CHAPTER IV.

GREEK

"Choose always and everywhere the best things,
Let no day pass without seeing and loving something beautiful."
— Frances Mary Steel.

The connecting link between the Egyptian and the Greek Art is the Art of Babylonia, Assyria and Persia.

Man's imagination which finds its expression through Art, is influenced by the changes in his environment. Though the Art of the Babylonians, Assyrians and Persians was greatly influenced by the Egyptians and many designs and forms of costume were the same as, or similar to the Egyptians, that of the eastern countries was filled with more action, free movement and feeling. The whole character of the patterns found show more freedom and quicker thought. This, no doubt, was brought about by the increased action in the every day life of the people.

The people were of a seafaring and warring race and the changes in Nature and their conflicts with other men kept their minds alert and well occupied. If plans were not quickly thought out and as quickly put into action their very lives were endangered or lost.

The costumes were designed for convenience in war, for climbing hills and travelling over rocky country, or for trips on the water which required warm as well as durable clothing.

Garments were made of wool as well as of linen, cotton and leather, and furs of many kinds were lavishly used. After a victory the victors adorned themselves with the spoils of the enemy and the women as well as the men became pompous with their military show.

From these eastern people the Greeks acquired their physical courage and the virtue and action of the soldier, but displayed it in a more refined way. The Greek costumes and ornaments do not show
NO. 11. GREEK MIRROR AND BOWL
the stolid heaviness of the Egyptians or the extreme war-like spirit of the Babylonians, Assyrians and Persians and yet they have a spirit of both with the added beauty and grace which comes from greater refinement and height of thought.

The Greeks influenced the style of the art of the world for ages but Greek Art reached its height under Pericles, between 470 B. C. and 429 B. C.

There is a widespread opinion that the Greek costume consisted of a pair of sandals for the feet and a ribbon for the hair and many of the statues of that time aid in leaving this impression, but this is mainly due to the fact that the Greek sculptors delighted most in modeling the nude figure because they were thus expressing their thoughts in the highest and most difficult manner. It should be remembered that the statues were not made to worship as idols, as the Egyptian statues were, but were made to glorify the Gods.

**Greek Costume.** The Greek costumes were very simple but perfect in their simplicity. They are distinguished by their refinement of detail, beauty of line, gracefulness and unity of composition.

Mabée's definition of Art seems to apply exceptionally well to that of the Greeks. He says, "Art is the culmination and summing up of the process of observation; experience and feeling; it is the deposit of whatever is the richest and most enduring in the life of a man or race."

The Greeks were close observers and received many ideas from the people of the surrounding countries. As a race they were seldom, if ever, idle. The occupations were numerous and such an interest was taken in their work that it became a great pleasure and joy rather than an irksome task. They firmly believed that a certain amount of work made one happy and that the worker who did not care enough for Art to contribute at least a small portion of his thought and energy was extremely stupid. This being the general idea, the people became experienced in many lines which in turn endowed them with a wonderful feeling for good proportion, harmonious color and refined designs.
There may come a time when some nation will give the world a higher standard for beauty than that set by the Greeks but until that time, the Greek models of the human figure and the Greek costume and ornament will be the standard for all such work and will continue to be called the perfect idea or the ideal.

See illustration No. 11—Grecian Mirror and Bowl. Notice the figures in Greek costumes, the head-dress, fan, Greek fret, anthemion and acanthus designs. The artistic decorations formed by these various units are most interesting.

As the Greeks were very proud of a well proportioned figure, the young people, both men and women spent much of their time in training for athletic sports and for dances. Great festivals were held in which the youths exhibited their strength and grace. Many of the stories of the Olympian Games are common knowledge, how the people from all over the country came either to witness or to partake in these wonderful festivals and how a certain time was set apart during which no warfare was waged that all the people might travel to and from these great games un molested. The affairs of state centered about these gatherings and the first reliable date is 776 B. C. that of the first Olympian game.

The Greeks were tall and well proportioned and as they exercised a great deal, walking, running and dancing, they became very graceful in all their actions and every part of the body was well rounded and beautifully moulded. The measurements and proportions of both the Greek male and female figures are used as standard today.

With the Greek an abundance of hair was the mark of a nobleman. As a whole the hair of the Greeks was curly enough to be easily dressed and such great care was taken of it that it became very silky. The Greeks were not entirely dependent upon artificial decoration for their good looks and they spent their energies in enriching what nature had given them. Many people have the idea that the Greeks were all perfect physically but this is a fallacy. The poets, sculptors and artists only described the highest development of their race. Women were supposed to be the most beautiful between the
ages of eighteen and twenty-five and the men, from twenty-five to thirty-five. The deformed and delicate were ignored, for to mention them was to cast a reflection on the family. The aged among those of noble birth were cared for but the aged among the poor were often badly treated and left to die.

Since the women faded much earlier in life than the men, the wife was usually much younger than her husband. Before the young women were married the greatest care was taken to shield them from the disagreeable things of life and from the world in general. A court and a secluded part of the house were provided for the young women, not that they were deprived of the pleasures of the household, but that they might enjoy greater freedom with those of their own sex. Groups of maidens went to the shrines to worship and to decorate the statues of the Gods on festival days but for a virgin to go upon the streets alone was considered rude and ill bred.

Many pleasant hours were spent in the house court where the women met to weave and embroider their own apparel and to play games as well as to study. The leading women of the country directed the work at these gatherings. In the Iliad groups of women are described:

"Her royal hand a wondrous work designs,
Around a circle of bright damsels shines,
Part twist the threads, and part the wool dispose,
Whilst with the purple orb the spindle glows."

The Spartan girls had the most freedom and often competed with the men in wrestling and in dart throwing.

The dress of the men, women and children was much the same. The small infant was carefully wrapped from head to foot with strips of linen. The Greek costume consisted of an under garment, often of fine wool or silk and wool, a dress and an outer shawl shaped drapery.

It is almost impossible to discuss the subject of costume design without touching upon architecture and the other forms of art of that same period. The two main costumes from which all others were modeled correspond in name to the well-known columns, the Doric and the Ionic.
Chiton. The chiton or dress of the Ionic style, is the simpler of the two and consists of two pieces of cloth sewed together to form a straight slip with one part, about two-fifths of the length of the entire garment, folded over to hang straight with the remaining part. The garment was slipped over the head and the entire upper part allowed to hang below the arm pits. The top of the fold was then caught over the shoulders by means of metal clasps while the loose parts were held at the waist by means of a cord. (Illustration 12—No. 2.)

Ionic Style. Beautiful examples of the Ionic costumes are shown on the female figures in the south portico of the Erechtheum of Athens. The vertical folds of the draperies here shown re-echo the flutings of the Ionic column.

Himation. Doric Style. The Doric style of costume was also made of two pieces of cloth folded together and fastened over the shoulder but the cord was fastened over the fold instead of under it and the himation or shawl shaped drapery was worn over the chiton. The head-dress as of the rest of the costume, was very simple, sometimes being merely a wreath of flowers or of laurel twisted together to make a band. The hair, worn in curls, was fastened by such a band. The crescent shaped diadem worn by Juno was the most common. This diadem was often made of gold and set with jewels but it was delicately formed and the colors corresponded to those of the rest of the costume. (Illustration 12—No. 3.)

Veil. The fold of the Ionic costume was often thrown over the head for a covering but veils of various sorts were used. A veil of the sheerest material was worn by the women of high rank as a sign of modesty but heavier veils were worn by both men and women as a sign of mourning. Reference to veils are to be found through the Iliad and the Odyssey. Of Helen we read:

"O'er her fair face a snowy veil she threw,
And softly sighing, from the loom withdrew."

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"And veiled her blushes in a silken shade."
NO. 12. GREEK COSTUMES AND ORNAMENT

1. Palmette Design
2. Ionic Costume
3. Doric Costume
4. Greek Fret
Electra being persuaded to unveil and leave off mourning:

"Pull off your veil, dear sister, and this grief forbear,
Speak out, unfold your head, refrain from tears."

Wool was used most by the Dorians and linen by the Ionians
but a chiton of linen and a himation of wool were not uncommon.
An interesting description of a woman’s costume is given in the
fifth book of the Odyssey:

"The Nymph’s fair head a veil transparent graced;
Her swelling loins a radiant zone embraced
With flowers of gold; an under robe, unbound
In snowy waves flow’d glittering on the ground."

The dress depended for its beauty on the softness of the material,
the graceful hanging or flow of its lines and the way in which it
draped but it did not conceal the form beneath it. At this time the
number of jewels and richness of the apparel no longer was an
indication that the wearer was distinguished, powerful or a leader,
this was conveyed by the cut of the garment, the selection of the
colors and mode of wearing the chiton and himation. The Greeks
spent much of their time in practicing the effect of the arrangement of
the draperies. The woman’s chiton was long, reaching to the feet,
the man’s was short barely reaching to the knees but both were
subject to many changes by simply shifting the clasp on the shoulders
or the girdle at the waist.

**Kolpos.** In some cases only one clasp was used, thereby draping the
garment from the left shoulder and leaving the right arm free of
covering. Other examples show the folds which hung from the arm
fastened together by means of clasps or buttons, thus forming a sleeve
with small openings which showed the arms at intervals. This same
effect was used at the side of the skirt which was left open from the
thigh down and linked together by studs. The Kolpos, the name
applied to the picturesque folds which were formed by the hanging
corners of the loose edge of the chiton, could be varied widely by
merely shifting the position of the clasps or buttons which held the
chiton at the shoulder or by varying the width of the cloth, thus making longer and more numerous folds.

The girdle was sometimes worn around the waist or allowed to drop to the hips, while in still other cases the chiton was held to the body just below the bust and around the hips by a supporting band. The folds of the garment not being fastened in any fixed fashion, the dress could be pulled through the girdle as desired and be thus made long or short at will.

**Sandals.** Various shapes of sandals constituted the only style of footwear and these were made of leather and sometimes covered with gold.

**Colors.** The dainty Greek colors were quite a contrast to the hard bright colors of the Egyptians. Golden yellows, light blues, greens, terra cotta and saffron were the colors most extensively used. The gold and white combination was still used for royalty but was no longer used for mourning. Black was no longer used for any other but the mourning garment.

The ladies who took part in the festival parades were described as follows: “Pure tints with which refinement and charity had been associated would through all time continue to be the apparel of virgins and noble matrons who trod proudly in golden sandals at the festivals in which the noble born took part.” White robes were among the most beautiful and their whiteness was renewed frequently by the use of chalk and pipe clay. Of Juno we read:

> “Then o’er her head she cast a veil more white,  
> Than new fallen snow and dazzling as the light.”

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> “Do’st thou conceal thy pendant locks with a white veil?”

Many interesting patterns were woven in or embroidered on these veils, among them being the well-known Greek fret and the wall of Troy. In the Iliad, Helen is described as wearing a veil:

> “Her in the palace of her loom she found;  
> The golden web her own sad story crown’d.  
> The Trojan wars she weaved (herself the prize),  
> And the dire triumph of her fatal eyes.”
**Jewelry.** Contrary to the women of former times the Greeks selected and wore jewelry with discriminating taste. Only one necklace was worn at a time and that was so selected that it would add to the appearance of the gown. The jewels chosen were in harmony with the hair and gave a charming effect with the beautiful flesh tints in the women’s healthy faces. Dainty fans, of colors to harmonize with the other decorations of the dress, were attractive accessories.

**Sun shade.** The umbrellas, more aptly named sun shade, for they were seldom used in bad weather, took the place of the Egyptian fan and were made of light silk or fine linen with the handles and supports for the upper part made of gold wrought in the most intricate designs. (Illustration 13—No. 7.)

**Mirrors.** The mirrors were also treasures greatly admired by the women. “But the daughter of Jove possesses gold mirrors, the delight of virgins.” The decorations on these articles as well as those on the costumes are most interesting. (Illustration 11.)

**Greek Designs.** The designs of the Greeks were not so full of meaning and symbolism as is true of the designs of the preceding ages, but they show a wonderful feeling for the abstract principles in design, rhythm, balance, good proportion and space division, as well as graceful curves and radiating parts.

**The Greek Fret.** One of the best-known ornaments, and no doubt of textile origin as the rectangular network suggests, is the Greek Fret or “Meander” border. The name “Meander” is said to be taken from a river in Asia Minor, the Meandros, now the Menderes, which flows in sinuous curves. The construction is perhaps the most simple of all the Greek borders and the measurements of the lengths and observance of the rhythmic regularity is peculiar to all Greek patterns. This band has no “up” or “down” or limitation in regard to length. It was based on the square and in general the breadth of the broad lines or ornament is equal to the distance between them. It may therefore be easily drawn on a square network as shown in the illustration. (Illustration 13—No. 4.)
NO. 13. GREEK DESIGNS

1. Ionic Column
2. Doric Column
3. Acanthus
4. Laurel—natural and conventional
5. Honeysuckle—natural and conventional
6. Wall of Troy
7. Sun shade
8. Fan
Anthemion. Besides the patterns based on simple geometric construction, are those which have the natural forms as their motif. These were known as anthemion or flower ornament. They did not directly imitate nature either in form or color but, using such forms and colors as an inspiration and foundation for the imagination, the designer worked out his original ideas in a decorative style. The plants were not selected for their meaning or symbolic significance but for their ornamental possibilities. The plants which could be most successfully adapted to such work seem to be the acanthus, the honeysuckle and the laurel.

The Acanthus. The acanthus was a thorny tree growing in southern Europe and cultivated for its beautiful foliage. The leaves were large and sharply toothed. Since its introduction by the Greeks it recurs in almost every western style, differing only in conception and treatment of the margin and shape of the leaf. The Greek acanthus designs are distinguished by their pointed leaves. (Illustration 13—No. 3.)

The Honeysuckle. The honeysuckle ornament, varying in detail but constant in type, frequently occurs in single examples and in a series in jewelry, dress fabrics and all other decorative art. (Illustration 13—No. 5.)

Palmette. A specifically Greek ornament is the "Palmette" which expresses the delicate sensitiveness of an artistically inclined people. The palmette was constructed after the fashion of the "palma" or palm of the hand. Like the fingers of an outspread hand, a group of leaves, odd in number, or sections of a flower were combined into a symmetrical ornament. The center section was the largest with the surrounding ones diminishing gradually as they approach the sides with the tips of the leaves lying on a regular curve. The lower ends of the sections were disconnected and were divided from each other by slight intervals. In most cases the palmettes were connected or bordered by spiral bands. (Illustration 12—No. 1.)
The Laurel. In its natural form the laurel was an emblem of glory and a sprig of laurel was the prize of the victor. Greek victors were crowned with chaplets of flowers and garlands of laurel. (Illustration 13.)

"Their temples wreath'd with leaves that still renew; For deathless laurel is the victor's due." — Dryden.

The true laurel of the ancients was the bay-laurel or bay-tree. It was used in design in both a naturalistic and a conventionalized form for its decorative value.

The many examples of Greek design have been made most familiar to us through their architectural use than almost any other for the treasures now in existence in the way of costumes and textiles are now so rare that we are almost entirely dependent upon the examples to be found in architecture and in pottery for any information to be gained. We owe much to the decorators of the Grecian urn for the history of the time as well as for a knowledge of the costume and habits of the people. Keats in his "Ode on a Grecian Urn" shows that it was more than a piece of clay decorated for a pastime, but that it was an embodiment of the age which has lived to influence many nations.

See illustration No. 14.—The Grecian Urn. Notice the graceful curves and good proportion of the urn as well as the interesting decorations of attractive figures in costume, laurel and honeysuckle designs.

"O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede Of marble men and maidens overwrought, With forest branches and trodden weed; Thou silent form, dost tease us out of thought Or doth eternity; Cold Pastoral When old age shall this generation waste, Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe Than ours, a friend to man, to whom they sayest, Beauty is truth, truth beauty, that is all ye know on earth, And all ye need to know."
LESSON 4.

Make a sheet of sketches showing a Greek costume and two or more Greek designs. Color at least one design. Notice the balance, proportion, and radiation in the designs. Make an original design for a summer dress using the lines and proportions found in the Greek. Use the Greek color combinations.

Work in cross stitch the Greek fret. (A)

Make a Greek costume out of paper or cloth, stencil the design. (C)

Arrange on a sheet bits of modern trimmings, cloth or costumes which resemble the Greek.