ARTICLE VIII.

THE PUBLIC ECONOMY OF THE ATHENIANS.[1]

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AMONG the countless publications of our day, few possess enough of real and permanent value to give promise of ever becoming standard works. That is a rare book which reveals any great truth, or even presents a thorough and impartial discussion of any important subject. Accordingly, the appearance of a truly great work, in any leading department of letters or science, is a subject for general congratulation. Scholars throughout the world hail it alike as an invaluable contribution to the treasury of knowledge, and as a vast accession to their facilities for future research.

Boeckh's *Staatshaushaltung der Athener* is a noble specimen of this class of works. Conceived and executed in the very best style of German scholarship, it marks an era in the study of classical antiquity. Its accomplished author brings to his arduous task a mind gifted with the choicest natural endowments, trained to the highest culture, and stored with the richest treasures of learning. He has, moreover, no favorite theory to establish; he is not the paid advocate, striving with special pleadings to save a desperate cause; but the impartial judge, calmly weighing the claims of truth and justice. Steadily he pursues his investigations. Does he discover heroic patriotism or noble magnanimity, the just meed of praise springs spontaneously from his generous heart; does he lay bare the dark immorality of a corrupt and depraved populace? his moral nature rising before us in all its truthfulness pronounces the stern sentence of unqulified condemnation.

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[1] Die Staatshaushaltung der Athener, von August Böckh. Zweite Ausgabe. Berlin: Bei G. Reimer. 1851.

The Public Economy of the Athenians, with Notes and a copious Index, by Augustus Boeckh. Translated from the second German edition, by Anthony Lamb. Boston: Little, Brown and Co. London: Sampson Low, Son and Co. 1857.

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This work, as every scholar knows, is the most thorough and complete investigation of the public economy of the ancient Athenians ever attempted. Free from vague generalities, it gives us not empty declamation, but substantial fact; not mere assertion, but reliable proof. It has long been the standard authority on all subjects discussed in its pages; and yet we must not expect to find its pictures of Athenian life complete and full; in many instances indeed, we have only the rude outline, and neither the classic page nor the ancient inscription furnishes us a single hint, by which we may complete the picture. The artist has wisely left his work at the very point where the light of history failed him; he knew but too well that, though the imagination might conceive a beautiful painting, it could not produce a truthful portrait.

The work, though published in 1817, underwent no important revision until 1851, when the present enlarged and improved edition made its appearance. A full generation had already passed away since the work was first offered to the world, — a generation more distinguished for profound archæological research than any which had preceded it. The ancient inscriptions had been subjected to the most searching scrutiny, and the information thus elicited on many abstruse and puzzling questions of antiquity, had modified not a few of the received opinions of scholars. But no one better understood these results, or had indeed done more to reach them than the learned author of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum.* At his bidding, defaced and mutilated slabs reclaimed from the accumulated rubbish of centuries, had brought forth their precious records, and disclosed the secrets which had so long been buried with them. Accordingly, when Boeckh put his hand a second time to his great work on the Athenian finances, the world of scholars turned to him in expectation of great results. They well knew that all the dross would be purged out by this second refining, and that much pure metal, brought up by the labors of a generation from the exhaustless mines of ancient lore, would be added to its rich stores. These expectations were

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abundantly realized. Mr. Lamb, therefore, has judged not wrongly in thinking that a new translation, founded on this greatly improved edition, would be a valuable and an acceptable contribution to American scholarship. The translation of Sir G. C. Lewis, published in London some years since, was of course based on the first edition of the original work, and is thus an entire generation behind the present state of antiquarian research.

In placing this remarkable production of Professor Boeckh, enriched as it now is by the latest efforts of German scholarship, within the reach of all who speak the English tongue, Mr. Lamb has performed an invaluable service alike for the student of antiquity and for the general reader. The work is rich in facts which every American citizen desires to know. A faithful exhibition of the Athenian polity, an unvarnished record portraying the elements alike of strength and weakness in that most famed of ancient commonwealths, can never be to us an object of indifference, so long as our own destinies are identified with the fortunes of a great republic. Our English literature, moreover, is sadly wanting in great works on classical antiquity; we hail, therefore, every honest effort to relieve our poverty by the importation of foreign learning in the form of scholarlike translations, as a noble act of public charity.

The extreme difficulty of making a translation, at once elegant and faithful, of a work like the present, can be fully appreciated only by those who have made the experiment. Prof. Boeckh's investigations on the Athenian finances are so profound and thorough, so replete with nice discriminations, and so compacted with minute details, that it is almost impossible to re-produce them in a foreign tongue. The work is so thoroughly German that it is difficult to force it, without distortion, into the strait proportions of the English garb. Mr. Lamb has displayed both scholarship and skill in surmounting these obstacles, and has performed his task with the most conscientious fidelity. Well may we congratulate him on the success which has attended his efforts. We could scarcely express a higher wish for the cause of

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classical studies in our land than by bespeaking an extensive sale for this work. Let the student of Demosthenes and Homer scan well these garnered treasures, which scholarship has patiently gleaned from the distant shores of antiquity; and let the young American, as he looks with fond and hopeful gaze to his country's future, pause a brief moment, and ponder the lessons of Athenian experience.

Guided by the learned researches of Prof. Boeckh, we purpose briefly to examine the Financial System of the ancient Athenians.

Political economy recognizes no more powerful agency in promoting the material prosperity of nations than the division of labor. This of course involves exchange, and the consequent necessity of some convenient circulating medium. Thus the currency of a people becomes no mean index of their civilization.

The basis of the Athenian currency was silver. This was worked without seigniorage and without alloy, so far at least as the imperfect state of the refiner's art would allow. Athens nobly decreed that her coinage should derive its full nominal value from the metal which it contained, and that the metal, moreover, should be used in the purest possible state. From this generous policy she never intentionally departed in practice, if we except an abortive attempt once made, in imitation of other Grecian States, to introduce a debased coinage for home circulation, — an attempt which was visited with such an outburst of popular indignation, that no Athenian citizen ever after dared to propose the unholy project of tampering with that pure currency which had long been the basis both of the public credit and of the commercial greatness of the nation.

Some of the specimens of Athenian coins, which have been tested, are found to contain 99 of pure silver; and the average standard given by Wurm[1] is, 97, — a degree of purity unequalled in the currencies of modern times. Even the English coins are alloyed some eight per cent., the American and the French, ten per cent.

[1] As quoted by Boeckh.

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But again, the coins struck at Athens were not only of rare purity, but of full weight. For many centuries they were made to conform, with comparatively slight deviations, to the standard established by Solon. How unlike this has been the history of most national currencies. The *as*, the basis of the Roman coinage, was originally a pound of copper, but, having been from time to time reduced in weight without change of name, it at last contained only half an ounce, and possessed of course but one twenty-fourth of its original value. The silver coins of England have been changed, according to a recent authority, no less than nineteen times within the last eight centuries, and, with two unimportant exceptions, have in each instance lost in value. The French livre contained in the time of Charlemagne, a pound of silver, while at present it has scarcely one-eightieth of that amount; indeed, such was the depreciation of the French coins in the reign of Philip VI., that an ingenious French writer sees in the disasters of Cressy and Poitiers only the legitimate results of a debased currency. This, he says, had so crippled the once powerful chivalry of France, that it was no longer able to take the field with men and horses properly appointed, and was accordingly obliged to yield before its more fortunate foe.

In view of this almost universal practice of debasing currency, the noble example of the Athenians, in guarding the purity of their national coinage as the exponent of commercial integrity and honor, challenges our admiration.

If now we inquire what relation this currency sustained to the various forms of property, we shall find that, though prices were very much higher at Athens than in other portions of Greece, they yet ranged exceedingly low, in comparison with those now current throughout the civilized world. The reason is obvious. The ancient Greeks possessed but little gold and silver; and no small proportion even of that was locked up in public treasuries, or lay idle as votive offerings in the temples of the gods. The Athenian treasury upon the Acropolis contained in its public coffers no less than $9,700,000 in coined silver, while the colossal statue of

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Athene in the Parthenon was draped in gold at an expense of half a million of dollars. The amount of gold and silver withdrawn from circulation to be deposited in temples as sacred offerings to the gods, is almost incredible. Gyges consecrated to the Delphian Apollo a long list of rich and costly offerings; among which we read of six huge golden bowls, weighing in the aggregate some seventeen hundred pounds, and worth $300,000. Crœsus is as famed for his pious liberality as for his princely wealth. His votive offerings, though scattered through numerous temples, were accumulated in richest abundance at Delphi. The devotee, as he entered that famed temple, was overawed by the magnificent display of costly articles in gold and silver of every variety of size and shape, with which the fabulous wealth of the Lydian prince had enriched it. There were bowls, casks, water-pots and ewers, all of massive silver; a golden statue three cubits high, a golden lion of some five or six hundred pounds weight, a huge golden bowl weighing a quarter of a ton; indeed the votive offerings of this one prince, consecrated in this single temple, must have contained upwards of seven tons of gold. The estimate of Diodorus is still higher; he tells us that, from the gold alone, coins were struck in later times to the almost incredible sum of $4,000,000. The aggregate amount of gold and silver coined by the Phocians in the Second Sacred war, from the accumulated treasures of Delphi reached $10,000,000.

The vast quantities of gold and silver, thus kept out of circulation, produced a comparative scarcity, and, of course, greatly enhanced the value of the precious metals. It has been a common opinion among scholars that modern prices are some ten times as high as those which prevailed in ancient Greece; and though Prof. Boeckh thinks this ratio quite too high, it may still be doubted whether he has succeeded in proving it to be so. It is well known that the amount of gold and silver thrown into circulation in Greece by the Persian wars, by the magnificent works of Pericles, by the lavish expenditures of Philip of Macedon, and by other kindred causes, raised prices at Athens, in the course of two

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centuries, some five-fold; the money coined by Constantine the Great, from the treasures of heathen temples, at once caused a marked rise in prices; the working of the mines of the New World in the 16th century reduced gold and silver to one third of their former value. It may not, indeed, be possible to measure the united results of these and other causes acting through a period of so many centuries, but, with all due allowance for the counteracting influence of luxury and commerce, the advance in prices since the time of Solon must have been manifold.

It may not be improper to subjoin a few illustrations of prices once current in ancient Athens.

Landed property about Athens was comparatively high, as indeed we should expect to find it in a densely peopled country in the vicinity of a great and flourishing metropolis. Boeckh conjectures on data which do not warrant a decided opinion, that the average price of land in Attica was about $30 per acre.

Houses sold at prices ranging from $50 to $2000; though there is probably but one instance on record in which this last sum was paid for a residence, and that is cited by Plautus as a piece of comic extravagance. The rich banker Pasion owned a house valued at $1700. Before luxury and corruption had begun to undermine Athenian simplicity and virtue, the citizen ever true to his lofty sentiments of public spirit, scorned private display, and reserved his treasures for the public call. Private houses were, accordingly, of moderate dimensions, simple and unadorned. Four or five hundred dollars were thought quite sufficient to purchase a comfortable home. Even the residences of the most illustrious citizens,—of Miltiades, Themistocles, and Aristides, as Demosthenes expressly assures us, were not at all distinguished from those of their humble neighbors. Perhaps few New England mechanics would live content in the unpretending homes of the victors of Marathon and Salamis. In the golden age of Athenian greatness and freedom, there was no more striking contrast, even in that city of contradictions and extremes, than that presented by the simplicity and

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cheapness of its private houses, when compared with the unrivalled richness and magnificence of its public edifices.

The price of ordinary slaves seems to have varied from $10 to $175. Those employed in the work of the house, the mine or the mill, seldom sold higher than $25; and yet a common horse, trained to the plough, would bring twice that sum. A steed for the chariot could not be bought for less than two or three hundred dollars. The fancy price of $13,000 paid by Alexander for his noble charger Bucephalus would have purchased five hundred slaves; and the coxcomb Alcibiades did not hesitate to invest the value of fifty faithful servants in a single dog.

The low price of cattle in the Athenian market in the sixth century B. C. is quite remarkable. With the gold which a good yoke of oxen would bring to-day in the Brighton market, Solon might have purchased a full hecatomb of choice bullocks and heifers for the altar. Sheep sold at ten cents per head.

Meats were of course cheap. Aristophanes tells us that a meal could be bought for one and a half cents. A Grecian proverb allows three cents for a meal of salted meat, and the same sum for the spices to season it.

But grain, everywhere indeed a most important staple, claims special attention from the student of the Athenian polity. Attica was not a productive country, and, being densely peopled, was obliged to rely on its foreign commerce for the annual supply of grain to the amount of a million and a half of bushels. The regulation of the corn trade, therefore, became from the very first a prominent object in Athenian legislation. The exportation of grain was prohibited by the most stringent enactments; all corn vessels which touched at the Piræus were required to offer two thirds of their cargoes at the Athenian market; it was declared a capital offence to attempt to forestall or monopolize the trade in time of scarcity; indeed, it was criminal in the sight of the law to demand, at any time, more than three cents profit on the bushel. The necessity of stringent legislation on this subject is sufficiently obvious. Could the grain dealers have

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escaped the wise severity of the Athenian laws, their rapacity would have reduced the poor to the very verge of starvation. Like Cleomenes of Alexandria, many an extortioner would have grown rich on the calamities and sufferings of his fellow citizens. Even the severity of the Athenian code, with all the terrors of the death penalty, furnished but a partial protection against the unholy designs of grasping speculators. The eloquent Lysias well nigh exhausts even his copious vocabulary in quest of opprobrious epithets to designate the villanous characters and practices of the grain dealers at Athens.

The current price of wheat per bushel, in the time of Solon, was ten or twelve cents; in the age of Socrates it had risen to thirty, and in that of Demosthenes to fifty or sixty cents.

Ordinary clothing sold extremely low. The exquisite indeed, who affected great splendor, flourished the finest textures, and displayed the richest dyes, who wore Alcibiades boots, and was fragrant with perfumery expensive beyond anything which Parisian luxury ever knew, may have found a fortune requisite to replenish his wardrobe and supply his toilet; yet the plain Athenian citizen, with his simple habits and tastes, was perfectly content and comfortable in his homespun suit, which had not cost him more than two or three dollars.

From the details already given, it is evident that the necessary expenses of living in ancient Athens were quite inconsiderable. Boeckh makes the calculation that a family of four adults could have lived in the time of Socrates for $65 per annum, and in the age of Demosthenes for $80. This low estimate, however, presupposes a degree of economy to which even a bare competency could scarcely be expected to submit. Demosthenes found that for himself, sister and mother $120, exclusive of rent, was not too generous a support. Wealth, of course, indulged in various degrees of luxury. While Athenian frugality might judge eight or ten cents quite adequate to furnish a family of three or four persons with a suitable meal, Macedonian extravagance

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loaded the table of Alexander with all the luxuries which the daily expenditure of $1700 could command.

Another important inquiry relates to the compensation of labor. In the time of Pericles, a common laborer received a drachma, or about seventeen cents, per day for his services; and indeed we read in Athenæus that the philosophers, Menedemus and Asclepiades, in youth, after the studies of the day, each earned in a grain mill at night the comfortable support of two drachmas. These prices show how much better ordinary labor was paid at ancient Athens than it now is in many of the countries of Europe. It was this healthful arrangement which saved Athens from becoming, like modern Naples, the home of vicious mendicants and reckless, starving vagrants.

The genius of the Athenian democracy tended to equalize the compensation of labor in all the departments of human industry. The general received but four-fold more than the private soldier; the architect of the temple of Minerva Polias could aspire to no higher pay than the common laborer engaged in the work; yet rare ability and eminent skill, triumphing over the arbitrary rule of democratic equality, not unfrequently commanded wages commensurate with their high services. The famous Democedes, at a time when money had ten-fold its present value, received as public physician at Crotona a regular salary of upwards of $1000. He afterwards removed to Athens on a salary of $1700, and finally accepted the still higher offer of $2000 from Polycrates of Samos. The passion for the fine arts, so inordinate in the Athenian breast, secured to the great masters in music, dramatic action, and sculpture, the most extravagant rewards. Aristodemus received $1000 for performing in a single drama; and Amœbeus the same sum for a single concert. Even Jenny Lind was scarcely better rewarded by the enthusiastic admiration of the American people, than were the celebrated masters of song by the music-loving Athenians.

The Athenian devotion to learning also secured enormous incomes to eminent instructors in philosophy and eloquence. Protagoras of Abdera, Gorgias and Zeno the Eleatic de-

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manded from each scholar for a full course of instruction the surprising sum of $1700. Plato assures us that some of the great teachers of wisdom lived in a style "splendid to ostentation;" some of them are also said to have amassed immense fortunes; Gorgias erected in the temple of Delphi a statue of himself in solid gold. And, even after teachers had begun to bid for patronage by requiring a smaller honorary, it was a subject of general surprise and derision when Evenus placed his terms of tuition at the paltry sum $170 per pupil. Isocrates the rhetorician, with a school of one hundred pupils, realized $17000 for each full course of lectures. Plato and Aristotle are also known to have found their lectures in the Academy and the Lyceum exceedingly lucrative.

But we pass, in the second place, to examine the treasury department of the Athenian government. By whom was it administered, and by what checks was it guarded?

Athens possessed at all times a distinct and fully organized system of public finance. Few states of antiquity more fully realized the vital importance of this department; few bestowed more care upon it; yet none, perhaps, made more fatal mistakes in its administration.

The people retained in their own hands the sovereign control of the finances; their legislation prescribed the regular course of receipt and disbursement; the council, however, as their responsible agent or sub-committee, was charged with the administration of the department. But acting under this general authority, though often virtually controlling it, stood the treasurer of the public revenue, an officer corresponding in the main to the secretary of the treasury with us, or the minister of finance in most modern states. His position was one of great importance, dignity and trust; it was his duty to have the oversight of all the revenues of the state and to take cognizance of all its expenditures; to keep the people and the council informed on the condition of the treasury, and to recommend to them such measures as his superior wisdom and experience might suggest.

This high office was honored in Athens by two names,

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whose lustre even the foul breath of envy and suspicion has failed to tarnish,— Aristides and Lycurgus. Both were upright; both, incorruptible. The administration of each will live in history to the latest time, as a model of fidelity and integrity in the discharge of high fiscal duties. Both were endowed with rare ability, yet Lycurgus was the superior genius; he is indeed the great financier of antiquity. For a period of twelve years he administered his department with such consummate skill, that he raised the revenues, which before had become quite inconsiderable, to the remarkable sum of $1,200,000. He enriched the city with real and substantial wealth; he built her navies and stored her arsenals; he planted her Lyceum with groves and erected a noble gymnasium within its learned bowers; he furnished her citadel with golden vessels for the solemn festivals and with golden ornaments to deck a hundred virgins for the festive trains. Under his vigorous rule, public spirit once more revived; public enterprises were carried steadily forward; and noble edifices, which had long remained in an unfinished state, at length stood before the admiring beholder in all their completeness and beauty.

In the course of his administration, $19,000,000 are said to have passed through his hands; yet there is no evidence that he ever embezzled a farthing of the public money. Though living in a corrupt age, he shared not its spirit; though defaulters as unprincipled as those of our own day were multiplying around him, the infection was powerless upon him. His periodical reports to the auditing boards were full and satisfactory, and the final detailed account of his entire fiscal administration, which was engraved on stone and exposed to public view, is said to have borne ample testimony alike to his integrity and ability.

But besides the minister of finance, there were numerous treasurers of different grades connected with this department. There were ten treasurers of Athene, who, in the presence of the council, annually took into their keeping the costly possessions of the Goddess. There were also ten treasurers of the other gods, treasurers of the sacred triremes,

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and treasurers, in fine, connected with all the various departments of the state.

But the most interesting feature of this financial system was the strict accountability of all its officers. Indeed, every one who had been entrusted with the least share in administering the government, with the single exception of the judges, was held to a rigid account before the proper boards. Not even the grave council of five hundred, or the venerable court of Areopagus was exempted. An Athenian citizen, after the expiration of his term of office, labored under the heaviest disabilities, until he had honorably passed the prescribed ordeal. He could neither leave the city, make his will, consecrate a votive offering, nor secure any public reward or honor.

On the day of the examination, the loud voice of the herald was heard pealing through the Agora and public squares, through the streets and lanes of the city, inviting any and all to show cause why the account should not be allowed. The registers of the controllers were carefully searched; and the various items of the account separately verified. If the report was found to be in all respects correct, it was of course accepted, after which it was engraved on stone, and exposed to public inspection. Thus with the ancient Athenians to accept a treasurer's report and place it on file, was a somewhat more imposing and formidable ceremony than with us. Not a few of the marble tablets to which these choice records were committed have been preserved, and, though but mutilated fragments from the public archives of this ancient state, they will ever remain an invaluable legacy to the student of the Athenian finance.

Thus ample and judicious were the provisions made by the Athenian constitution to ensure fidelity and honesty in the management of the public funds, yet they proved utterly powerless to check the unhallowed lust for gold. It is sad indeed to contemplate the revolting spectacles of defaulting and embezzlement, which so disgrace our own age and country; yet the ancient Athenians, with all this complicated system of checks and counter-checks, exhibit a degree of cor-

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ruption and fraud unparalleled in the history of modern states. Public trusts were unscrupulously violated; public moneys purloined, and even the sacred treasury of the gods perverted to the unholy uses of self and sense. Even the severe sentence which Polybius passes upon Grecian defaulting, has more of truth than of exaggeration. "When in Greece," says he, "the state entrusts her public servants with a single talent, though she may have ten controllers, the same number of seals and twice as many witnesses, she cannot insure fidelity."

Our next inquiry relates to the adjustment of the revenue to the public expenditure, — a problem in political science, which the united wisdom of the past and the present has even now but imperfectly solved. Aristotle indeed presents clear and comprehensive views of the duties of a national financier; but Athens unfortunately did not always follow the guidance of her best and greatest minds. The populace, like a pampered child, became indolent and restless, and could be appeased only by indulgence and feasting. It availed little, therefore, that the great principles of a sound national policy were recognized by good and loyal statesmen; so long as they were distasteful to the multitude, they could never be made the basis of action.

The salaries of public officers at Athens were excessively low; a grave senator in the time of Pericles, if dependent upon the compensation which he received for his public services, must have supported his dignity on the daily allowance of seventeen cents. But as the state offered every citizen some place in the public service, the draft upon her coffers, for this single item in the national expenditure, cannot have been light.

All legislative power was vested in the Public Assembly. Every citizen was entitled to a seat and a vote in this body, and to a compensation of eight cents for each day of actual attendance. By this unfortunate arrangement, the people were paid for transacting their own business, paid, indeed, for governing themselves. The pittance thus received accelerated the growing indolence of a corrupt age, and, in

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process of time, left the administration of government in the hands of an idle and unprincipled populace.

Prof. Boeckh estimates the average attendance of the public assembly at eight thousand. On the basis of this calculation the annual expense to the state for the fifty regular sessions of the year must have been about $34,000.

The council of Five Hundred, though often called the Senate, was really but a standing committee to prepare the business for the assembly. Its members received each a drachma (17 cents) per day, and, as it was almost daily in session, it must have cost the state some $25,000 per annum. The gross expenditure, therefore, of the Athenian republic or the legislative department, embracing the assembly and the council, was almost $60,000, — a sum quite too large for a state whose entire population, bond and free, would not exceed five hundred thousand. The principle of representative legislation, which in all free governments now so successfully economizes both time and money, was unknown to the ancient Athenian.

But a far heavier item in the public expenditure of this ancient state is found in the cost of maintaining her popular courts. It is well known that the organization of the Athenian judiciary was peculiar. Six thousand citizens were annually drawn by lot, and organized into ten distinct courts, where they discharged the two-fold office of judge and juror. Athens became the court-town for all countries in alliance with her. Her numerous confederates, whether dwelling in the neighboring islands of the Ægean or on the remote coasts of Thrace and the Hellespont, were all required to enter their suits before her courts. Law became the common profession of her citizens; and her streets were thronged with multitudes of half-bred declaimers, pettifoggers, and knaves. The courts of justice annually cost the state $150,000.

The pay of other officers under government must have been in the aggregate quite considerable; but our limits forbid us to attempt an estimate.

Public festivals formed a heavy charge upon the state. Religious festivity enters largely into every picture of Hel-

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lenic life. The Athenian knew no higher joy than to crowd the grand processions of the Great Panathenæa, or to listen to the lofty strains of poetry and music at his favorite Dionysia. His ardent soul would kindle with transports of rapture, if he could but behold the honor of the gods, or the glory of the state, reflected in the pomp and magnificence of public display. Though economical almost to a fault in his private expenditures, his liberality knew no bounds, when country or religion called. Public festivals, accordingly, became a source of unwarrantable extravagance. Yet, as we contemplate them, in their relation to that age of spiritual darkness, we scarcely know whether more to commend or censure. To the enlightened eye of Christian faith, indeed, all this pomp was but blind idolatry; in the light of sound political science, it was a prodigal waste of precious treasure; yet we discern in these religious and social gatherings so much of rational and refined enjoyment, so much that is unselfish and generous, that we are constrained to qualify our sentence of condemnation. No inhuman and revolting rites, such as too generally follow in the train of a false religion, found a place at these joyous festivities. Healthful and invigorating exercises shared the time with those social and intellectual entertainments of which the cultivated Athenians were ever so passionately fond. Gymnastic contests developed that manly form, which, preserved in the Grecian statue, is still the beau ideal of human symmetry; youth and beauty thronged the festive processions, and melodious voices swelled the choral songs.

But with the decline of Athenian greatness and virtue, the public festivals at once lost their pure and elevated tone. Motives of religion and national glory gave place to those of indulgence and pleasure; sacrificial offerings were multiplied to satisfy the craving appetite of the idle multitude. Demosthenes denounces the degeneracy of these times, and even Plutarch is forced to the reluctant confession, that his favorite Athens squandered in pleasure the best revenues of the state, and expended upon her Œdipuses and her Antigones greater treasures than in all her struggles with barbarian or Grecian foes.

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Rewards bestowed upon meritorious citizens formed another item in the public charge. The state delighted in entertaining its great benefactors at its public tables in the Prytaneum, and in honoring them with crowns and statues. The golden garland was several times placed by a grateful people on the noble brow of Demosthenes; the invaluable services of the great and good Aristides were rewarded to his children. Each of the daughters received from the state a dowry of upwards of $500, and the son, though degenerate and unworthy, obtained in the name of his noble sire the generous allowance of fifty acres of land, and seventeen hundred dollars in money with the daily stipend of four-fold the pay of an Athenian senator.

But while the meritorious were deservedly honored and rewarded, the idle and the dissolute were permitted to riot upon the public treasury. Indiscriminate donations in various forms were made to the people; baits thrown to the multitude by unprincipled, designing demagogues. Tickets to the theatre and the concert were gratuitously distributed at the public expense; the contributions of the allies were wasted upon a selfish populace; property was confiscated to appease the noisy rabble; public enterprises were abandoned, that more money might be left for feasting and pleasure; indeed, the profligate Demades, on one occasion publicly promised every Athenian citizen some eight or ten dollars for the celebration of a favorite festival, if they would relinquish their contemplated expedition against Alexander, — an instance of unblushing corruption well nigh without a parallel in history.

But it is a relief to turn to a brighter phase of Athenian civilization, and to contemplate those noble institutions of charity, to which it gave birth. Athenian munificence permitted no citizen to lack the necessaries of life. While the indolent were required by law to seek an honest support by labor, the helpless and the infirm were cared for at the public charge. The aged soldier who had fought for his country was sure of a comfortable home in his loved Athens. The orphan children of those who fell in battle became the

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adopted sons and daughters of the state. At her hands they received their support; by her they were educated, and with her benediction they went forth to the duties of life. Happy lot for the orphan! Many an Athenian youth might envy him, when at the age of eighteen in the great Dionysiac Theatre amidst approving thousands, he received in the name of the state his full suit of armor, and heard the voice of the herald proclaiming aloud his father's glorious deeds, and bidding him, thus panoplied for service, go forth in the light of that bright example.

Athens kept no standing army, yet her military establishment, even in time of peace, involved no trifling expense. The navy numbered some three or four hundred gallies of war, and the cavalry was a thousand strong. Xenophon estimates the annual expense of the latter at $40,000.

The liberality of the ancient Athenians in lavishing their treasures upon great public works, is well nigh proverbial. Amidst all the changing fortunes of the republic, it was their unvarying policy to foster architecture and art as the special handmaids of religion and the state. Through a long line of statesmen — with the illustrious names of Pisistratus, Themistocles, Cimon, Pericles, Conon, and Lycurgus, we behold the public revenues lavished with an unsparing hand upon the imposing edifices of the state and the magnificent temples of religion. Athens became the pride of her own citizens, and the admiration of Greece and the world; her master works of art still remain unrivalled amidst the accumulated labors of all ages and nations. Roman genius bowed before the great Athenian models; modern art can do little more than study, admire, and imitate; even Michael Angelo acknowledged himself a child in the presence of the great Grecian master.

The fortifications of Athens were massive and gigantic. One continuous wall of solid masonry, sixty feet in height, and some twelve or fifteen in thickness, encompassed both the city and its harbors. The dockyards were constructed at an expense of $1,000,000, and the Propylaea, we are told, cost upwards of $2,000,000. What expenditure then could

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have reared the stately temples, and fashioned the exquisite works of art which crowned the Citadel and filled the sacred enclosure, to which the famed Propylaea, with all its massive grandeur, was but a fit and unpretending portal? What untold treasures were requisite to rear the Parthenon, with all its matchless sculpture and rich adorning? Half a million of dollars was barely sufficient to drape the statue of the virgin goddess, which stood within it. What countless sums must have been expended upon the Theseum, the Erechtheum, and upon the temples of the Olympian Zeus, and of Nike! Estimate, too, the cost of the Odeum, the Prytaneum, the Tholus, the Dionysiac Theatre, the Painted Stoa; count up the aqueducts, the fountains, the gymnasia, the hippodromes; call to mind the countless works of art which adorned all the great temples, and even lined the streets and the Agora; in all this you behold an exhibition of enlarged public spirit almost as rare and wonderful as the matchless creations of genius to which it gave birth.

The annual expenditure upon public works must, of course, have varied with the circumstances of the times, and with the condition of the treasury. It was heaviest under the administration of Pericles. That great patron of art probably expended several millions of dollars in beautifying the city.

Prof. Boeckh, in his general estimate, places the regular annual expenses of the state at $400,000. He adds, however, the obvious remark, that the construction of great public works and special extravagance in the celebration of festivals not unfrequently swelled the expenditure far beyond this amount.

Much has been written on the demoralizing extravagance of the Athenian government, and there certainly were many items in the annual appropriations which must have been at best but an inexcusable waste of treasure; yet it must be admitted that $400,000 is not an extravagantly large expenditure for a state of half a million of souls. Perhaps few governments of modern times are more economically administered. The police for the year 1857 cost the city of

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London upwards of $220,000: the budget of Paris recently appropriated for the current year exceeds $14,000,000.

But we pass, finally, to examine the sources of revenue at the command of the Athenian government. The statesmen of ancient Athens had the wisdom to perceive that a revenue raised by indirect taxation would be the most acceptable to the people. To an Athenian it would have been an act of intolerable oppression to impose a direct tax upon the person or the occupation of the citizen; indeed, no direct taxes whatever were levied, except in cases of emergency, and then only upon property, never upon the man himself. Tertullian, in denouncing the direct taxation of the person, did but echo a sentiment which centuries before commanded the general assent of Greece. "As the field," says he, "is of less value when subject to taxation, so are the persons of men more despised when they pay a poll-tax, for this is an indication of captivity." [1]

The ordinary sources of revenue were rents, duties, fines, tributes, and the gratuitous services of citizens.

A very considerable income accrued to the state from the rents of the public lands and the mines. Many of the public buildings are also supposed to have been rented; and, however little it may comport with our ideas of state dignity, it is an undeniable fact that the Athenian republic kept tenements to lease.

A trifling duty of two per cent., levied on all imports and exports, probably yielded the state an income of some $35,000. The tax on slaves netted almost $30,000; and the protection extended to resident aliens, $20,000.

The courts of justice also opened an important source of revenue. Law-suits, in ancient as in modern times, furnished an easy method of sinking private fortunes. Whichever party lost, the lawyer and the state were sure to gain. The regular fees were by no means inconsiderable; and the fines imposed as the punishment of crime, were often extremely heavy. The penalty for accepting a bribe was either death or a fine of four-fold the amount received; any

[1] Quoted by Boeckh.

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woman who was found guilty of the shocking crime of riding to Eleusis in a carriage, was fined $1000; any person who presumed to bring a foreign dancer upon the stage of the Dionysiac Theatre, was required to pay the State $170 for the insult. Demades, however, did not hesitate to exhibit a hundred such dancers, but even he could not escape the heavy forfeit. As the penalty of his arrogant folly, he was compelled to pay into the public treasury the full sum of $17,000. Heavy fines of some thousands of dollars were at times imposed upon statesmen for proposing unconstitutional laws. Aeschines, in his indictment of Ctesiphon, lays the damages at $50,000. In special cases, indeed, still higher pecuniary penalties were imposed; a fine of no less than $100,000 was assessed upon Timotheus in an action for treason.

Confiscation of property was by no means uncommon at Athens. This form of punishment, ever indeed most unwise and perilous, became, in the hands of a corrupt and heartless populace, a powerful weapon of injustice and cruelty. The innocent were accused, that their property might become the public spoil. The treasury profited but little by the ill-gotten gain; by far the greater share fell into the grasping hands of the multitude. Indeed the entire wealth of Diphilus, amounting to some $160,000, was no sooner confiscated than it was distributed among the people.

But no branch of the public revenue was more productive than the tributes of the allies; and none contributed more directly to the corruption of the public morals and to the ruin of the state. The famed confederacy of Delos was at length so perverted from its specific purpose as to be made the means of filling the Athenian treasury. Voluntary contributions soon became forced tributes; and Athens found herself in the time of Pericles in the annual receipt of $600,000 from this source alone. But not content even with this, she not long after doubled the assessment, and actually collected the enormous sum of $1,200,000 from those who had voluntarily associated themselves with her for purposes of mutual defence. We here behold one of those remarka-

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ble paradoxes in human nature which the Athenian character unfortunately too often displays. The very people, we might almost say the very men, who repeatedly put forth the most heroic and self-sacrificing efforts in behalf of the liberties of Greece; who in their dealings alike with friend and foe so often show themselves models of rarest magnanimity, — this very people, now recreant to the plainest obligations of right, become guilty of the revolting crime of oppressing and robbing their own allies.

But any view of the Athenian revenue would be exceedingly incomplete if it should fail to take account of those expensive services which the Athenian constitution required the wealthy to perform in the name of the state. These were nominally gratuities; but, like many gratuities with which governments have since honored the people, they were such as must be paid. In theory these gratuitous services were not burdens, but only expensive honors conferred by the state upon such as were able to accept them, and, indeed, in practice they were not unfrequently eagerly sought. In the Athenian code, to serve the gods and the state was the highest privilege of man. The law prescribed the nature and extent of the service to be rendered; but the wealthy in most cases not only far exceeded these requirements, but actually vied with each other in the richness and magnificence which they displayed in the public services. Whatever may be thought of the wisdom of this prodigal expenditure of private treasure, few will be disposed to criticise such an exhibition of rare public spirit. It must be admitted, however, that the system is open to grave censure. It provided, as Prof. Boeckh remarks, no equal distribution of the public burdens; it enabled the poor actually to oppress the rich, while it also tempted the ambitious to excessive expenditure to secure the favor of the people. Still we have but little sympathy with those who would resolve all their noble sacrifices into mere displays of selfish pride, or costly baits thrown out by ambition to appease the rapacity of a mad populace. While we freely admit that the system was liable to shocking abuse, we cannot but deem it

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illiberal to deny to acts, in themselves so generous, all share of high and noble motive. As well might we explain the liberal charities of our own time as selfish bids for popular applause. The ancient Athenians were indeed far enough from any true comprehension of a Christian philanthropy; yet, in the service of the state and of their ancestral gods, they have furnished an exhibition of enlarged public spirit which may well command the admiration of the world.

Prof. Boeckh thinks that the various sources of revenue exclusive of gratuities, must have yielded annually in the best days of the Athenian republic some $1,800,000. On the basis of this estimate, it will be seen, that the government in time of peace not only supported itself without any direct tax upon its citizens, but often found itself at the close of the year in possession of a large surplus.

The heavy expenses of war were met by special provision. These were two-fold, a property tax assessed on most equitable principles, and extraordinary services from the rich. But into a discussion of these subjects our limits forbid us to enter.

The financial system of ancient Athens is a strange combination of rarest excellence and of puerile imperfection. We admire the liberal public spirit which marks its provisions; we dwell with delight upon its kindly charities, but we are pained at its exhibitions of demoralizing indulgence and of unblushing corruption. The Athenian character itself was largely made up of contradictions and extremes. The ancient Athenian was enthusiastic in his devotion to country; yet he not unfrequently found his patriotism powerless to resist the temptations of gold; he was liberal to a fault in expending his treasures upon the works of the state; yet not for a moment could he be trusted with the public coffers. It is not strange, therefore, that these contradictions re-appear in the state; republican institutions must ever reflect the character of the people.

A careful study of the Athenian polity furnishes the American student with numerous topics of useful reflection. It is at once interesting and instructive to examine the con-

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stitution of the ancient State, to observe the points of similarity and the points of contrast between this and our American republic. It is folly indeed to idolize antiquity; it is equal folly to disregard it. A nearer view of the inner workings of the Athenian commonwealth prepares us the better to appreciate and admire the purer spirit and the truer freedom of our own favored institutions.

ARTICLE IX.

SMITH'S DICTIONARY OF GEOGRAPHY.—SMYRNA.

BY PROF. GEORGE M. LANE, HARVARD UNIVERSITY.

MR. SMITH is an indefatigable writer of books. His last book for 1857 is a pamphlet of some 1380 pages, on Greek and Roman Geography.

The book contains more than the title implies. Besides the geography it aims at a chorographic and topographic description of countries and cities; with historical accounts of their origin, rise and decline, and sketches of the more important buildings of the cities.

The work abounds in the excellencies and defects which may be noticed in the whole series of Mr. Smith. He has done more than any other English scholar toward popularizing the results of continental scholars, and presenting the *material* side of antiquity in a convenient and accessible form. In general the due proportion in the length and prominence of the Articles has been preserved. They are written in neat English, printed in neat type, and illustrated by neat cuts and maps. On the other hand, even a casual

[1] Dictionary of Greek and Roman Geography. Edited by William Smith, LL.D. In two volumes. Boston: Little, Brown and Company. Vol. I. 1854. pp. 1108. Vol. II. 1857. pp. 1383.

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