



IV

THE GREEK SETTLEMENTS IN SICILY.

B.C. 735-580.

[Of the Greek settlements in Sicily we have the precious sketch at the beginning of the sixth book of Thucydides, in which some say that he followed the Syracusan writer Antiochos. The books of Diodôros in which he must have described them more fully are unluckily lost, save some fragments. A good deal may be learned from Strabo, from whom we see that there were often several stories current about the same foundation. And there are casual notices in many places, in Plutarch's lesser works and elsewhere.]

THE Western Greeks at least had some vague notions of Sicily and the Sikels as early as the time of the Odyssey. We there hear of a land called *Sikanië*, which can only mean Sicily, and of a people called Sikels, who may be those either of Sicily or of Italy. With them the Greeks seem to have carried on a brisk trade in buying and selling slaves. The suitors threaten to sell Odysseus to the Sikels, and old Laertês is waited on by a Sikel woman. But such a trade, carried on along the coast, as all intercourse between Greece and Sicily still was ages afterwards, carried on too most likely in Phœnician vessels, does not prove much intercourse between

the people at the two ends. It is plain that Greek notions of Sicily were still very vague when settlement in Sicily began. It is said that the Phœnicians spread tales likely to frighten any other people from settling there.

For a long time Greek settlement was directed to the East rather than to the West. And it was said that, when settlement in Italy and Sicily did begin, the earliest Greek colony, like the earliest Phœnician colony, was the most distant. It was believed that Kymê, the Latin Cumæ in Campania, was founded in the eleventh century B.C. The other plantations in Italy and Sicily did not begin till the eighth. Kymê always stood by itself, as the head of a group of Greek towns in its own neighbourhood and apart from those more to the south, and it may very well be that some accident caused it to be settled sooner than the points nearer to Greece. But it is not likely to have been settled three hundred years earlier. Most likely it was planted just long enough before the nearer sites to suggest their planting. Anyhow, in the latter half of the eighth century B.C. Greek settlement to the West, in Illyria, Sicily, and Italy, began in good earnest.

It was said that the first settlement in Sicily came of an accident. Chalkis in Eubœia was then one of the chief sea-faring towns of Greece. Theoklès, a man of Chalkis, was driven by storm to the coast of Sicily. He came back, saying that it was a good land and that the people would be easy to conquer. So in 735 B.C. he was sent forth to plant the first Greek colony in Sicily. The settlers were partly from

Chalkis, partly from the island of Naxos. So it was agreed that the new town should be called Naxos, but that Chalkis should count as its metropolis. So the new Naxos arose on the eastern coast of Sicily, on a peninsula made by the lava. It looked up at the great hill of Tauros, on which Taormina now stands. The Greek settlers drove out the Sikels and took so much land as they wanted. They built and fortified a town, and part of their walls may still be seen. As the first Greek settlers in the land, they set up an altar and statue of Apollôn *Archégetés*, the Leader and Beginner. It stood outside the town of Naxos, and became the religious centre of the Greeks of Sicily, the *Sikeliot*s as distinguished from the *Sikels*. Hither all who went from Sicily to any of the great festivals of old Greece came first to sacrifice to the common god of all *Sikeliot*s.

Naxos, as the beginning of Greek settlement in Sicily, answers to Ebbsfleet, the beginning of English settlement in Britain. The oldest of *Sikeliot* towns, it never became one of the greatest, and about three hundred years after its foundation it was altogether swept away, and has never since been rebuilt. Its settlers, Chalkidian and Naxian, belonged to the Ionian division of the Greek nation. In the very next year, it is said, in 734 B.C., a Dorian city was founded in Sicily, which has a much greater history. Corinth on the isthmus, with its two havens looking east and west, was one of the greatest sea-faring cities of Greece, and sent out colonies both ways. A joint enterprise to Sicily and the Illyrian coast was now decreed, and two famous Corinthian colonies, Korkyra

and Syracuse, arose as twin sisters. Chersikratês founded Korkyra and Archias founded Syracuse. Corinth seems to have claimed a measure of authority over her nearer colonies which was not usual on the part of a Greek metropolis. In the case of Korkyra this led to a War of Independence, and to bitter hatred between the mother and the daughter city. But no such authority was claimed over more distant Syracuse. Here therefore the metropolis and the colony were always on the best of terms, and the relations between them form the most pleasing story in Greek political life.

Kymê was planted on a high hill overlooking the sea; Naxos was planted all but in the sea, on a low peninsula. Syracuse was planted altogether in the sea on a low island. This shows how the Greeks had advanced since the days when all towns were built on inland hill-tops. The Greeks had caught up the Phœnicians. The island was that island of Ortygia which contains the spring of Arethousa. It lies close to the coast, so near that it was afterwards joined to it, sometimes by a mole, sometimes by a bridge. Running north and south, and with the peninsula called Plêmmyrion opposite to it to the south, the two fence in an inlet of the sea with a comparatively narrow mouth, which forms the Great Harbour of Syracuse, great as a harbour, though small as a bay. North of the island is another smaller harbour, so that Syracuse, like her mother Corinth, had two havens, though they were much nearer to each other than those of Corinth. A little to the north again is a long hill at its east end which rises sheer from