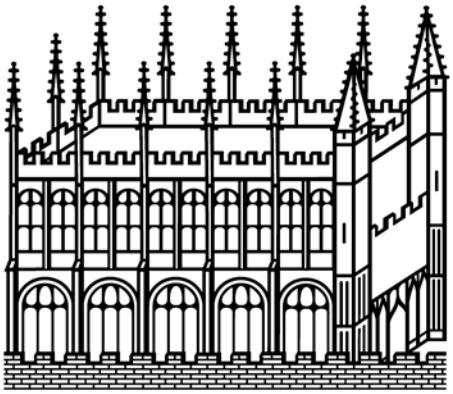

THE BRITISH ACADEMY

ERNST CURTIUS

By

Thomas Hodgkin

Fellow of the Academy

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FELLOW OF THE ACADEMY

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In the vestibule of the Museum at Olympia, just outside the halls which contain the group of Hermes and Dionysus, and the interesting but ruined sculptures which adorned the two great pediments of the temple of Olympian Zeus, is a bust in bronze representing the keen, thoughtful features of Professor Curtius. Rightly is he placed there, as if to guard the treasures of sculpture revealed by five years of excavation undertaken by the German Government at his entreaty and at the bidding of his friend and pupil, the Crown Prince (afterwards Emperor) Frederick.

The life of Curtius, peaceful and unadventurous as it might be considered, was one of striking contrasts and of great results springing from apparently trifling causes. It began in a quaint old German city within hearing of the billows of the Baltic, and it ended, or at least reached its culminating point, in the olive-studded plains of Olympia. It was the accident of the young student being chosen as tutor to the sons of a minister of King Otho, which gave to historical science some of the ablest treatises on Greek topography, to literature a delightful History of Greece, and to archaeology the originator of some of the most important excavations of the nineteenth century.

Lübeck, where Curtius was born, Sept. 2, 1814, still retained down to very recent times some portion of that independence which she had once possessed in much fuller measure as a leading member of the great Hanseatic Confederation. But her freedom had of course suffered grievous limitations during the seven years following the battle of Jena (1806 to 1813), and hard was the part which her *Syndikus*, Karl Georg Curtius, father of the historian, had to play during these difficult years. In fact he had once to submit to actual banishment at the decree of Napoleon. The Syndikus was himself a man of considerable classical culture, with some talent for poetry and of a devout religious character. Others of his sons besides Ernst (who was third in the list) achieved some degree of distinction.

The second son, Theodor, rose to be Senator, and eventually Burgomaster of his native city: and Georg, the fourth son, six years younger than Ernst, was as a philologist only less distinguished than his brother. Curtius passed his schooldays at the Catherineum, the High School of Lübeck, and there formed a romantic friendship with Emanuel Geibel, a lad of highly poetic temperament, whom he was to meet again in much altered circumstances during his residence in Greece.

It may well be supposed that the glorious Past of the great Hanseatic city, coupled with what he heard from his elders, of the perils and degradation through which she had so lately passed, had a powerful influence in turning the mind of the thoughtful and intensely patriotic boy towards the study of History. Nor, fortunately, were incitements to the study of Art altogether wanting. In the picturesque old city a school of artists, the best known of whom was the religious painter Overbeck, was already formed and found a social rallying-point in the hospitable house of the aesthetic Syndikus.

In 1833 Curtius went to the University of Bonn, where he made the acquaintance of the philosopher Brandis, an acquaintance which was destined powerfully to influence his career in life. Here, too, he attended the lectures of Prof. Welcker, whose enthusiasm for the mystical side of the old Hellenic life made a deep impression on the young student. In the autumn of 1834 he migrated to Göttingen, where at that time the reigning influence was that of K. O. Müller, author of those two well-known books, *The Dorians* and *The History of Greek Literature*. Finally he completed his studies (in 1836) by a year at Berlin under August Boeckh, the author of *The Public Economy of Athens*, Müller's own teacher and at that time a kind of patriarch among the students of classical antiquity. This frequent passage from one university to another—it will be noticed that Curtius studied at three in the course of four years—may seem strange to an English scholar, but was entirely in accordance with the best traditions of higher education in Germany, which as we must always remember makes the University, not as with us the College, the student's intellectual home, but which also requires the men who aim at the highest position to study at more than one seat of learning, that they may, if possible, be acquainted with all that the foremost professors have taught in that department of science to which they devote their attention.

Of the three universities, Göttingen seems most to have corresponded to Curtius's ideal of academic life. Bonn was perhaps too

convivial. Berlin oppressed him by the sense of an unsympathizing multitude surrounding him and caring nought for students and their interests. Moreover the Court at that time was narrow and exclusive, and, as he hints, given to ignoble parsimony. At Göttingen he felt himself thoroughly at home, and he was filled with admiration for its foremost teacher, Karl Ottfried Müller.

'It is an unspeakable advantage,' he says, 'to have a long course of daily attendance on Müller's lectures, for as a teacher he is without a rival. The clearness of his explanations, the vivacity and charm of his delivery, the fullness and soundness of his learning, fascinates one every day more and more, and continually gives one fresh enthusiasm for that department of knowledge to which he by his exceptional mental endowments has given an altogether new life. Before him Philology had been burdened with a lot of dull dreary knowledge handed down from generation to generation, an incongruous mass of infinitely unimportant details. Our age, however, was not content to hand down this intellectual property with some trifling additions to future generations. It has begun to shape these scraps of knowledge and detached facts into a living and scientific Whole. It has aimed higher and sunk its wells of criticism deeper: and of all the men to whom Historical Science owes this regeneration there is certainly none who has worked with so good success as Müller.'

This passage well expresses the object which such scholars as Curtius and his contemporaries, not only in Germany but in other countries, set before them and in large measure succeeded in accomplishing. Must it not be admitted that classical scholarship both in England and Germany at the end of the eighteenth century was in danger of becoming a dead, dull and unprofitable exercise of the human intellect? In Germany itself there was developed, during the nineteenth century, a certain divergence between two schools of classical scholarship, both sprung from one common ancestry in the lecture-room of F. A. Wolff. There were the *Sprachphilologen*, who might be said to carry forward the methods of our English Bentley, whose great champion was Gottfried Hermann of Leipzig, and who made the emendation of texts and the minutely critical study of language their chief aims. On the other hand the *Sachphilologen*, who might be considered the intellectual descendants of Scaliger and his French compeers, made the matter rather than the form of the classics the object of their study. Of this school the chief representatives, when Curtius was a young man, were Boeckh, Welcker, and K. O. Müller, and by all of these he was profoundly influenced. Without presuming to decide between the two rival schools or hinting depreciation of minute and accurate scholarship, we may venture to assert that the scholars of the mid-century who interpreted the literatures of Greece and Rome by the light of

Art, Philosophy, Religion, even Politics, breathed into the study of them a new savour of life, gave that study a right to claim a place in the education of the citizen, and—it is hardly too much to say—once more made 'the humanities' human. And among these liberalizers of classical studies we may fairly claim a high place not only for Müller, but for Müller's disciple Curtius.

During his residence at Berlin the young student was more and more turning his attention to the history of Classical Art. 'Berlin,' as he says, 'is a highly favoured spot for an archaeological student, and especially its collection of vases is beyond price.' We have a hint of one or more essays written on classical life as illustrated by such vase-pictures. But he was about to be brought into a closer connexion with Hellas and its history than could be won from any number of hours spent in a museum.

We have seen that, during his residence at Bonn, Curtius had been honoured by the friendship of C. A. Brandis, the renowned historian of Greek philosophy. To this professor a proposal was now made by the Greek Government that he should spend some years at Athens as a sort of literary adviser to the young king Otho and an informal Minister of Education. In accepting the flattering offer Brandis felt the necessity of providing for the education of his own family, and invited young Curtius, whose academic course he had watched with interest, to accompany him to Athens as tutor to his two sons Dietrich and Johann. It is interesting to note that one of these, the present Sir Dietrich Brandis, entered eventually the service of the British Crown, and has fulfilled an honourable career as Inspector-General of Forests to the Indian Government.

The proposal, cordially embraced by Curtius, formed the turning-point in his career. After paying some farewell visits to his friends, he joined the Brandis family at Frankfurt, and from thence on New Year's Day, 1837, they commenced the great migration. A long and solemn business that migration was, of some seven or eight Germans, men, women, and children, travelling across Europe in 'a mighty Post-omnibus,' and taking ten weeks in the journey. The coach, which had three rows of seats, was perhaps something like an old-fashioned diligence, and was fully packed within and without, so top-heavy in fact with luggage that it stuck in awkward fashion in the gateway of the White Lamb, at Augsburg. It was the depth of winter, and in toiling up the snow-covered mountain roads, the horses often seemed as if they would give up the too heavy task. But notwithstanding all the little inconveniences of the journey, it seems to have been throughout a merry and harmonious

party that rumbled through central Europe in the 'mighty Post-omnibus.' Besides his own special pupils there were two little boys who seem to have at once found their way to the young student's heart.

'Little Hans is just six years old. An indescribably charming, fair-haired child, full of poetic fantasies. If anything delights him he sings out his pleasure in simple, touching words, and everything delights him because all is so new and surprising. It must be my sacred duty and joy to cherish this childlike disposition, and yet what can one give to a jolly little fellow like this in comparison with what one learns from him? To shew you what a devout little soul he has, fancy him after a big fire in Bonn writing a letter in good Latin characters "to the dear God," thanking him for having kept their house safe from the burning. The youngest, a little three-year old, is a beautiful boy with very dark eyes and long shadowing eye-lashes. When I look at these lovely children, a fear often comes over me whether with their delicate frames they will stand the long journey and the change of climate.'

Notwithstanding these forebodings all seems to have gone well with the migrating family.

'Our coach,' he says, 'is very comfortable and runs so smoothly that one can easily read in it. In the morning we regularly read a hymn and then a chapter of the Bible. After that I take the boys in hand: they sit with me on the front seat, and I teach them all sorts of things, of course in a very free and easy way, so that at any interesting point of the journey lessons are broken off, and they are always easily exchanged for general conversation.'

The family coach descended at last into Italy: there was a tedious week of quarantine at Verona, then a happy week of sight-seeing at Florence. Rome they decided that they must not visit, and at last by February 18, they reached Ancona, then the only Italian port in communication with Patras. Either they were detained there by contrary winds or they had an unusually long passage down the Adriatic, for it was not till March 4 that they touched at Patras. A sail of a day and a half brought them to Corinth, where they stayed for two or three days, twice ascending Acrocorinth, groaning over the discomforts of the modern city, but delighting in the remains of Grecian sculpture with which it teemed. Putting their multifarious baggage on camels and pack-horses, they then pursued their leisurely way to Athens, which they seem to have reached on the third day after leaving Corinth.

So ended the ten weeks' journey. The whole *trajet* from Frankfurt to Athens could now be easily accomplished in five or at the most in six days. The migration of the family Brandis seems to belong to the same order of events as the departure of Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees, or the descent upon Italy of the waggons

which held the wives and daughters of Alaric and his Goths. Must we not draw the dividing line between Ancient and Modern History somewhere about the year 1840, which saw the general adoption of the railway system by the countries of Europe?

For the next four years (1837 to 1840) Curtius remained in Greece, during the greater part of the time as an inmate of the Brandis family, his relations with whom were always of the most friendly character. Their house was at first in the Acropolis itself, not then cleared of all modern habitations, but afterwards they lived in a house near the foot of Lycabettus. A yearly return to Germany was of course out of the question, and the visitors from the coasts of the Baltic had to bear the fierce heat of a Greek summer as best they might. During the first summer Curtius had a mild attack of fever, but after this he seems to have become thoroughly acclimatized, so that when his German friends came out to visit him, they found him well burnt and browned by the sun of Attica. Not without reason does he sing the praises of Cephissia, that charming summer resort of the Athenians at the foot of Pentelicus, 'full of shaded gardens, where air and water are of the finest, that renowned Attic clime, in which Herodes Atticus passed his fairest days.' But a more frequent place of summer holiday-making was Piraeus and its neighbourhood. Here the sea-breeze from the Saronic Gulf did something to temper the fierce heats of July and August. A practised swimmer, he imparted to his young pupils something of his own proficiency, so that, as he says in one of his letters,

> 'With my boys, now quite at home in the sea, we had a grand archaeological swimming tour in the harbour of Phalerum. There in that noble and lonely region [lonely now no longer] we spent a whole day hunting for traces of the old fortifications.'

The result of Curtius's investigations were given to the world after his return to Germany in a Latin treatise *de Portubus Athenarum*, the chief merit of which was that it definitely fixed the site of the fort of Munychia.

The house of Professor Brandis during the years of his residence in Athens was the centre of a delightful circle of earnest archaeologists. Chief among these were H. N. Ulrichs, Professor of Latin in the University of Athens, Ludwig Ross, Chief Curator of Antiquities in Athens, and the two architects, Schaubert and Hansen, who with Ross were charged with the superintendence of the excavations in the Acropolis. These excavations, during the years with which we are now dealing, seem to have been chiefly connected with the Erechtheum,

then presenting many difficult problems to archaeologists, and also with the area on the north side of the Parthenon, where one metope and three fairly preserved slabs from the frieze were discovered in the last year of Curtius's residence. It may well be imagined that in the late afternoons when his work as tutor was ended and the heat of the day was a little abated his steps generally turned towards the temple-crowned Acropolis. Some facts which have now become the commonplace of the handbooks then presented themselves to him and his fellow workers with all the delightful freshness of a newly-discovered truth. One such fact is the wonderful combination in the Parthenon of simplicity in the general effect with minuteness of attention to details. As he says—

'The more that he who contemplates the building as a whole is struck by its supreme simplicity and the perfect harmony of all its proportions, the more is he who examines it in detail struck by the elaborately artistic and most carefully thought out character of these same proportions.'

He then goes on to describe the now well-known fact of the slight deviation from the perpendicular in each individual column which nevertheless possesses the effect of perfect perpendicularity in the structure as a whole.

It was during Curtius's stay in Athens that a very interesting bas-relief was discovered in Attica, which he thus describes:

'It is of more than life-size, in very flat relief but most carefully wrought. It represents a warrior in profile standing upright with a spear in his hand and helmet with inserted guard (*dessen Bügel eingesetzt war*). The head, and in fact the whole figure, is in the stiff Aeginetan style: a little piece has been knocked off from the pointed beard, and the point of the lance is missing; otherwise the statue is in excellent preservation and shews traces of the most beautiful colouring.'

As the reader has perhaps already conjectured, the writer is describing the well-known Stelè of Aristion.

Happy as were the relations of the Brandis household with one another and with their little circle of German friends, it was not all smooth sailing in their external affairs. They do not seem to have made many friends among the Athenian citizens, who after a long and exhausting war had not yet had time to develop a large literary class. King Otho and his young and clever queen, Amalia, were still fairly popular with their subjects, but the Bavarian *entourage* of the Court was much disliked. Curtius tells his parents that he always had to begin a conversation with the natives by saying 'We are not Bavaresi, and Bavaria is only a small part of Germany'; but even so his reception was not always cordial.

'It is a suspicious symptom that the inclination towards France and the alienation from Germany are so greatly on the increase. The young people cannot be induced to learn German, whereas French is almost a second mother-tongue; and even English is a good deal spoken.'

Of the condition of affairs both in the Greek Church and State Curtius, perhaps slightly biased by the unpopularity of his countrymen, draws a truly depressing picture. The ecclesiastical synod was striving to establish a new hierarchy, telling scandalous lies about Luther and the Reformers, and imprisoning a man who was an earnest educationist and an old soldier of freedom in a monastery, because he had gently hinted that he was not quite sure of his belief in all the dogmas of the Eastern Church. Millions were being wasted in the building of the royal palace while the common people were in uttermost need; and the Greek capitalists were shamelessly embezzling the revenues of the State. Meanwhile the newspapers were continually attacking Brandis, whom they always spoke of as 'the German adventurer.' He persuaded himself and perhaps he persuaded his friends that these attacks passed him by unheeded, but one may be allowed to conjecture that they had something to do with the early close of his Greek career. In August, 1839, after only two years and a half of residence in Greece the Brandis family returned to Germany.

'He has had the great satisfaction,' wrote Curtius, 'almost entirely to complete the organization of the University in concert with the King. God bless those dear ones. The change is a very serious matter, but why trouble about it? In any event Brandis is lucky to have done for ever with the Greek cabinet and to be able to lead again the free life of a man of science. For the children too, the return to their home is a matter of great importance.'

Curtius himself, who had now definitely taken up the study of Greek topography as the main pursuit of his life, remained in Greece for a year and a half after the departure of his friends. Encouraged by letters from his old Göttingen professor, K. O. Müller, he proposed to publish a comprehensive description of Greece, based on the great work of our countryman, Col. Leake, but somewhat condensed and thoroughly revised and corrected in the light of his own personal observation. On the relative merits of English and German explorers Curtius made the following naïve remarks in one of his letters to his parents:

'The provoking part of this kind of studies is that in pursuing them so much depends on external resources. One often sees that important scientific questions would be susceptible of immediate solution if one could afford to visit remote spots, to hire a suitable retinue, to pay a staff of workmen, and so on. Englishmen have as a rule far fewer intellectual qualifications than Germans for seeing and describing foreign countries, but by the power of the purse they have become the founders of Greek topography. However, there still remains

a fine unappropriated portion of the domain of human intelligence which is not to be bought for any quantity of guineas, and so there is left even for us Germans, though we be as poor as church-mice, a little sphere in which we can exhibit the results of our years of study.'

With these objects in view Curtius, who had wisely made himself master of the Greek vernacular idiom and who was evidently not held too rigorously to his tutorial duties by his friendly employer, had already made two or three journeys of some importance. In the very first year of his sojourn in Greece he had the great advantage of making a tour in Peloponnesus with the geographer Karl Ritter, whose helpful influence may be distinctly traced in some passages of Curtius's later work on Peloponnesus. Next year he again travelled in the Morea with Count Baudissin, translator of Shakespeare, and a Mexican architect named Fuente. These journeys were described in extremely voluminous letters to his parents at Lübeck, which no doubt served and were meant to serve as the groundwork for his later published treatises. They are not, however, entirely taken up with archaeological and architectural details. Here, for instance, is a pleasant picture of his visit to Messenian Calamata, which Curtius considered the most charming spot in the whole of Peloponnesus:

'I went at once to the post-office to inquire for a letter which I expected from Frau Brandis. I found a good old greybeard walking up and down in the garden surrounding the house, smoking a long pipe, which he offered to me. "Yes: there was a letter for me, and if I could come back in half an hour he would have found it for me by that time and I should be introduced to his family." I returned and found the mother in the room with her children, a young Alexander and a very lovely daughter named Theano. My letter lay on the table covered by a nosegay. As soon as I had read it and was satisfied that all was well, I looked about me in the well-lighted room full of sweet scents from the surrounding garden. I was greeted as an old and long-expected friend. The mother talked to me of bye-gone happier times, ere Ibrahim Pasha came and laid everything waste. But the children with a joy that touched my heart talked of the happy future of their country, which they saw all in a rosy light illumined by the glory of its ancient heroes. As we sat there in a lovely bower in the garden I had to tell them all about Athens, about its temples and its colonnades, about the Pnyx and about all the glories of Greece that I had seen. How those young faces glowed, as they sat and listened, wanting always something more, and then told me what they had themselves read of their country's history. The black-eyed Theano especially wanted to tell me all the adventures of the old Messenian chief Aristomenes. It was perfectly delightful: but the sun was already climbing above the orange-trees: I knew that my companions were waiting for me, and I had to take leave with a heavy heart. Only those who know how rare is such innocent simplicity among the Greeks, and how delightful it is when you do meet with it, can imagine my rapture in the company of these child-like souls.'

In the course of his Peloponnesian travels Curtius visited Olympia, where French explorers had already made some excavations, but, as

he said, 'there is now little for the traveller to do at Olympia,' and he rode on without presentiment of what that river-traversed plain would one day do for his renown. He was always much attracted by the islands of the Archipelago, whose inhabitants seemed to him to be of a nobler and purer type than those of the mainland and whose churches, as having escaped the destruction wrought by Ibrahim's troops, were of far greater archaeological interest. Thus it came to pass that in September, 1839, he paid a visit to the Cyclades, especially to Paros and Naxos, in company with his old friend Geibel, who had been for some time living at Athens in a similar capacity to that of Curtius himself. Geibel's lot however had fallen to him in far less pleasant places than his friend's, for his employer, the Russian Ambassador, seems to have kept him at a respectful distance and his pupils bravely resisted his attempts to teach them anything. All the more delightful was the holiday in the Cyclades for the worried tutor whose poetic temperament sensibly affected the mind of his companion. The long letters from Naxos written by Curtius to his parents have rather more of poetry and romance and less of mere archaeology than the rest of his correspondence. He was for a time visibly attracted by the atmosphere of mediaeval romance which hangs round some of these little fragments of the great perished Latin Empire in the Levant, and his verses addressed to the Boy of Naxos lamenting the fallen fortunes of a peasant lad descended from the once powerful dukes of that island, have the true ring of romantic poetry. One almost ventures to say that the German student has caught a truer inspiration from 'the Isles of Greece' than the far more famous English poet who peopled them with misanthropic pirate-chiefs, the reflexions of his own moody personality.

In April, 1840, an event happened to which the young student had for some time looked forward with eager anticipation. The great Karl Ottfried Müller arrived, to survey for himself under the guidance of his former pupil the land about which he had been writing for half a lifetime, to copy inscriptions and to excavate temples. He brought with him a young companion, G. A. Schill (afterwards Professor of the History of Art in the University of Berlin), and with him Curtius, who was evidently a little over-awed and sometimes overborne by the strong will of his much revered teacher, at once formed a cordial friendship. Müller plunged immediately with eager zeal into all the burning questions of Athenian archaeology, spent long days on the Acropolis, watching the excavations then proceeding on the north side of the Parthenon and with untired

energy discussing with the students who gathered round him point after point of the antiquities of Athens. As the year wore on and the days grew hotter, young Curtius ventured to hint that Müller was working too hard, that he should at least allow himself the noon-tide repose which all dwellers in the lands of the South find necessary for health. 'No! no siesta for me,' he seems to have said. 'My brain is as strong as iron: I need not cover my head for fear of sun-stroke. And all this spring the weather has been cold and damp. Your sun of Attica is not half so terrible as he is described.' So the party set forth from Athens early in May, and for six weeks travelled backwards and forwards across Peloponnesus, of which they sought to explore every corner. The journey at that time of year would be considered a hard one even now with all the improvements—such as they are—which sixty years have brought to benefit the Grecian traveller: and at that time to spend long hot days riding over rugged mountain-passes and resting or trying to rest at night in vermin-haunted khans was felt to be rough work even by the well-seasoned Curtius, and was evidently most unwise for the sedentary Göttingen professor.

For ten days the party rested in Athens: then in the beginning of July they started under a burning sun for Delphi, a place which on account of its connexion with the Dorians, had special attractions for the author of the history of that people. Here for some days they worked, digging, measuring, copying inscriptions of which they were reaping an abundant harvest. Soon, however, several of the party showed symptoms of fever, probably contracted in traversing the marshy region of Lake Copais; and Müller himself, who had lain for hours in a cramped and uncomfortable position copying an important inscription, displayed such evident signs of serious indisposition that the party decided on an immediate return to Athens, and sent word for an Athenian doctor to meet them at the frontier of Attica. Sometimes Müller's strength a little revived, and then again for a whole day he had to be supported on his horse by a friend on either side of him, and at night he was sometimes delirious, declaring that he saw an inscription and must go forth to copy it. Eventually the party reached Athens, but the fever was strong upon him and he was unconscious when they arrived. He died on August 1, in the forty-third year of his age. A monument has been erected to him on the rocky hill of Colonus, where it is now joined by another monument erected to the French scholar Lenormant, who, like him, died at Athens in the midst of his archaeological labours. Excellent as the work was which Müller had done for

classical literature he must be said to have perished in his prime, and might have had years of good work before him if he had shown ordinary prudence in his journey to Greece. There was, however, as his contemporaries remarked, a sort of poetic fitness in the place and manner of his death, seeing that it was in the high mountain sanctuary of his own beloved Dorians that he fell smitten by the rays of the Far-darting Apollo.

With Müller's death all motives for further prolonging Curtius's stay in Greece disappeared. He left Athens in December, 1840, and after a tedious quarantine at Ancona, a residence of a couple of months in Rome, where he had a touch of Roman fever ('the shiver which ran through me in the galleries of the Vatican was not a thrill of admiration for the glories of art, but the first touch of the fever-god'), and then a short stay at Venice and a very leisurely northward journey, he returned at last at the end of May to his home at Lübeck, from which he had been absent four years and a half. Greatly as he had gained in thought and culture by these years of travel, it seemed at first as if he had injured his worldly prospects by his acceptance of the invitation of Brandis. He had not even finished his university course when he returned, an undergraduate of twenty-seven, to Germany. That however was soon set right: for on December 22, 1841, he took his doctor's degree at the University of Halle with distinguished success, his Doctoral thesis being the before-mentioned treatise *de Portubus Athenarum*. That done however, no door to honourable or profitable employment seemed to open before him. He must perforce accept a situation as teacher in the High School (Gymnasium) of Joachimsthal in Berlin under the headship of Professor Meineke. The drudgery of a schoolmaster's life, however, was not to his taste, though he ever after considered that his year of office at Joachimsthal had been of use to him as a lecturer, since the absolute necessity of getting and keeping the attention of a class of restless boys had forced him to adopt a style different from that soporific presentation of the contents of a note-book which too often characterized the lectures of an eminent professor.

In May, 1843, he settled down as a *Privat-Docent* in the University of Berlin, fully aware of the long years of weary waiting which often fall to the lot of the *Privat-Docent* ere he can attain to the ease and comfort of a Professor's chair, but also feeling that in his vivid and pictorial conceptions of Greek history and Greek art he had a treasure not possessed by all, perhaps not by any of his competitors. He felt sure that his opportunity would one day come, and mean-

while as he said, 'What an inexpressible charm there is in forming a circle for oneself, in shaping out one's own sphere of activity!'

The opportunity came early in 1844, and it came in connexion with a movement at which Curtius himself had once been inclined to smile. This was the *Lecture-Union* founded by the indefatigable historical student Friedrich von Raumer. This organization, somewhat resembling our own University Extension Lectures, aimed at popularizing the study of science, both physical and moral, and inducing the learned men who abounded in Berlin, the high Brahminical caste of Professors and Private Tutors, to impart to the ordinary citizens of Berlin, to the men and women who had no pretensions to special culture or deep learning, as much as they could communicate of the intellectual stores resulting from their own labour. At this descent from the high places of academic exclusiveness some of the Professor's colleagues shrugged the shoulder of scorn. Savigny said that it seemed to him that the lectures would be 'an oral Penny-Magazine' (a sneer perhaps fully intelligible only by those whose childhood was passed in the thirties and early forties of last century); but in spite of such sneers the movement went forward, and the lectures delivered in the great hall of the Singing-School of Berlin, and dealing with a wide variety of subjects, from the Mammalia of South Africa to the Potentialities of the Philosopher Schelling, did, whether fully comprehended or not, lay hold of the great unacademic public and became the common talk of Berlin.

Curtius was invited to be one of the lecturers, and chose for his subject the Acropolis of Athens. He wrote to his brother:

'Yesterday Encke lectured on the Universe: a wonderful lecture;—all pure gold. A week ago Raumer gave a discourse on the Maid of Orleans, extremely interesting for any one to whom the recently discovered notes of the trial were unknown. Next Saturday, at 10 minutes past 5, unhappy I shall be standing on the platform, opposite the Royal Family of Prussia, in a brilliant assemblage of 950 persons. My heart will thump a bit, but let us hope that all will go well.'

All did go magnificently well. We hear from an enthusiastic fellow-citizen of Curtius how, no doubt on account of the presence of Royalty, all the rank and fashion of Berlin crowded into the Singing-School, how the slight finely-featured man stood apparently unmoved before the brilliant throng, 'his usual wild disorder of hair now combed into exceptional neatness, and his neckcloth and gloves of dazzling whiteness.' At a sign from the Royal box the lecturer began. His enthusiasm, his deep interest in the subject, carried all before him. The superfine aristocracy of Berlin forgot to chatter

and all listened with breathless attention as the lecturer, breaking away from the fetters of his manuscript, in a gush of extemporaneous oratory described the glories of the city on the hill, the Erechtheum, the Parthenon, the Statue of Minerva, and finally drew before his enraptured audience a picture of the great Panathenaic procession winding up the height and moving into the Cella of the Virgin's Temple.

The lecture closed amid enthusiastic plaudits. Old generals came forward to grasp the young lecturer's hand: great ladies stepped up to the platform and begged him to print his discourse. Most important fact of all, the Princess Augusta, wife of the heir to the throne, and grand-daughter of Goethe's Grand-duke of Weimar, beckoned to Professor Lachmann and asked for all the particulars that he could give her as to the character and past career of 'this most interesting young man.'

All this description comes from the pen of his friend. Curtius himself modestly says:

> 'The success of my lecture has surpassed my expectation. I have set all Berlin on fire for the Acropolis, and I am only blamed for one thing, that in my final reverence I did not bow deeply enough towards the Royal box. People thought they saw in this the stiff-necked republican of Lübeck.'

The intercourse with the Court for which the way was opened by this lecture and the introduction to Princess Augusta which followed it, led in a few months to Curtius's appointment as tutor to the young prince Frederick William (afterwards Emperor Frederick III). The duties of this important post occupied him for the next six years of his life (August, 1844, to March, 1850) and left him but little time for literary work. They were however years full of interest, and the influence exerted by the pure and noble character of the tutor on the still impressionable mind of his pupil was without doubt fraught with blessing for Germany, and had the reign of the Emperor Frederick III not been prematurely cut short by disease, might have changed for the better the future of all Europe. When the young prince first made the acquaintance of his tutor, he seems to have been, though amiable and healthy-natured, somewhat lacking in independence of character and too listless in the acquisition of knowledge. Curtius succeeded in firing him with some of his own enthusiasm for Greece, for history, for all that is beautiful in art and in human life. At the same time, knowing what high destinies awaited his pupil, he never aimed at making him a mere student or a mere dilettante. He kept ever before him the necessity of striving after a high ideal of courage, loyalty, and truth: and

in all these things he appealed to that sanction which religion gives and by which his own life was consistently governed. An anecdote which Curtius himself related to a friend of my own, but which has not, it is believed, found its way into any of the memoirs, may be quoted to illustrate this relation between teacher and pupil. Years after the daily intercourse between them had ceased, when the Crown Prince had reached middle life, he was on a visit to a foreign Court when circumstances occurred which rendered it necessary for him either to make a protest—a most difficult and painful protest—on behalf of decency and morality, or to seem himself indifferent to their claims. He made his protest modestly but firmly, and it succeeded. The letter describing the event reached Berlin at a time when Curtius happened to be in the Royal presence. As he narrated the occurrence 'Da legte Seine Majestät die Hand auf meine Schulter und sagte: "*Das* hat mein Sohn von Ihnen, Curtius!"'

The years of Curtius's engagement as tutor were not easy ones for the family of his pupil. In March, 1848, the revolution broke out at Berlin; the troops fired on the people; Frederick William IV, wavering between divine right and popular sovereignty, humbled himself in apologies to the citizens of Berlin; his brother the Prince of Prussia, afterwards the adored Emperor William, being suspected of a leaning towards absolutism, had to bow for a while to the storm, and take refuge at the house of the German Ambassador in London. Over the façade of his palace in Berlin appeared the ominous words 'National Property.' His wife, his son and their diminished household, including Curtius, spent some months in complete retirement in the country. In June, however, the tide began to turn. The Prince of Prussia came back with these memorable words on his lips, 'It is impossible for men to be freer than they are in England, but *there* the highest respect for the law reigns, and so must it be with us, and all must join together to work for this lawful freedom.' In 1849 the revolutionary waves were still heaving; but in March, 1850, when Curtius took leave of his pupil at the University of Bonn, the cause of monarchy was generally triumphant throughout Europe, and Germany had settled down again nearly on the old lines. The effect of all these disturbances on Curtius's own mind was, as he says, to make him a more decided Royalist than ever. An English reader of his letters will perhaps think that he looks at matters too exclusively from the point of view of his royal patrons, and will wish that there were a more generous recognition of the real value of the popular claims, disfigured and caricatured as they were by the excesses of

the Berlin mob; but it cannot be doubted that his hearty sympathy with the parents of his pupil in those dark days of banishment and distress, greatly strengthened the tie which bound them to one another.

Returning to Berlin, Curtius resumed the ordinary career of a *Privat-Docent* and *Professor Extraordinarius*. He was now able to increase in a satisfactory manner his literary output. In the years 1851 and 1852 appeared the two volumes of his *Peloponnesus*, in some respects his most important contribution to the study of the life of ancient Greece. He was working also during these and following years at the editing of the last volume of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum*, a heavy and somewhat uncongenial task, which had however the result of procuring for him admission to the well-guarded circle of the Berlin Academy of Sciences.

The Professor's popular lectures on Ancient Greece were now a sort of recognized yearly festival in Berlin. None attracted more attention than one which he delivered in January, 1852, on Olympia, strongly urging the resumption of excavations on that important site which had been practically abandoned for two generations. This lecture was received with almost as much enthusiasm as that on the Acropolis. King Frederick William IV was one of the audience, and on leaving the hall said to his friend and chief scientific adviser Humboldt, 'Now I must go round with the begging-box, and collect money for the excavations.' This enthusiasm, however, like many others of the kind-hearted but visionary sovereign, soon died away. There was no energy now for adventurous schemes of any kind in Prussia, which, hopeless and spiritless, was being dragged along in the wake of Russia through the rough seas of the Crimean war. Then, ere long, came the king's mental malady and the regency of his brother. During these years, from 1853 to 1861, Prussia was in 'the doldrums,' and had neither money nor enthusiasm to spare for scientific research.

During this period, however, Curtius began to experience in a new capacity the joys and sorrows of family life. He married in March, 1850, Augusta Bessel, widow of his friend Bessel the publisher. She died after a married life of little more than a year, leaving him with one infant son. In 1853 he married again, his second wife being his sister-in-law Clara Reichhelm, by whom he had a daughter, who married the son of the great Egyptologist, Lepsius. In January, 1856, news came to Berlin of the death of Karl Friedrich Hermann [1]. His chair at the University of Göttingen

[1] Not to be confused with the older and more renowned Gottfried Hermann of Leipzig, who had died eight years before at the age of seventy-six.

was almost immediately offered to Curtius with a salary near six times as large as the meagre stipend which had been paid him in Berlin. In addition to this there was the great attraction of succeeding to a post which had been held by Heyne, by his own honoured teacher and friend K. O. Müller, and lastly by K. F. Hermann. The offer was gladly accepted, and the next twelve years of Curtius's life (1856–68) were spent at the *Georgia-Augusta* University of Göttingen. These years were not the least happy, nor the least fruitful period of his life. There was at that time a group of eminent men such as Lotze, Ewald, Wieseler, Waitz, and Sauppe among the Professors at Göttingen, and for them, but also most emphatically for the younger teachers and for the students at the University, Curtius's table, presided over by his wife, a lady of singular social charm, was a favourite rallying point.

The chief literary fruit of the Göttingen period was the *History of Greece*, the work by which the author is best known to the general public. In 1852 the great bookselling firm of Weidmann, who were publishing Mommsen's *History of Rome*, approached the author of *Peloponnesus* with a proposal that he should undertake a similar work on Greek history. He did not refuse, but it was not till 1855 that he was fairly launched upon the voyage, which afterwards the serene academic air of Göttingen made so prosperous. The *Geschichte Griechenlands* was published in three volumes, which appeared at intervals from 1857 to 1867. Obtaining at once a large circle of readers, the book has since gone through five or more editions, and has been translated into various languages. It is satisfactory to remember that our own country was the first to extend to it this hospitable greeting. The first volume of this excellent translation by our colleague, Professor A. W. Ward, appeared in 1870, some years before the Italian or the French reproduction of the *Geschichte Griechenlands*.

The *History of Greece* had, like Macaulay's *History of England*, to pay the penalty of its wide popularity by undergoing some severe criticisms at the hands of the experts in philology. The author's letters show that he was not altogether insensible to the criticisms of his brother professors.

'While some,' he said, 'clasp my hand and thank me for the pleasure which I have given them, others are critical and shrug their shoulders. I am beginning happily to grow thick-skinned about this. The great point for me is that the book *goes*; but I must also say that I do not think actual errors have been pointed out on a single page; and if, as many of my friends tell me, they cannot on this or that point accept my views, there is always the possibility that what seems strange to them at first—I allude especially to my representation of

the influence of Delphi—may gradually win its way, and that they may come to see it as I do. Anyhow, I will with God's help push on vigorously, and do my day's work to the best of my power' (p. 524).

Again, later on in life he says:

'I am deeply grateful for the success of my History, which consoles me for the fact that the professed *savants* turn up their noses at it and pass it by with scorn. For the good German *Gelehrte* hints his distrust if a book is readable, and if he does not see the drops of sweat on the author's brow. I am very conscious in myself that I have spared no pains in writing it, but I have always thought it a worthy aim to keep my labour in the background. The result is a work which people of real culture can read from beginning to end without weariness. This ever-recurring chasm between "the learned" and "the laity" is a bad bit of barbarism' (p. 661).

The present writer does not venture to pronounce an opinion as to the abiding merits of Curtius's History. Any one can feel its charm, can perceive in some measure the skill with which the author, who was before all things poet, has reproduced the impressions which the land, the art, the religion of the Greeks have made upon his poet-soul. As Prof. Bury has said, 'The new note which Ernst Curtius introduced into the study of Greek History is that which might be described as *geographical vividness*.' None of the previous historians of Greece had visited the country: he had, and its mountains and plains, its deep gulfs and long winding shores were ever before his eyes while he wrote. So, too, with its statues and its temples. He was fascinated by the beautiful forms in which Greek artists embodied their conceptions of glorified humanity, and his own deeply religious nature longed to find out the points of contact between his and their thoughts concerning the Invisible.

On the other hand it seems to be admitted that Curtius is not strong in purely philological work, and that his lack of practical experience of political life prevents him from having a firm grasp of the principles of constitutional development in the states of antiquity. Here a tempting contrast suggests itself with the work of the man whom he calls 'the dry banker Grote,' but I must not allow myself the luxury of such a digression.

Since the publication of the first edition of Curtius's book all our thoughts concerning the early history of Greece have been profoundly modified by the discoveries of Schliemann and his followers. It would be unreasonable to expect that the author's pictures of events in prehistoric Tiryns and Mycenae should correspond with that which we now know concerning life in those centres of a pre-Homeric civilization, but on the whole it will probably be

agreed that the general soundness of Curtius's method is shown by the fact that he suffers less than some of his competitors by these additions to our knowledge. In particular he seems to have discerned with much sagacity the important part played by the rulers of Crete in the earliest dawn-age of Greek civilization[1]. The way too in which his glance is ever turned towards the East, the stress which he lays on Assyria, Egypt, and Phoenicia as factors in the development of the life of Hellas, are things common to Curtius with our newest school of investigators.

The twelve years during which Curtius was peacefully lecturing at Göttingen were fateful years for Germany. Frederick William IV died: his brother succeeded him: at Bismarck's urging he defied his Parliament and remodelled the Prussian army at his will: the Schleswig-Holstein question awoke from its uneasy slumber: Austria and Prussia in alliance crushed Denmark: they quarrelled, as Bismarck had probably intended that they should quarrel, over the division of the spoil: in 1866 the so-called Six Weeks' war broke out, Austria with her allies Saxony, Hanover and Bavaria was defeated: Hanover, Cassel, and many fair cities of North Germany were incorporated in the Prussian monarchy. During these later events the position of Curtius was a painful one. Himself the salaried servant of the House of Hanover, he nevertheless continued 'true Prussian' at heart, and kept up a correspondence of cordial friendship with his former pupil, now Crown Prince of Prussia. One of the most interesting and certainly the most beautiful of the many letters from Frederick William which are published in the life of Curtius is that in which the Crown Prince describes his conflict of emotions between the loss of a darling child, the little prince Sigismund, and the necessity of going forth straight from the little grave to fight and overcome at Königgratz. From the uncomfortable position in which he found himself at Göttingen after the annexation of Hanover by Prussia, Curtius was soon delivered by an invitation to return to the University of Berlin. In May, 1867, Gerhard, the founder of the Archaeological Institute, the Professor of Archaeology in the University and the Director of the Museum, died. The Professorship, and a prominent place in the Museum, which eventually was exchanged for the actual directorship, were offered to Curtius and gladly accepted by him. He rightly attached great importance to his official connexion with

[1] Whereas Grote says (I. 19) 'That the Cretans were ever united under one government or ever exercised maritime dominion over the Aegean, this is a fact which we are not able either to affirm or to deny.'

the Museum and regarded himself as a link between that Institution and the University. In truth he had now found the most fitting sphere for his genius. He was always more interested in archaeology than in philology, in the excavation or description of temples than in the discussion of texts: and in the Museum, surrounded by his beloved statues and models and maps of buried cities, he happily passed the remainder of his days.

One advantage of his new position was that it brought Curtius once more into direct official connexion with his old pupil the Crown Prince, who was the recognized 'Protector' of the Museum. Of this connexion and of his undiminished influence with the heir to the crown he made a noble use, not for any private ambitions of his own but in order to attain two public objects both of which were very near to his heart, (1) the foundation of a German Institute for the study of Archaeology at Athens, and (2) the excavation of Olympia. The first, though very important, was the easier work of the two. He jokingly says in a letter written April 15, 1872, 'The modern mania for founding new institutions has so infected me that I am devoting all my energies to a scheme for establishing an Archaeological Institute in Athens,' and in March, 1873, he reports the cordial acceptance of his scheme. The example of Germany in thus providing for the education of her young archaeologists in the very home of the noblest art that the world has ever seen, has since been followed, as every one knows, by England, by the United States, and by Austria, and the happiest results for archaeological science have followed from their friendly rivalry[1].

To enlist the sympathies of the Court and the nation on behalf of the scheme for the excavation of Olympia was a harder matter. Mindful of the heavy losses which their country had sustained in past times by the removal of its artistic treasures, the Greek Government had come to a firm resolution not to allow any excavations which were undertaken with a view to the exportation of the objects thus discovered. This seemed to close the door against Olympia's exploration. If the Museum at Berlin might have hoped to be enriched by the work, as it was being enriched in an extraordinary manner by the wonderful discoveries at Pergamum, whose trophies the Turkish Government allowed the Germans to carry away with them, then no doubt the money would have been freely forthcoming: but an excavation for purely scientific purposes, an excavation which would not enrich the Berlin collection by a single

[1] The foundation of the French school of Archaeology at Athens preceded by several years that of the German Institute.

statue—that was a very altruistic scheme to propose to the countrymen of Bismarck. However, such was the project which Curtius ventured to bring before the Prussian Government. On April 4, 1870, he writes,

'The affair of Olympia has pursued its adventurous way through all the Ministries to the king himself, and soon it will be decided whether an undertaking of so idealist a character as the opening out of the site of a temple without any ulterior objects of a selfish kind can be carried through or not. I hope it is now a question of time, and only of a few months' time.'

The project however required a longer time for its acceptance than its sanguine author had allowed. Within four months after the date of the above letter the German cannon were thundering on the French frontier, and William of Prussia, soon to become Emperor of Germany, had other things to think about than the exploration of Greek temples. However, when peace came Curtius renewed his application: possibly the French *milliards* received by the conquerors made consent more easy, and though the affair took some time and Bismarck never smiled upon the plan, the cordial support of the Crown Prince at length ensured the triumph of his friend. At Easter, 1874, we find Curtius at Athens negotiating with the Greek Prime Minister, Delyannis, for leave to begin excavations at Olympia on condition that nothing discovered should be removed out of the country, but that all should be deposited either at Athens or in a Museum to be formed at Olympia itself. For this object the German Reichstag voted a first credit of £8,000 —they eventually spent £40,000—but strange to say the hesitation to close the bargain came not from Germany but from Greece. As Prof. Diehl has said:

'The Archaeological Society of Athens protested: the Chamber and public opinion were alike distrustful. Nobody would believe that the enterprise, pursued solely in the interests of science, would not add a morsel of marble to the collections at Berlin: as late as 1876, a year after the beginning of the excavation, a highly placed Greek personage discreetly congratulated a German *savant* on the extraordinary skill with which his countrymen were smuggling out of Greece the marbles of Olympia.'

I need hardly say that such suspicions were altogether unfounded. The lovely Hermes of Praxiteles, the interesting archaic groups of sculpture from the pediments of the temple of Olympian Zeus, a charming head of Aphrodite in Parian marble, these and all the other statues found in the course of the excavations (except such duplicates as by the terms of the agreement the explorers had the right to retain) are in the Museum at Olympia, which is guarded by the bust of its spiritual founder; the bronzes are in the Museum

at Athens: the German Empire has only a very scanty material to show for that large expenditure of money, nothing but the glory of having recovered for the world of science the exact proportions of the renowned temple of Zeus, the workshop in which Phidias wrought at his glorious statue of the Father of gods and men, the treasuries of the various Greek states, the pedestals which once bore the statues of Zeus erected out of fines paid by competitors who had fought unfairly, the lines of the great Stadium, scene of so many victories, and of so many heart-breaking defeats. All these and countless other details which enable us to reconstruct in imagination the *Panegyris* which was the one cherished focus of all Hellenic life, the persistent importunity of Curtius, the loyalty of his pupil and friend, and the wise liberality of the first generation of the statesmen of the German Empire have recovered for the world. Surely they have done a noble work, though the Berlin Museum may have little to show for their outlay.

Nor does this statement sum up the debt which classical Archaeology owes to Ernst Curtius and his royal friends. Inspired by their example, the French Republic concluded with the Greek Government a similar self-denying convention, giving them power to excavate at their own costs that other site which vied with Olympia in sanctity and renown, the temple of Apollo at Delphi. The French Chamber voted for the purpose a credit of £20,000, and no one who has seen the extensive operations carried on by the Director, M. Homolle, under the shadow of Parnassus, will be surprised to hear that that credit has been largely exceeded. Two years ago, the excavated site, the museum, and all its contents, rivalling those of Olympia in interest, were handed over by the French Minister of Education to the Greek Government.

In this noble form of international competition our own country has officially taken no share. Much has been done at their own expense by private individuals, especially in connexion with the excavations in Crete, but Great Britain as a state has, I fear, done little or nothing towards unveiling the hidden mysteries of Hellas.

The German excavations at Olympia occupied five years, from 1875 to 1880. The work was a very heavy one owing to the incursion of the river Kladeus, which in the course of centuries has covered the sacred site with layers of sand twelve to fifteen feet deep. On the other hand, as Curtius remarked in one of his letters, this was not entirely to be regretted, since the kindly violence of the stream had covered the treasures of art from the covetous eyes of the peasants, who would otherwise have burnt all the marble

into lime. Though now advanced in years he spared himself no hardship or fatigue in the service of his favourite science. He had already made one journey to Athens, in order to inspect the excavations on the Acropolis, and another to Asia Minor to ascertain what Schliemann was doing at Troy, and Wood at Ephesus, and to advise Conze about the German Government's operations at Pergamum. He now made three successive journeys to Olympia, to encourage the workers by his presence, and to examine the monuments which they had uncovered. The results, though less striking than those obtained by the wealthy and enthusiastic Schliemann, abundantly rewarded him for his years of effort over this enterprise. As he said, in reviewing the work near its close, 'My young helpers have all fully performed their duty, and we can with justifiable pride view that which has been accomplished. All intelligent observers the world over, have recognized it as a work that does honour to the German people, and lets in new light on all sorts of questions. I myself in my daily contact with the antiquities of Olympia have learned much and gained many fresh ideas. In the silence of my own heart I am deeply thankful for the success of this work, and know that a rich blessing rests upon it which will make itself yet more manifest in years to come.'

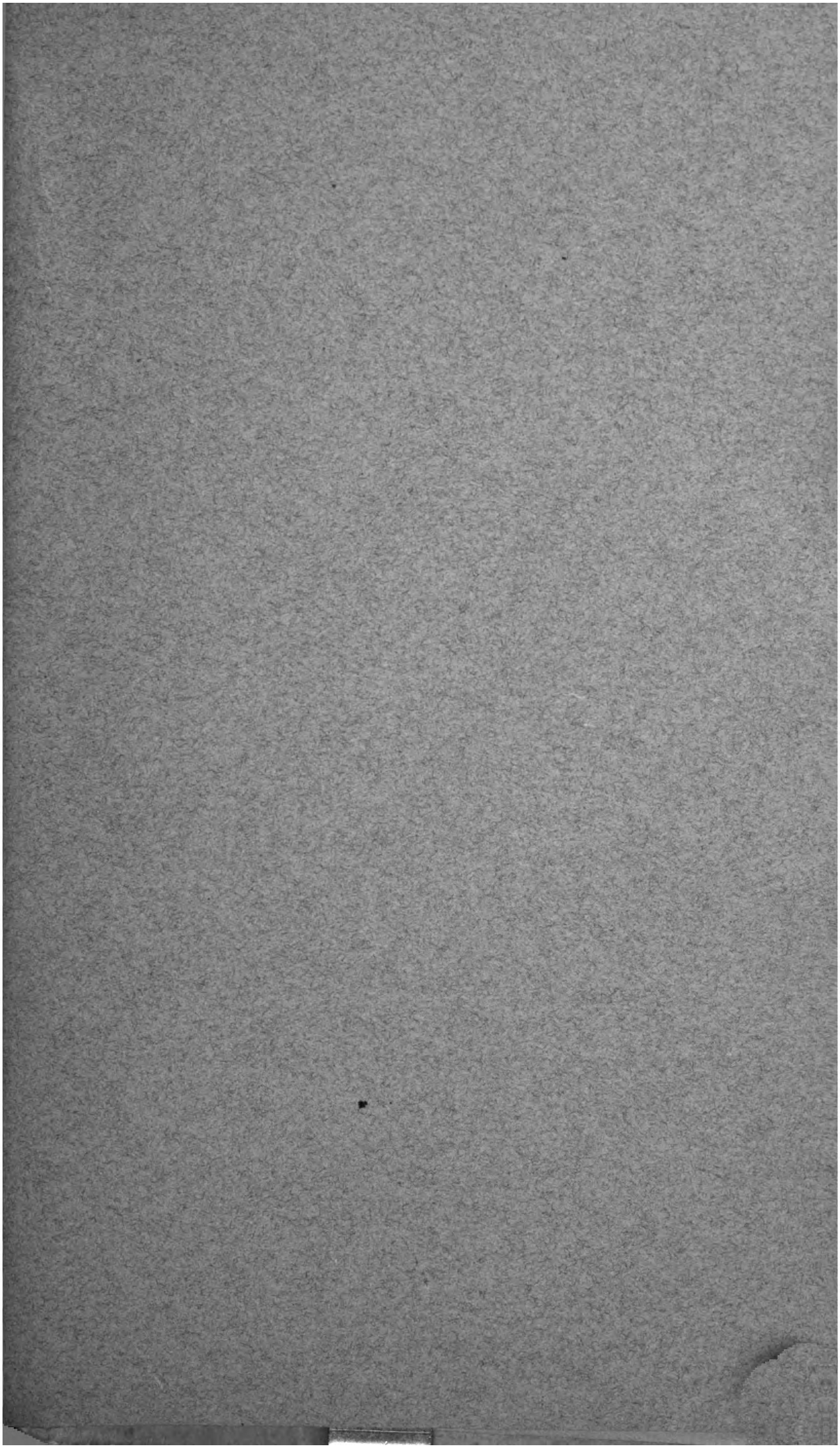
When the excavations of Olympia were ended, the *Hauptwerk* of Curtius, the main interest of his life, had come to a close, except—and it is a large exception—for the labour still required in order to bring the results of the excavations in an adequate manner before the world. At this, and at his lectures at the University, and his demonstrations in the Museum, he still toiled bravely on into the ninth decade of his life. Death was busy in the ranks of his friends. In 1888 (the *Drei-Kaiser-Jahr*, as the Germans call it) he lost both his old patron, the Emperor William, and his dearly loved pupil the Emperor Frederick. Two years before this his younger brother Georg, Professor of Philology at Leipzig, his dearest friend and most constant correspondent, had preceded him to the tomb. About the same time he lost through death the companionship of his colleague and kinsman Lepsius, the Egyptologist, and of his boyhood's friend the poet Geibel. Though he still at eighty retained much of the freshness and even of the bodily activity of youth, he had warnings that the day of work was drawing to a close. He had to undergo two operations for cataract, and was forced to spare his eyes by not studying except in daylight. Two severe accidents, the result of collisions in the streets of Berlin, probably gave a shock to his system from which it never wholly recovered. In December,

1895, he was attacked by renal disease, and after six months of pain and weariness patiently endured, he died on July 11, 1896.

The object of this address has been to describe only the archaeological side of Ernst Curtius's career. I must therefore not attempt to bring before you the ethical aspects of a singularly pure and noble life, his ardent patriotism, his loyalty to his friends, his beautiful family life, the strong and simple faith in God, which was his ruling principle from boyhood to old age.

Two great nations, Germany and Great Britain, have for some years past been perseveringly showing to one another the least attractive side of their respective characters. Yet the generation of idealists like Ernst Curtius is not extinct in either nation, and I venture to say that to them, to the idealists in the widest sense of the word, not to the hard egotistic materialists, belongs the future of our race. These are the men, engaged as a Frenchman would say in the pursuit of 'le vrai, le beau et le bien,' who help us to understand what is noblest in our own character and in the character of the nations round us.

Perhaps it may not be amiss to remind ourselves of the existence of such an Idealist German as Ernst Curtius, whom certainly no man could accuse of that arrogant egotism which it is the fashion to attribute to his countrymen.



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