

Into this sea from the North, there stretch two peninsulas—the easternmost, Greece; the more western one, Italy. Into the question as to what people constituted the first inhabitants of these peninsulas, I will not enter; for it is one which exemplifies the adage, *quot homines, tot sententiae*. But it is generally agreed that at a very early period, the two peninsulas were overrun by peoples that were kindred in race, and one in language. Each was an offshoot of the Pelasgian or Low Iranian branch of the great Indo-Germanic family; which, at a period entirely pre-historic, migrated from the East and embraced the ancestors of both Greeks and Italians. And yet, though originally one in race and language, they developed into two very different peoples, each being destined, while obeying its own natural and national tendencies, to leave its mark indelibly imprinted upon European Life and History. It is my purpose in this Essay, to trace, as well as I am able, the influence of these remarkable peoples on each other, and on what—speaking generally—we may call the civilization of modern Europe, and through Europe, of this Western World at the present day.

It will be interesting briefly to trace the effect which the different geographical conformation of the two countries had upon the two peoples. In Greece, the sea has cut deeply into the land on all sides; in proportion to her size she has an enormous coast-line; her shores abound in innumerable bays and inlets; she has an abundance of natural harbors. No wonder, then, that the Greeks were a sea-loving, sea-faring, commercial people, possessed of all the shrewdness and intelligence which foreign intercourse confers. As the experience of Darius and Xerxes proved, the insular character of their country was a bulwark against foreign invasion. No spot in the country was far from the sea, and this proximity to the sea tempered the heat of the land and rendered the labor which the soil required very endurable; while the fact that the soil did require labor preserved the Greeks from the Asiatic torpor, apathy, and indolence which proves so destructive to progress in civilization. The bright, clear air, the healthy climate, and the physical features of the country, were such as to gratify every appetite for pleasurable