prehistory. And in the lead, his torch held aloft to penetrate the darkness of the labyrinth, strode Arthur Evans.

APPENDIX A

MYCENAE'S SECOND GLORY

At the end of the first edition of this book, published by Evans Bros. Ltd. in the autumn of 1953, I mentioned some remarkable discoveries made at Mycenae in the spring of 1952, more important than any made on that site since Schliemann discovered the shaft-graves in 1876. At the end of the brief Appendix describing some of the treasures brought to light in 1952 I wrote, "By the time these words appear in print no doubt other graves of the newly-discovered Circle will have been excavated, perhaps revealing treasures equalling or exceeding in wonder those which Schliemann found three-quarters of a century ago".

These words have been proved abundantly true, as have the concluding lines of the book, which read: "Another chapter will have been added to our story; a story which can never end, for if the Schliemanns and the Evanses have had their triumphs, who can say that the last secrets have been revealed, and that archaeologists of the future may not achieve even greater victories over the forces of Time and Decay?"

In Chapter V I have described my visit to Mycenae, which I approached along the narrow winding road which leads from the village of Charvati to the Citadel. Little did I know that at one point I had walked over the grave of a Mycenaean Princess, nor that within a few yards of the roadside lay a Grave Circle containing more than *sixteen* graves of Mycenaean royalty of the Middle Bronze Age. A few months after I left, Dr. John Papadimitriou of the Greek Archaeological Service made this marvellous discovery, and during the past two years treasures have come to light almost equalling in splendour and historical significance those which the German excavator found.

During the same period British archaeologists, working under Professor Wace, have been active, excavating in the prehistoric cemetery just outside the Lion Gate, and uncovering the ruins of Mycenaean houses outside the walls of the Citadel, revealing objects which have thrown new light on the Mycenaean

Age and confirmed its close connection with the world described by Homer.

Even more remarkable, though less spectacular, is the partial decipherment, in 1952, of the Minoan/Mycenaean "Linear B" script which Evans first discovered at Knossos and which has baffled scholars for more than fifty years. Chief credit for this achievement goes to a young English architect, thirty-five-year-old Michael Ventris, though American and European scholars have been working on similar lines and have helped him in his researches.

The two discoveries are closely linked, because tablets and objects have been discovered in Greece inscribed with the same form of writing which Evans found on the Knossian tablets, proving that the Mycenaeans used the same system of writing as was used in Crete during the latter part of the Late Minoan Period (1550–1100 B.C.). Recently Professor Blegen, of the University of Cincinnati, found many scores of inscribed tablets at Pylos, and Wace has discovered similar tablets and inscribed jars at Mycenae. Moreover, it now appears fairly certain that the language was an early form of *Greek*, thus supporting the theory of Wace and others that during its latter stages the Minoan civilization at Knossos was strongly influenced by the mainland and that, in fact, Knossos may have been conquered by the Mycenaeans. Wace has also stated that the recently-excavated graves in the prehistoric cemetery show continuity of culture, and that there was not a complete archaeological break in the culture of Mycenae at the end of the Bronze Age. This, he suggests, tends to disprove the hitherto-accepted belief that the Dorian Invasion brought in a Dark Age. However, not all scholars accept this view, some asserting that though Mycenae continued to be occupied after the Dorian sack, the Mycenaean culture was certainly disrupted. Epic poetry was the main medium through which its memory was kept alive.

Certainly Aegean archaeology is entering upon a new and exciting phase, in which some earlier theories may have to be discarded.

In this Appendix, therefore, I shall describe some of the recent finds at Mycenae. In that which follows, Ventris's work on the "Linear B" script will be discussed, after which I shall try to relate the two, and endeavour to indicate how these extraordinary developments are likely to influence our view of the

Aegean civilization which was first brought to light by Schliemann and Evans.

In 1952, Wace and his British staff began further explorations of the prehistoric cemetery just outside the Lion Gate. In Chapter V I mentioned that "Professor Wace has shown that the prehistoric cemetery of which the shaft-graves form part originally extended beyond the line of the Cyclopean walls, west of the Lion Gate".

He found in 1952 a number of graves of the Middle Bronze Age with characteristic burials of the period. These apparently were not royal graves, and they had been plundered in antiquity, though interesting objects had survived. He also found interesting objects which may have been discarded loot from a *tholos* or rich chamber tomb of the Late Helladic Period. Among these was a remarkable group of ivories, some of which were in the form of our old friend the "figure-of-eight" shield (see page 61). These seem to have been models of the great body-shield mentioned by Homer. Other ivories seem to have formed part of the mountings of wooden furniture. For example, there was one with a tenon at the base for the insertion of a socket, which may have formed part of a bedstead or chair, though Wace suggests that it may have been the head of a herald's staff—analogous to the caduceus which is usually borne by Hermes.

Another ivory showed a griffin in low relief, masterfully carved (remember the griffins on the walls of the Throne Room at Knossos). There was also the handle of a silver cup of the same type as the famous golden cups of Vapheio (Plate 12); the barrel of the handle and the upper and lower plates were inlaid with gold and niello.

During the same season (1952) Wace and his helpers worked on the Perseia Fountain House, which had been thought previously to have been a Hellenistic gymnasium. But Pausanias had mentioned this Fountain House, served by the fountain Perseia (see page 69), and the excavators found two basins set in front of a long terrace wall. One was for human beings, the other for animals, and the eastern and larger of the two had a paved area in front which originally had probably been roofed. This Fountain House was Hellenistic (third and second centuries), but probably had a classical predecessor dating from the period when Mycenae was again occupied by the Argives some 500 years B.C.

More interesting was a small hoard of bronzes found nearby. They seem to have been the stock-in-trade of some worker in bronze. Wace found tools, including chisels, a drill and a hammer, a double axe, an adze, a dagger and several curved knives. These were of the Mycenaean period.

It should be remembered that not all the Mycenaeans lived within the walls of the Citadel. On the slopes below were many houses, and it was in the ruins of these houses that Wace made his most remarkable discoveries. In one of these, which seems to have belonged to an oil merchant, was a store-room with large jars (*pithoi*) ranged along the wall as described by Odysseus in the *Odyssey*. But the significant fact was that this house had been burned and the stirrup jars had been deliberately broken or unstoppered to add fuel to the flames.

The two basement rooms of the same house contained thirty-eight clay tablets inscribed with the "Linear B" script like that discovered by Evans at Knossos. These, except for surface finds made in 1950, were the first to be found anywhere in a purely private house. Like those found at Knossos and at Pylos (by Blegen), they seem to have been merely accounts and inventories. Since their discovery they have been partially deciphered by Ventris. On one of these tablets was a sketch of a man in a short kilt standing to attention. Perhaps this was an artist's draft for a wall fresco, as at Knossos. We know that the Mycenaeans were in the habit of adorning their plastered walls with frescoes of men and women, chariots and hunting scenes.

In 1953 Wace continued work at Mycenae. To the north and south of the House of the Oil Merchant he discovered two more houses dating from the thirteenth century B.C. This time he found even more magnificent ivory carvings.

> "Such a wealth of Mycenaean work in ivory has probably never been found before. Certainly nothing which could be compared with this has been found for at least sixty years."

On the north side of the House of the Oil Merchant the excavators examined a house which stands on a platform held up by massive walls. Two rooms were revealed, the western one containing ivory carvings which appear to have been used mainly as inlays and decoration for wooden caskets, beds, chairs and other furniture. Here again the spade of the archaeologist has confirmed what Homer wrote, for he mentions ivory as an adornment of furniture, harness, swords and keys. More model figure-of-eight shields were found in ivory, also ivory lids, and the head of a Mycenaean warrior wearing the "boars' tusk helmet" mentioned by Homer (see page 62).

Wace called this the "House of Shields", and named the other, southern house the "House of Sphinxes", from a small ivory plaque of couchant sphinxes which it contained. These are rather like the lions shown on the Lion Gate. "The anatomy of the legs and bodies is delicately drawn," he writes. "They wear 'lily-crowns' and their hair streams out behind."

Much was also learned about the construction of Mycenaean houses. They had wooden thresholds to the doorways, as described by Homer, and the basements recalled the basements in the palaces of Priam and Menelaüs described by the poet. It is now very clear that Homer preserved many of the features of what we call Mycenaean civilization, even though he wrote during the transitional age between iron and bronze.

But perhaps the most important discovery made by Wace in 1952 and 1953 was that of a number of inscribed clay tablets, clay seals and seal impressions. Some of these were found in the House of Shields. Other specimens of Mycenaean writing were found in the House of Sphinxes. In a doorway leading to the store-room were seven clay seals from the same signet, and on the back of each seal was an incised inscription in the "Linear B" script, all different.

> "The important fact [writes Wace] is that we have now clear evidence of writing in each of the three houses in this row of large private houses. This confirms beyond all doubt that reading and writing were generally known to citizens of Mycenae and that their use was not confined to kings and officers, the priesthood and tax-gatherers."

Further excavations in the prehistoric cemetery revealed continuity of culture between the end of the Bronze Age—the latest phase of Mycenaean civilization—and the beginning of the Iron Age to which Homer belonged.

> "One of the graves belongs to the latest phase of Mycenaean civilization at the close of the Bronze Age and dates from the twelfth century B.C. In it two characteristic vases were found, a small jug and a bowl typical of the so-called Granary style. Next in date is a grave (sunk in the ruins of the House of Shields) of the opening of the Iron Age, with proto-Geometric pottery. The

two vases, a large amphora with concentric circles and a small, duck-like vase and simple linear ornament, carry on the tradition."

Other graves were found which also "carried on the tradition". The objects found in them—vases, iron daggers, bronze pins, etc.—would have little appeal to the layman compared with the riches found in the Royal Grave Circle, which will be described later, and yet they have greater significance historically. For, as the excavator says:

> "This series of graves is valuable because they give us the sequence of styles and show that there was no archaeological break in the culture of Mycenae at the end of the Bronze Age. . . . The effects of the Dorian Invasion have been unduly magnified by historians. The archaeological facts suggest that there was no definite racial or cultural break, but only a political revolution.* The citadel of Mycenae was burned at the end of the Bronze Age, but there was no real interruption in its civilization."

The work of Wace and his colleagues has not brought to light anything so spectacular and romantic as the discovery of the new Grave Circle, but their patient digging has added much to our knowledge of the Mycenaean civilization and its close relationship with the Heroic world of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Homeric architecture, Homeric arms and objects have been found. It has been established that the Mycenaeans had a system of writing which was known outside palace and official circles. It is also clear that in the thirteenth century B.C. Mycenae enjoyed peace, since otherwise how could the wealthy merchants have built their houses *outside* the wall? But many puzzles remain unsolved, some of which will be discussed at the end of Appendix B.

* * *

That second-century travel-writer, Pausanias, whose observations were not accepted literally by nineteenth-century scholars, is gaining increased respect as excavation at Mycenae continues to confirm his accuracy. The first to vindicate him was, of course, Schliemann, who, as I described in Chapter IV (page 56), accepted the truth of his statement that:

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* It is only fair to state at this point that a number of scholars disagree with this conclusion of Professor Wace, and assert that there *was* a break in culture.

> "In the ruins of Mycenae . . . there is a tomb of Atreus and there are also tombs of those whom Aegisthos murdered on their return from Troy. . . . Clytemnestra and Aegisthos were buried a little outside the wall, for they were not deemed worthy of burial within it, where Agamemnon lies and those who were murdered with him."

Schliemann dug within the walls of the citadel and found the six shaft-graves. In 1951, seventy-five years after Schliemann, Dr. J. Papadimitriou of the Greek Archaeological Service discovered the *second* grave circle which Pausanias describes as being *outside* the wall. He found it by accident when repairing the so-called "Tomb of Clytemnestra".

The newly-discovered Grave Circle lies 130–140 yards west of the Lion Gate, partly under the road which runs between the Citadel and the village of Charvati. Dr. Papadimitriou believes that the graves were known in the time of Pausanias (A.D. 127) because gravestones or *stelai* similar to those found above Schliemann's shaft-graves were found "at a very small depth from the surface soil of the area in the days of Pausanias, which level has definitely been determined by the latest excavations". However, it still remains a mystery why, if the graves were known at that time, they were not robbed.

There is a difference between the new Grave Circle and Schliemann's. Both have roughly the same diameter, about 27 metres (29½ yards), but the enclosing wall of the new circle is much thicker, 1·55 metres (5 feet 1 inch), and is built of large roughly-hewn blocks of limestone. Chronologically it belongs to the same period as the graves it encloses, whereas the wall surrounding the Circle within the Citadel was built 200 years *after* the burials, of slabs of *poros* stone. This was because Schliemann's graves originally lay outside the wall of the Citadel. When this was extended, and the graves came within the Citadel, a new encircling wall was built around them. Perhaps originally they were enclosed by the same kind of limestone wall as that which surrounds the newly-discovered circle.

So far (April 1954) sixteen graves have been excavated, and some have yielded treasures almost equal to those found by Schliemann. Over two of them were found funerary *stelai*

> "bearing beautiful representations of bull-hunting and lion-hunting scenes. On another grave . . . was found *in situ* the base containing a fragment of a funerary *stele*. This gave us a chance to examine again the method followed in the setting the *stelai*

> which were discovered by Schliemann and transported without their bases to the National Museum in Athens. As a result we found in the Grave Circle in the Citadel some blocks belonging to the bases of *stelai* which have remained unknown to this date. This detail alone is capable of showing the significance of the new graves whose excavation, as it is carried out today with our new scientific methods, and the experience and knowledge obtained since the days of Schliemann from the excavation work and writings of international scholars, will yield most important conclusions relative to the construction of the graves and the burial customs of that remote age." (Dr. Papadimitriou.)

Dr. Papadimitriou has called the graves after the initials of the Greek alphabet, to distinguish them from those of Schliemann, who gave them Latin numerals. The richest is Grave *Omicron*, the excavation of which required considerable care.

> "At this site the wall of the grave circle had been completely destroyed by the modern road and the whole grave was completely under the asphalt. The aqueduct of the village crossed the grave, and in the centre of the grave a cement tank of the aqueduct had been built. However only the top of the grave was injured and the rest unknown and had not been robbed."

It was necessary to divert the road and the aqueduct and remove the tank—extremely fatiguing work—but the excavators were richly rewarded. For the grave seems to have been that of a Mycenaean princess, a young woman whose body was found lying in an extended position. On the north side of the grave, near three clay vases, was a rock-crystal bowl carved in the shape of a duck ". . . having the head with the neck gracefully bent as the handle of the bowl and its tail as the lip. No similar work of art has been found in the Greek mainland or in Crete. Only in Egypt and in Asia Minor can we find perhaps similar precious vases. It is amazing how the artist obtained this unusually large piece of crystal (15 centimetres—5⅞ inches)."

The skeleton of the Princess had originally been richly clothed, and though the fabric had of course perished, the gold and silver ornaments, clasps, necklaces, diadems, etc., had remained. On each shoulder was a bronze pin with a crystal head, presumably intended to hold a heavy robe, and another pin, of silver, with a gold head, was found near the right shoulder. Three necklaces lay on the breast, two made of various precious stones such as amethysts and carnelians, the other of amber beads. On one wrist was found a beautiful gold bracelet made of repeated spiral circles, and the Princess wore golden ear-clips of a strangely modern appearance. Near her head lay two large diadems of gold with an ivory plate which may have been used to hold them in position.

In another sepulchre, Grave *Xi*, was found the skeleton of a little girl of not more than two years of age. It was almost in the centre of the grave and adorned with beautiful miniature jewellery which appeared, says Papadimitriou ". . . *in situ* as they would have lain on the body of this unlucky child, and made a charming impression". A diadem of double gold leaves joined by a gold bandlet lay on the head, and there were two gold rings near the temples to hold the tresses together. A tiny necklace of small precious stones lay near the centre, and there was even a baby's rattle of gold. . . .

Grave *Delta* contained three bodies, near one of which lay two bronze swords and other bronze weapons and clay vases. One sword had an ivory pommel with delicate carving—spiral decorations and four sculptured heads, two of bulls and two of lions.

The body of a warrior, a tall man nearly six feet in height, lay in the *Gamma* Grave, placed with the legs apart and with the hands forward near the pelvis. It is not clear why this position was adopted (the excavators found other bodies in the same position), but it may be that the body was placed leaning against pillows with the hands on the hips. Near this skeleton lay two long bronze swords with ivory pommels, a fine bronze dagger, a bronze lance and other weapons. Another body wore a golden collar, and near the west side of the grave were gold ornaments and a gold cup. Bronze and alabaster cups were also found.

Papadimitriou discovered that the male and female bodies were buried in separate graves, and that only the graves of the men contained gold and silver cups. In the *Iota* Grave there were two male skeletons, one of which was equipped with a bronze sword and an ivory pommel, a bronze knife with a handle of rock-crystal, and a bronze lance. In many of the graves fine cups and vases were found, some of clay with painted decoration, some of stone and others of alabaster. One, discovered early in the excavations, contained bronze and silver vases, two gold cups, gold head ornaments and a face-mask of electrum (gold and silver alloy). Once again Homer's "Mycenae, rich in gold" has lived up to its reputation.

The method of burial was similar to that used in Schliemann's shaft graves. The graves vary in depth, but they are all of the shaft type. As the grave was dug a narrow ledge was left at a certain height from the bottom. The bodies were laid on a floor of pebbles, with their funerary gifts. Then wooden beams were laid from ledge to ledge, and thus formed a ceiling for the grave. On top of these were laid canes very close together, the whole being covered with a thick layer of greenish clay, or sometimes with flagstones, to make the grave waterproof. Then the earth was turned back, and as there was more earth than was needed to cover the grave, it was piled up in the form of a small mound, on top of which the funerary *stele* was set.

When it was desired to make another burial, the body of the earlier occupant was shifted to one side to make room for the new-comer. If there was still insufficient room, some of the clay jars would be moved from the shaft and placed on top of the ceiling, under the mound. No coffins were used.

Unfortunately there is still no clue to the identity of the people buried within these graves. Pausanias was told that they were the bodies of Aegisthos and his companions, the murderers of Agamemnon, who were not thought worthy of burial within the citadel. We know now that they date from a period several hundred years earlier than that in which Agamemnon is supposed to have lived. They are, in fact, the bodies of Mycenaean royalty who lived about 1650–1550 B.C., much older than the epoch of the Trojan War.

The simple people of Mycenae whom Pausanias met in A.D. 127, when the famous city of Agamemnon lay in ruins, knew their ancient history only by legend and the Homeric poems, and therefore had no sure conception of chronology such as we have today. None the less they remembered the names of their famous ancestors, the mighty warriors who made expeditions to the Orient and brought back gold, silver, ivory and other precious objects. The ivory almost certainly came from Syria, since we know that elephants were hunted in the Orontes Valley 1500 years B.C. Also they clearly had close cultural contacts with the island empire of Crete, which they may eventually have overcome.

Dr. Papadimitriou has reached the conclusion that the grave-circles were not flat, but that a mound of earth was raised over each grave. When the funeral ceremony was over and the grave filled in, the relatives and friends of the deceased held a funeral feast over the grave, as is proved by the quantities of animal bodies found in the earth covering each grave. "This custom", the archaeologist points out, "is referred to in Homer's *Iliad*, where, at the funeral of Patroclus, the Greeks assembled near the body at a funeral banquet given by Achilles, who killed animals, bulls, sheep and pigs, so that the blood ran around the body."

One fact has continued to puzzle me, and I offer it to the reader for his consideration. We now know that the Mycenaeans could write: clay tablets have been found in private houses in Mycenae (admittedly some two or three centuries later than the period of the Grave Circles) inscribed with the form of writing known as "Linear B". Vases and jars were also found inscribed with this script. Why, then, since the Mycenaeans took the trouble to draw up inventories of their goods and label their oil-jars, did they not carve on the grave-stones the names of their royal dead? The Egyptians covered the walls of their tombs with written inscriptions; so did the Phoenicians. The later Greeks and Romans also set up inscribed gravestones. But not the Mycenaeans. Why?

I asked this question of several archaeologist friends, and they admitted that it is a puzzle. Dr. Frank Stubbings, Lecturer in Classics at Cambridge, who has also dug at Mycenae with Wace, wrote to me:

> "I wonder myself whether a lively oral tradition of history took their place (i.e. the place of carved or written monumental inscriptions). Such an oral tradition must be behind the Homeric epics; perhaps epic itself had started even in Mycenaean times? Chadwick has pointed out how well the Greek of the tablets seems to fit the hexameter metre; and Homer preserves a number of words of this Mycenaean Greek otherwise lost by classical times. The stelae over the Shaft-Graves (both Schliemann's and Papadimitriou's) are earlier than any 'Linear B' yet known. (Knossos, *circa* 1400, is the earliest; Shaft-Graves say 1650–1550 (?)). Linear A * in Crete is found as early as the Shaft-Graves, but is unknown on the mainland. The Royal Tomb at

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* Evans discovered two forms of writing at Knossos, "Linear A", the earliest, and "Linear B", a later form which also appears on the mainland. It is this form which has been partially deciphered by Ventris (see Appendix B).

Isopata near Knossos, has an inscription that may or may not refer to the burial—it is short, and in Linear A, which is still undeciphered. Later Mycenaean tombs sometimes had gravestones or markers, in one case with painted pictures, but I know none inscribed. Were there *painted* tomb-inscriptions? None are known, and on such a monument as the "Treasury of Atreus", with its carved façade [now in the British Museum] one would rather expect such inscriptions (if they ever existed) to be carved on the stone too. In Homer there is talk of raising barrows (or even a stone) to mark the site of a tomb, but apparently only as a landmark—to be identified orally, I suppose."

Since the experts can give no definite answer, may I put forward two possible answers to this question? Neither has any firm historical or archaeological backing, and they are offered only as a theory. The first was suggested to me by Ancient Egypt.

The Egyptians had a system of writing before 3000 B.C., yet we do not find anything approaching a literature until 1,000 years later. Egyptian writing was invented for a purely utilitarian purpose. It was a working tool, a means by which a man could communicate with others without having to meet and talk with them; a means of keeping accounts and records. Later the Egyptians, like all civilized and articulate people, discovered that words have a magic of their own, and there then arose writers of stories and romances who used language for no other purpose than to give pleasure. Thus the craft developed into an art.

It is probable that the Mycenaeans adopted writing for the same practical purpose, as a means of keeping records and accounts, a purely mechanical device in which the aristocracy would not be interested—a useful tool for merchants, tradesmen, clerks and suchlike, but beneath the dignity of kings and princes.

It seems certain that the epic poems upon which Homer based his *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were originally recited—Homer mentions bards, but not writers. It appears to me more than probable that the Mycenaean princes, sitting in their halls of state after a banquet, liked to hear the deeds of their ancestors sung or recited in epic verse, but that no one would think of committing these poems to *writing*, because there was no need to do so. The bards had prodigious memories. Writing was for the "rude mechanicals".

If this theory is valid, then it is unlikely that any written literature of the Mycenaean period will ever be found, and that future generations will still have to rely, as we do, on the poems of Homer for any impression of how the Mycenaeans thought and felt.

But there remains the question: "Why did not the Mycenaeans at least record the names and achievements of their kings in their tombs, as did the peoples of other ancient civilizations?" This brings me to my alternative theory, that the anonymity of Mycenaean royalty may have been due to a religious taboo.

Anthropologists tell us that among primitive tribes to this day taboos exist which forbid the mention of a chief's name. The same reluctance occurs in Ancient Egypt. The Pharaoh was rarely referred to by his actual name. He was called "One" or "the Ruler", or his identity was disguised under such names as "the Bull" or "the Hawk". In "The Story of Sinuhe" the writer describes the death of Amenemhat as follows:

> "In the year 30, on the ninth day of the third month of the Inundation, the god entered his horizon."

Later, admittedly, he says, "King Amenemhat flew away to heaven", and names his successor, Sesostris, but immediately afterwards he refers to the young Prince as "the Hawk" who "flew away with his henchmen".

However, "The Story of Sinuhe" is a sophisticated work dating from the Twelfth Dynasty, in the middle period of Egyptian history more than 1,000 years after civilization began in the Nile Valley. Perhaps in much earlier times the name of the King could not be spoken, just as members of primitive African tribes today are forbidden to mention the name of their chief. This religious taboo may be due to the fact that names have a magical significance to primitive people. The name was a part of the man, and just as in Siam, 200 years ago, anyone touching the King's body was punished by death, so no common man was permitted to speak the sacred name.

If this prohibition applied to the Mycenaeans it would explain why the names of their Kings were never inscribed on their tombs, and why the walls of Mycenaean and Minoan Palaces, though adorned with frescoes depicting human beings, are void of written texts.

On the whole, however, I think it is more likely that the absence of tomb inscriptions, written histories and written poems was due to the fact that, at the time of which we are speaking—from about 1500 to 1100 B.C.—writing was a purely utilitarian device, and that Mycenaean poet-historians memorized their poems and transmitted them orally from generation to generation.

APPENDIX B

THE "EVEREST" OF GREEK ARCHAEOLOGY

IN Chapter X I described Sir Arthur Evans's discovery at Knossos of "whole deposits, entire or fragmentary, of clay tablets analogous to the Babylonian but with inscriptions in the prehistoric script of Crete. I must have about seven hundred pieces by now. It is extremely satisfactory," he wrote, "as it is what I came to Crete to find."

It was what he came to find, but although he and other scholars wrestled for more than thirty years with the decipherment of the mysterious writing, they were able only to establish that the tablets represented inventories, that there was a numerical system, and that some of the objects listed in the inventories could be identified as chariots, horses, men and women from the pictographs which appeared at the end of certain lines. All attempts to ascertain the grammatical basis of the language—if it had one—failed.

But while this book was being written, the script—or rather one form of it—was at last yielding its secrets, and now, more than fifty years after Evans discovered the "Linear B" tablets, they can be partially read. Moreover, it seems fairly certain that the language in which they were written was an early form of *Greek*.

In the first volume of his *Scripta Minoa* Evans showed that there were three stages of witing in Crete. First hieroglyphs represented on the early engraved seal stones. Then came a more cursive form of writing which he called "Linear A". Finally came a third script, a modified form of the "Linear A", which Evans called "Linear B". This was the commonest form, and it was in use at the time of the destruction of Knossos. The same form of writing has been found at places on the mainland, such as Mycenae and Pylos. It is this "Linear B" script which has been partially deciphered, largely through the efforts of a young Englishman named Michael Ventris, who is not an archaeologist, nor even a professional philologist. He is, in fact, an architect.

Nineteen years ago the British School at Athens was celebrating its fiftieth anniversary with an exhibition at Burlington House, London. Among the speakers was Sir Arthur Evans, then in his eighty-fourth year. And among the audience was a thirteen-year-old schoolboy studying classics at Stowe. The boy—Michael Ventris—heard Sir Arthur say that the tablets he had discovered thirty-six years before still challenged decipherment. Ventris was intrigued, and decided to make the subject his hobby. From that day he began to struggle with the problem, but it was to take him seventeen years to solve.

Why did the writing take so long to decipher? Largely because there was no bilingual clue such as that provided by the Rosetta Stone which set Egyptologists on the road to understanding the hieroglyphs. Champollion and other philologists were able to decipher the writing of the Ancient Egyptians because (*a*) there existed, on the Rosetta Stone, the same inscription written in both Ancient Egyptian and Greek, and (*b*) because elements of the ancient language still survived in the Coptic tongue. The Behistun Rock supplied the same kind of bilingual clue for the *cuneiform* writing of Babylonia. No such help was provided for those who tried to wrest the secret of the Minoan script from the baked-clay tablets found in the Palace of King Minos. The symbols bore no relation to any known form of writing. In vain archaeologists sought for a bilingual clue—perhaps a bill of lading written in Minoan and Greek. Nor has any such aid appeared, even today. How, then, has the feat been accomplished?

If no bilingual clue exists, there are other ways in which one can attempt to decipher an unknown language. As Ventris himself says:

> "Since 1802, when Grotefend first correctly read part of the Old Persian syllabary, the basic techniques necessary to a successful decipherment have been tested and developed on many other initially unreadable scripts. Each operation needs to be planned in three phases; an exhaustive analysis of the signs, words and contexts in all the available inscriptions, designed to extract every possible clue as to the spelling system, meaning and

language structure; an experimental substitution of phonetic values to give possible words and inflections in a known or postulated language; and a decisive *check*, preferably with the aid of virgin material, to ensure that the apparent results are not due to fantasy, coincidence or circular reasoning."

(*Antiquity*, Vol. XXVII, December 1953.)

Let us consider the first phase of the operation: "the exhaustive analysis of the signs, words and contexts". If sufficient material exists one can begin to sort out and classify the words and signs, to notice how many times the same group of signs occurs, and how often and in what way a word beginning with the same group of signs has varying endings. For instance, if the reader was confronted with a book written in English, without knowing the language or any related tongue, he might notice that the words "AND" and "THE" occurred more often than any others, and that sometimes one found a word beginning with the signs G-R-O-W which ended in different ways, e.g. GROW . . . GROWING . . . GROWN. Looking farther, he might find another word containing some, but not all, of the same signs but which also used the same endings as in the other group of words, e.g. THROW . . . THROWING . . . THROWN. Then he might have a setback on finding that whereas ROW and ROWING seemed to be governed by the same grammatical rules, the third form of the word was not ROWN but ROWED. In this way, if he had enough material and sufficient patience, skill and application, he might be able to hazard a guess at the grammar, and then, by comparing it with that of known languages, see if there was any possible link. Did the thing *work* or not?

This is only one example of the ways in which the script might be attacked. Another would be to find out the total number of symbols used. If, for example, there were only twenty-four signs, as in Greek, the language would probably be alphabetical, each sign representing a consonant or a vowel (though some ancient languages such as Egyptian had no signs for vowel sounds). On the other hand, if there were, say, seventy or eighty signs the language is probably syllabic, each symbol having the value of a consonant plus a vowel, e.g. one sign for TA, another for TO, a third for TE, and so on. A number of syllabic writing systems, e.g. Hittite and Cypriote, have managed to make do with between sixty and eighty signs.

At the outset Ventris was handicapped by lack of material. "When I started," he told me, "only 142 out of the 2,846 tablets (and fragments of tablets) found by Evans had been published. The most useful work on the material was by Sundwall, a Finnish scholar, who had access to more tablets than other people. But we made slow progress."

Then in 1939 Professor Blegen, of the University of Cincinnati, began to excavate at Pylos, in the Western Peloponnese, the traditional home of Nestor, the aged counsellor of the Greeks before Troy. He found a palatial Mycenaean building in which lay some 600 tablets in the "Linear B" script. These tablets, published in 1951, showed that though the script ceased to be used at Knossos after the sack of 1400 B.C., it was still in use 200 years later on the mainland. Then in 1952 Sir John Myres, Evans's lifelong friend, published *Scripta Minoa*, Volume Two, which Evans had left unfinished at his death. This volume contained all the "Linear B" tablets found at Knossos, and, with the Pylos tablets, provided Ventris with valuable new material.

Already by 1940 it was generally recognized that the script contained some seventy common signs for sound values, apart from the ideograms—the small pictorial signs which indicated such objects as chariots, swords, horses, men and women. The script was therefore clearly a syllabary like modern Japanese and the Hittite hieroglyphs.

The Pylos tablets discovered by Blegen had been deposited in the Bank of Athens, but Blegen had had them photographed, and one of his students, Emmett L. Bennett Jr., studied the tablets and helped to prepare them for publication. In 1947, after his return from cryptographer service in the U.S. Forces, he submitted a thesis on the tablets. He examined the shapes of the signs in a more methodical way than Evans. In 1940 Ventris wrote an article in the *American Journal of Archaeology* suggesting that the language might be like Etruscan, and that the Etruscans may have spoken an Aegean language. Working on this hypothesis he tried to decipher the script, but his theory was based on too small a part of the material, and came to nothing. Meanwhile, between 1944 and 1950 the late Dr. Alice Kober of Brooklyn wrote suggesting that by looking at the Knossian tablets which had been published one could see that the script had a certain grammatical pattern. She suggested also that by studying the order of the words and how they changed—e.g. by noting inflexions and word-endings—one might get at the grammar even without knowing the pronunciation.

Ventris, in the meantime, had joined the Royal Air Force and become a navigator in Bomber Command. It is typical of him that he chose to be a navigator rather than a pilot because the mathematical problems involved in navigating an aircraft seemed to offer more interest than "being a driver". Then the War ended and he was able to take up his hobby again, devoting to it all the time he could spare from his profession of architect.

Up to 1950 it was generally assumed that the "Linear B" script contained a non-Greek language, like "Linear A" (1700–1450 B.C.). Evans thought that "Linear B" was developed from "Linear A" when the Knossos ruler centralized the government of the island in his palace and overhauled its administrative methods. It remained the same language, Evans believed, but better written. But the young American scholar, Emmett L. Bennett, thought differently. He made a close study of the two scripts, and in 1950 published an article pointing out certain vital differences. *The signs looked the same, but the words were different.* To make this clearer, at the risk of over-simplification, imagine a Martian studying two manuscripts, one in English, the other in German, but both using the Latin alphabet. Not knowing the languages, and seeing that the same signs were used to write it, he might at first think that both manuscripts were written in the same language. Only after careful study would he discover that they were two different languages using the same signs.

This vital discovery led to a new approach to the "Linear B" script. "Linear A", the earlier form, was used in Crete over many centuries. Then suddenly one finds an entirely new system, though using the same signs, and this is used not only in Crete at the end of the Late Minoan Period but also continues on the mainland for centuries afterwards. Wace and other archaeologists believed that at this period mainland influence in Knossos was strong—that, in fact, the Mycenaeans, who were of Greek stock, may have conquered Knossos. *Could the "Linear B" script have been an archaic form of Greek, using the Minoan syllabary?* This possibility had already occurred to Ventris, and he corresponded with Bennett in order to test his theory. He was on the brink of an important discovery.

Blegen's 600 Pylos tablets, which had been published in

1951, furnished him with new material, and there was also Myres's *Scripta Minoa*, Volume Two, which came out later. The latter volume, based on Evans's fifty-year-old material, might possibly contain errors, so Emmett L. Bennett went out to Herakleion in Crete to check up on the originals in the museum. The two young scholars kept in touch, and between the spring of 1951 and 1952 Ventris worked away at the script, testing and discarding theories, and every month taking a particular line of inquiry. At regular intervals he would sent out duplicated copies of his investigations and conclusions, so that other scholars could study and comment on them.

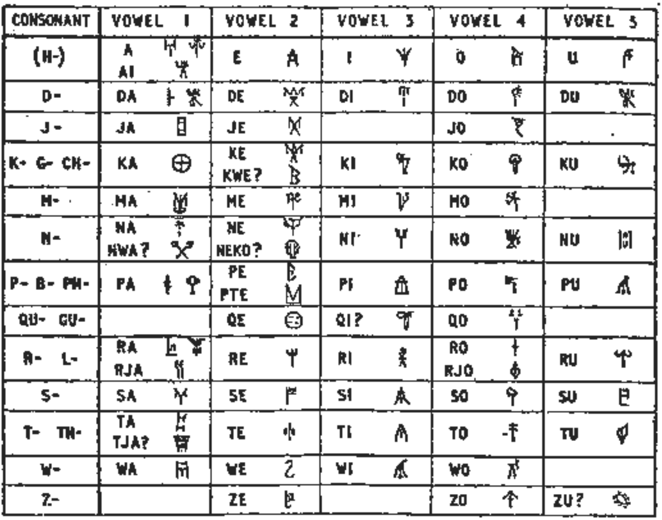
In May 1952 Professor Blegen was back at Pylos, excavating the Palace of Nestor. He explored the other end of the Archive Room in which he had found the 600 tablets in 1939. To his delight *another* 400 came to light, including the broken halves of some already dug up in 1939. They were entrusted to Bennett to prepare them for publication and the contents of a few of them were made known to Ventris and other scholars in early 1954.

A complete explanation of Ventris's methods is outside the scope of this book, and readers who wish to study the subject in greater detail should read the presentation of his theory in the joint article "Evidence for Greek Dialect in the Mycenaean Archives" which he and John Chadwick, a Cambridge philologist, wrote for the *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, Vol. LXXIII (1953). But, briefly, he built up a huge dossier which showed, for example, how many times a certain sign occurred, how many times it occurred at the end of a word, how many times in the middle, how many times at the beginning, etc. Then he and other scholars began a long process of analysis and gradually began to recognize the apparent grammatical structure of the ancient language, and the relative frequence and interrelationships of the phonetic signs with which it was written. Ventris writes:

> "Once the values of a syllabary are known, its signs can be most conveniently set out in the form of a chequerboard 'grid' on which the vertical columns each contain a single vowel, and the horizontal lines a single consonant. A vital part of the analysis consisted in arranging the signs as far as possible in their correct pattern *before* any phonetic values were tried out; this was made possible by clear evidence that certain groups of sign shared the same vowel, (e.g. *no ro to*), others the same consonant (e.g. *wa we wi wo*)."

There were also several pairs of spellings which alternated in such a way as to suggest masculine and feminine forms of the same word, and Dr. Kober had detected the presence of inflexional endings.

During the fifteen months following Bennett's publication of the Pylos tablets, Ventris had been able to form some idea of the grammatical structure of the "Linear B" language, and to fix the relative positions of many of the signs on his grid (above).



CONSONANT	VOWEL 1	VOWEL 2	VOWEL 3	VOWEL 4	VOWEL 5
(H-)	A AI	E	I	O	U
D-	DA	DE	DI	DO	DU
J-	JA	JE		JO	
K- G- CH-	KA	KE KWE?	KI	KO	KU
M-	MA	ME	MI	MO	
N-	NA NWA?	NE NEKO?	NI	NO	NU
P- B- PH-	PA	PE PTE	PI	PO	PU
QU- GU-		QE	QI?	QO	
R- L-	RA RJA	RE	RI	RO RJO	RU
S-	SA	SE	SI	SO	SU
T- TH-	TA TJA?	TE	TI	TO	TU
W-	WA	WE	WI	WO	
Z-		ZE		ZO	ZU?

Syllabic grid showing suggested phonetic values for 68 of the 88 signs of the "Linear B" system.

"There now seemed to be," he writes in his cautious scholar's way, "sufficient material for a reasonably controlled experiment in allotting phonetic values."

Thus, after years of preliminary research, classification and analysis, he had reached the second phase of the operation: "an experimental substitution of phonetic values to give possible words and inflections in a known or postulated language".

"Previous attempts at decipherment," wrote Ventris, "had all relied, for fixing of key phonetic values, on supposed resemblances between 'Linear B' signs and those of the classical Cypriot Syllabary, whose values are known."

What was this Cypriot Syllabary? Mr. R. D. Barnett, Deputy Keeper of the Department of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities of the British Museum, writes:

> "It has been thought for some time that the actual language of Homeric times was probably nearest to the archaic dialects which still survived in Classical times, isolated by later Dorian and Ionic invasions and restricted to Cyprus and, on the mainland, to the mountain district of Arcadia. This view is now likely to receive unhoped-for confirmation. When the Dorian and Ionian invasions came at the beginning of the Iron Age, the Mycenaean civilization collapsed and with it all recollection of the arts of writing, except for the memory of the tablet inscribed with 'baleful signs' which Proitos gave to Bellerophon to carry to the King of Lycia, which was really a request to have him killed."

This theory—that the "Linear B" script might be related to the Cypriot Syllabary, though attractive, cannot yet be proved. The Syllabary shows few superficial resemblances to either "Linear A" or "B", except in the shapes of some of the elementary signs. "The differences," writes Ventris, "might be due to a reduction in size and a more 'cuneiform' writing technique, but they make parallels between 'Linear B' and the classical Cypriot Syllabary almost impossible to trace. It is clear that the values of the 'Linear B' signs must be fixed on internal evidence, and to satisfy the 'grid' and inflexions already found, *without taking into account any other doubtfully related writing systems*." (Our italics.)

Ventris decided to "go it alone" and turned to the work of Alice Kober, who had worked on the "Linear B" script during the War, and who had recognized certain inflexions. Among the words which she had studied there was a consistent series which recur in different contexts in three different forms. Dr. Kober called these words "paradigms", and Ventris, "triplets". These, Ventris thought, were possibly the names of the chief Cretan cities, together with their corresponding adjectives.

> "Now it is characteristic of most languages," he wrote, "when syllabically written, that the signs for the plain vowels A-E-I-O-U- are exceptionally common in an initial position; and the first sign of the first 'triplet' suggested the value A to Kober and

Ktistopoulos. The decisive step was to identify the first words with Amnissos, and to substitute values which would turn the others into Knossos, Tylissos, Phaestos, and Lyktos:

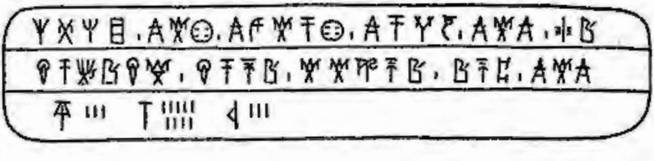
A-mi-ni-so	*Ko-no-so*	*Tu-ri-so*	*Pa-i-to*	*Ru-ki-to*
A-mi-ni-si-jo	*Ko-no-si-jo*	*Tu-ri-si-jo*	*Pa-i-ti-jo*	*Ru-ki-ti-jo*
A-mi-ni-si-ja	*Ko-no-si-ja*	*Tu-ri-si-ja*	*Pa-i-ti-ja*	*Ru-ki-ti-ja*

"Since about 50 signs had already been assigned to their places on the 'grid' the substitutions in these five words automatically fixed most of them as well, by a kind of chain reaction. If these names were an illusion, then the resulting system of values must inevitably be a completely dislocated jumble, with which no further sense could be extracted from the texts by any sort of jugglery."*

But they did *not* become a "dislocated jumble". When Ventris began to apply the experimental phonetic values to the pattern of declensions which he had already analysed he found to his surprise that "these fell into line, not merely with the known Greek system of declensions, but specifically with its most archaic forms as deduced from Homeric and other dialects".

Ventris was now at the third stage of the operation a "decisive *check*, preferably with the aid of virgin material, to ensure that the apparent results are not due to fantasy, coincidence or circular reasoning". At first, like Evans and other scholars, he had assumed that the unknown language was Minoan, and that it had no connection with Greek or any other known language. But now, by attributing, experimentally, Greek values to the signs, he began to realize that the language could be read as an archaic form of Greek, and the similarities occurred too often to be mere coincidences.

For example, here is one tablet from Pylos:



If one attributes to the signs the values given them by Ventris, this could read in Greek:

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* Ventris: "Greek Records in the Minoan Script", *Antiquity*, Vol. XXVII, December 1953.

"*Hiereia echei-que, euchetoi-que etonion echeen theon, ktoinoochons-de ktoinaon kekeimenaon onata echeen.* (*Tossonde spermo*;) *WHEAT* 3-9-3,"

which in English would read:

"This the priestess holds, and solemnly declares that the god has the true ownership, but the plot-holders the enjoyment, of the plots in which it is laid out. (So much seed) $3\frac{57}{60}$ units."

Another tablet, from the armoury of Knossos, could read:

"*Hiquia, phoinikia horarmostemena, araruia haniaphi; wirinios 'o-po-qo' keraiaphi opii(sta?) iaphi, ou-que 'pte-no'; CHARIOT* 1,"

which in English would read:

"Horse-vehicle, painted red, with bodywork fitted, supplied with reins; the rail(?) of wild-fig-wood with jointing of horn; and the *pte-no* is missing; 1 CHARIOT."

In decipherment the real test is simple: does it make sense? It appears to. For instance, there is an inventory of swords, recognizable from a pictogram, which clearly illustrates this weapon. It ends with a number and the "total" *to-sa pa-ka-na* (so many swords). The classical Greek equivalent for this would be *tossa phasgana*, which is good Greek and makes sense. There is another tablet with a pictogram representing chariot wheels. The accompanying description, read with the values Ventris ascribes to it, describes the wheels as *kakodeta* or *kakia*—"bound with bronze" or "brazen". The thing appears to work.

Most remarkable of all, two tablets from Knossos and one from Pylos, deciphered by the Ventris system, carry the names of Greek gods, Lady Athena, Enyalios (an old name for Ares), Pan, Poseidon, Zeus, Hera and The Lady.

John Chadwick, another British scholar who worked with Ventris, points out that "it is certainly surprising to find names which can be read as Hector and Achilles (but not Nestor or Minos)".

However, all the above examples were taken from the earlier Evans and Blegen "digs". They did not fall into that category of "virgin material" previously unknown, which Ventris needed for his "decisive check". But in 1952 this was forthcoming. A tablet was found at Pylos in that year which has almost the effect of a bilingual. On it are drawings of tripods and vases. Ventris, reading the signs which accompany the picture, gives them the values *ti-ri-po-de*—unmistakably the Greek word for "tripods". And the rest of the tablet is in the same strain, proving the decipherment on the right lines. Other tablets yielded similarly interesting results.

Ventris himself is very modest about his achievement. At the end of his article in *Antiquity* he writes cautiously:

> "There is some doubt whether the present 'Linear B' material is large enough for the decisive proof of a solution, but a substantial check is promised by the still unpublished Pylos tablets found by Blegen in 1952 and 1953. At all events, I do not anticipate serious competition from any rival decipherment—not out of conceit, but because of this unfair advantage; if the tablets are written in Greek, they can hardly be explained otherwise than we have proposed; but if they are not, their language is probably in the existing circumstances unknowable."

R. D. Barnett, Deputy Keeper of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities at the British Museum, writing about Ventris's achievement in the *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, hit on the happy phrase "the Everest of Greek Archaeology"; for such truly it is. To the layman, the most disappointing fact is that now, when the mysterious script seems to have been deciphered, after more than half a century of effort, all that is revealed are, as Evans and others suspected, mere inventories. It is as if some future excavator, searching for the clue to the unknown English language, and having heard of a great poet named Shakespeare, had found somebody's laundry bill.

But the important fact is that, assuming that Ventris is right in his conclusions—and there seems little doubt of that—scholars now have the key to the Minoan–Mycenaean writing should any more interesting inscriptions turn up. It is amazing that a brilliant and gifted people whose achievements are immortalized in the epic poems of Homer—which may indeed be based on oral poetry handed down from that remote age—have left no written documents apart from these inventories. Their contemporaries, the Egyptians, have left us tomb inscriptions, historical annals, stories, poems and letters. So have the people of the Euphrates Valley. The Mycenaeans must have been in touch with these contemporary civilizations; objects found in their cities prove that. But they have left us no written record of their history save what survives in the poems of Homer, which were first set down in writing many centuries after the last Achaean King ruled from Mycenae.

Homer mentions writing only once. There is a passage in the *Iliad*, Book VI, in which Glaucus, the son of Hippolochus, challenges Diomedes "of the loud war-cry" to single combat. In one of those long, discursive orations with which the Homeric heroes address each other before proceeding to battle, Diomedes asks if Glaucus is a man or a god in disguise, since he says, "I am not a man to fight against the gods of Heaven. . . . But if you are one of us mortals who plough the earth for food, come on, and you will meet your doom the sooner."

Glaucus, to reassure him, gives him a long piece of family history. He is descended, he says, from the redoubtable Bellerophon, son of Glaucus and grandson of Sisyphus—"as cunning a rogue as ever there was". Bellerophon was subject to King Proitos, a far more powerful nobleman than himself. Queen Anteia, the wife of Proitos, fell in love with the handsome youth, "who was endowed with every manly grace, and begged him to satisfy her passion in secret. But Bellerophon was a man of sound principles, and refused."

Whereupon, like Potiphar's wife, the Queen told her husband that Bellerophon had tried to ravish her, and urged Proitos to kill him, or be killed himself. Proitos dared not put Bellerophon to death, so he sent him to Lycia, and it is here that Homer mentions writing for the first and only time:

> ". . . he packed him off to Lycia with sinister credentials from himself. He gave him a folded tablet on which he had traced a number of devices with a deadly meaning, and told him to hand them to his father-in-law, the Lycian King, and thus ensure his own death."

The Lycian King gives Bellerophon a number of arduous and dangerous tasks, hoping he will be killed, but each time the young man triumphs, even when the King sets an ambush for him.

> "He picked the best men in all Lycia and stationed them in ambush. Not one of them came home. The incomparable Bellerophon killed them all. In the end the King realized that he was a true son of the Gods."

Now until recently this passage in the *Iliad* was regarded as a later interpolation, but, says Stubbings:

> "There is no reason why it should not refer to Minoan or Mycenaean script, and I think myself that it does. The writing

materials are not identifiable from what little is said. Little is yet known of Mycenaean contacts with Lycia in Asia Minor, though I hope one day will be, even though we can hardly expect to find the actual death-warrant for Bellerophon which Homer alludes to."

It is interesting to note, moreover, that Bellerophon belongs to an earlier generation of heroes, to be dated definitely earlier than the known examples of "Linear B".

So the torch is handed on: from Schliemann to Evans; from Evans to Ventris and Papadimitriou; from Ventris and Papadimitriou to whom? For though a corner has been turned and fresh vistas spring to view, the end is far from being in sight. Much more work on the tablets will be needed, in fact the work has only begun. And there still remains the "Linear A" script, which may be truly Minoan and may baffle all attempts at decipherment for years to come.

To conclude, let us take a forward look and consider the problems and possibilities arising from these new discoveries. It now appears very possible that people of Greek stock were dominant at Knossos at the close of the Late Minoan Period. Professor Wace has long believed that in Late Minoan II (1500–1400 B.C.) Knossos was under mainland influence. His case grows stronger with the evidence that Greek was written there at that time. In a letter to *Antiquity* published in March of 1955 he wrote:

"For some time past several of us have been pointing out that in L.M. II at Knossos (but not in the rest of Crete) there are features which are mainland; beehive tombs, throne-rooms, the Palace Style, alabastra, imitations of Ephyraean pots, and so on. Also the Knossian frescoes, as Luisa Banti points out, agree with the mainland more than with the rest of Crete. Now Knossos alone in Crete has the 'Linear B' script, and it is known on tablets at Pylos and Mycenae and on pots from Thebes, Mycenae, Orchomenos, Tiryns and Eleusis. 'Linear B' is more spread on the mainland than in Crete. 'Linear B' is Greek. So at Knossos in L.M. II there were Greeks. The Mycenaeans were Greeks; they were the Middle Helladic people developed after contact with the Minoan civilization and the Near East in Late Helladic I, or rather from just before the end of Middle Helladic through Late Helladic I. Thus the decipherment of the tablets confirms the result already arrived at archaeologically."

There is another aspect. The earliest known date for the Phoenician alphabet as adapted by the Greeks is the eighth century B.C. Historians used to believe that after the Dorian invasion there was a Dark Age during which the Greeks were illiterate. Now we know that the "Linear B" Mycenaean script was in use down to the fall of Pylos, which presumably came towards the end of the Bronze Age. Wace poses the question "Is it likely that such an inventive, intelligent and wide-awake people as the Greeks would ever have stopped reading and writing once they had learned to do so?"

Perhaps—who knows—the end of the "Linear B" script and the beginning of the Phoenician Alphabet may have overlapped?

> "If only [writes Wace] we could find an inhabited site of the Late Bronze to Early Bronze Age to Early Iron Age period we might find tablets in it. All our knowledge at this period is from tombs. . . ."

The crying need now is for more documents from Pylos, Mycenae and other sites, and an Early Iron Age inhabited site, in order to find out what the script and language situation was at that time. The so-called Dark Age, thinks Wace, is dark only to us.

> "We are on the eve of great developments. We can no longer speak of pre-Hellenic Greece, because from 2000 B.C. onwards the Greeks were in Greece, and Mycenaean art is the first great manifestation of Greek art. . . . One would like to see applied to the Dorian invasion the same methods of study and the same archaeological technique as have thrown so much light upon the arrival in Britain of the Anglo-Saxons and upon our own origins: the two problems have much in common."