

less excellent in their execution, and fortunate indeed were the Romans in having to follow such able guides, otherwise their own excellence would never have been shown, as it afterwards was, in respect to emblems.

Having made our starting-point in the classic isles of Greece, we find that ancient country was composed of a number of colonies forming one entire whole. These colonies had each its own peculiarity, with which we become acquainted by studying the Grecian mythological history; hence arose the emblematical representation of each colony or community. Next we observe that it was amongst these communities that the first coins of which we have any knowledge were issued. The emblems of which we are about to treat were impressed on their coins, and to these very permanent means for preservation and for being handed down so truthfully to us at the present time we are indebted. Thus, for instance, the coins of Athens, which were so extensively influential in a commercial point of view in those ages of the world's history, were well known to all trading communities, and sought after and accepted by all parties. These coins had impressed upon them the emblem of the goddess Minerva (the owl) on the reverse, and on the obverse the head of the goddess, to whom the city was dedicated. These symbols, separate or combined, were illustrative of the wisdom and enterprise of the Athenians. On similar grounds we find on the coins of the city of Argos the wolf's head; on those of Ægina the tortoise; Macedon the horse; Corinth and Carthage the Pegasus; whilst the Egyptian coins of the Ptolemies had the head of Jupiter on the obverse, and an eagle on the reverse, the latter being the emblem of Jupiter. Most of the above were amongst the earliest coinage known; and though it is generally supposed that the coins of Ægina and Argos were the first of all, it is altogether uncertain which of the Greek coins was the earliest. I may as well mention here the shekel of the Jews,