

When war was made the subject of art by the nameless sculptors of Egypt and Western Asia, it was dealt with in an entirely illustrative or narrative spirit to hand down to posterity the fame of the despot. This conception was altogether alien to the Greek spirit. "War memorials" abound in Greek sculpture, but classic sculpture before the end of the 4th century, B.C., does not include a single instance of illustration, and even the so-called Sarcophagus of Alexander the Great (which probably held the remains of Abdalonus, the last King of Sidon), now in Constantinople, with its relief of a battle with the Persians, cannot be called illustrative in the same sense as the Egyptian and Assyrian reliefs. When the Greek sculptor wanted to commemorate the victorious wars of his race, he used the imagery of mythology or mythical history. The Trojan war, the struggle between Greeks and Amazons, or between Centaurs and Lapithæ, had to stand as symbols for the wars between Hellas and Persia. Thus the pediments of the Aphaia Temple on the island of Aegina which had played so important a part in the Persian wars were decorated with figures of Greeks and Trojans fighting. They date from about 475, B.C., and are now in the Munich Glyptothek. A similar significance is probably attached to the Centaurs and Lapithæ on the western pediment of the temple of Zeus at Olympia, and to the metopes of the Parthenon, which deal with the same subject. It certainly underlies the frequent representations of the struggle between Amazons and Greeks, the Amazons serving invariably as symbol for Asiatic fighting power. This is, to mention only the most famous instance, the subject of the bas-reliefs of the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus, erected by Artemisia, Queen of Caria, to the memory of her husband Mausolus, in 353, B.C.

Neither the confusion of battle, nor the horrors of war find a place in these

memorials of the classic period. For the freedom-loving Greek, who aimed at perfect physical and intellectual development, these war memorials did not mean the glorification of despotic power and of wholesale butchery, but the glorification of the human body in action. The battle was not a shambles, but a kind of gladiatorial single fight, man against man. The scene might as well have been the floor of the palæstra as the battlefield, as there is no background in these sculptured groups to indicate the terrain or locality. The chief motive is not so much victory, as the fight itself, the contest of strength and agility, which affords the sculptor the fullest opportunity for showing the human body in its perfection of muscular beauty, liveness, grace and suppleness. Suffering and death are almost excluded, or at any rate ennobled, even where they are represented in men belonging to a despised race of barbarians, as in the votive statues of vanquished Gauls, offered by Attalus, King of Pergamon, after his victory over the Gaul invaders, about 240, B.C. In all the works of the golden period of Greek art, the sculptors, whilst making an ever closer study of the construction and movements of the human body, had maintained a certain restraint and reposefulness even in vigorous action. In the period of decline which is known as the Hellenistic epoch, this restraint gave way to passionate dramatic exuberance and tumultuous movement. The most striking war memorial of this Hellenistic age is the colossal altar to Zeus, erected by Eumenes II. on the Acropolis of Pergamon, in commemoration of his victories. The subject of the reliefs, which are now in the Berlin Museum, is taken from the gigantomachy—the combat between the gods and the giants. The violence of the treatment bears the same relation to the serene art of the golden age, as the ecstatic contortions and fluttering draperies of the late Baroque bear to the quiet strength of, say Donatello.