

A RED-FIGURED PYXIS

THE vase which forms the subject of this article is one of the latest acquisitions of the Mediterranean Section of the Museum. It is a pyxis, or toilet box, of the latest period of Attic vase painting, in a style often called the "Kertsch" style, because a large proportion of the vases of this technique have been found in Kertsch, in the Crimea, on the site of the ancient Greek city of Panticapaeum. Enough of them, however, have been found in Attica to warrant the statement that they are of Attic manufacture.

A box like this formed part of the equipment of the toilet table of an Athenian lady of position in the end of the fifth and beginning of the fourth century before Christ. It was used for cosmetics, perfumes, and articles of personal adornment. The unusual feature of this vase, however, is its size; for whereas the greater number of the flat boxes of this period are not more than fifteen centimetres in diameter at the lid, this one has a diameter of twenty-one centimetres. Its height is 7.9 centimetres.

As is fitting for a vase used for such a purpose, the subject portrayed on the lid is one of a nuptial procession. But the painter chose not an ordinary wedding, but the wedlock of the immortals, Herakles and Hebe. For the myth ran, that when he died Herakles was transformed into a god, and given to wife Hebe, the cupbearer of the gods. The fifteenth Homeric Hymn, which is addressed to Herakles, recites his birth and briefly speaks of his labors; and, at the end, says:

*νῦν δ' ἦδη κατὰ καλὸν ἔδος νιφόεντος Ὀλύμπου
ναίει τερπόμενος, καὶ ἔχει καλλίσφυρον Ἥβην.
χαίρε, ἄναξ Διὸς νιέ· δίδου δ' ἀρετὴν τε καὶ ὄλβον.*

"But now he dwells rejoicing in the beautiful seat of snowy Olympos, and he has to wife Hebe, of the beautiful ankles. Hail, O King, son of Zeus; give to us virtue and prosperity." This hymn, while later than the Homeric poems, gives us the classical tradition of the life of the great hero among the gods.

This vase painting (Fig. 205) is really to be thought of as divided into two parts: first, the bridal procession; second, the assembly

of the gods, which awaits it. Herakles, nude, and represented as a beautiful youth, as he generally is on these late vase paintings, with a chlamys thrown over his right shoulder, and left arm, and with his club in his left hand, turns toward Hebe, whose left hand he holds with his right. She is clad in a sleeved chiton of white, richly decorated with an elaborate design of stripes, spots, and a maeander-pattern, in brown and yellow, and wears a necklace and a diadem, which are treated in relief, and were originally gilded. Her hair is black, and on her head is a bridal veil of brown. Her flesh, as is common in this period, is rendered in white. A nude Eros, or love-



FIG. 204.—A red-figured pyxis recently acquired by the University Museum.

god (flesh white) flies behind her, adjusting her veil. On the ground between them a bird is represented, a dove, the attribute of Aphrodite. Then come two bridesmaids, one of whom carries a vase with a long neck, called a "loutrophoros," and used to hold the water for the nuptial bath; while the other carries a chest or casket, which probably contained the bride's jewels. She also carries a shawl. Both bridesmaids wear necklaces and earrings treated in relief, which were originally gilded, although all trace of it has now disappeared. On either side of them is a large chest for the clothing that the bride brings as a trousseau. Herakles and Hebe stand before a low plinth, perhaps to represent the threshold of their new

home; on the other side of this another Eros (flesh white) stands with a nuptial torch, beckoning them on. Beyond him is another dove.

Advancing to meet the nuptial procession we now have a woman with a torch in each hand. This begins the second part of the picture: for this woman is a goddess, Hestia, the presiding genius of the hearth and of domestic life, welcoming the bride and groom to their home in Olympos. Behind her is seated Athena, the constant friend and patroness of Herakles, wearing her helmet, and with her aegis treated in yellow and white, with a necklace of raised beads (originally gilded) on her neck, and a himation thrown across her lap. Her spear is in her left hand. She rejoices that her hero and protégé has overcome all his earthly burdens, and is now to have eternal happiness.

Behind her, seated on a double throne, and richly clad, are Zeus and Hera, the king and queen of the gods, with their sceptres in their hands, gazing benignly on the youthful pair, while a third Eros (flesh white) leans on the back of the throne, and whispers into the ear of the Father of Gods and Men. An incense-burner stands behind the throne.

Such, then, is the scene that this vase portrays. The reader will notice the skill and freedom of the drawing, which, however, is always marked by dignity and restraint. Abundant use was made of overcolor when the vase was new; lines of drapery and flesh were rendered in purple and brown, and the knobs on the club of Herakles, and beads of the necklaces of Hebe, the two bridesmaids, and Athena, the earrings worn by the female figures, and the diadems of Hebe, Zeus and Hera, were treated in relief and gilded. Most of this gilding is now gone. On the side of the box ran a beautiful myrtle leaf pattern (Fig. 204), in which the berries were also raised and gilded. Nearly all of this is lost; but we can see, nevertheless, that this vase was made as an object of luxury and beauty.

We are fortunate in knowing something of the past history of this pyxis; and this fact adds, of course, immensely to its value, and it should be a source of delight to all, as it is to the writer, that it has been rescued from being a "lost vase," and has found a permanent home in the University Museum. We first hear of it in the famous Forman Collection, which was dispersed in 1899, and many of the vases from it found their way to the British Museum, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, and the collection of Mr. James Loeb. This vase is No. 364 in the catalogue of the Forman

Collection, written by Mr. (now Sir) Cecil Smith, then of the British Museum's Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities, and now Director of the Victoria and Albert (formerly the South Kensington) Museum. Sir Cecil Smith is a man especially well fitted to write on vases, as his knowledge is very great, and his



FIG. 205.—The cover of a red-figured pyxis. The marriage of Herakles and Hebe.

judgment very reliable. He publishes a photograph of the pyxis in the catalogue, to face page 76, and says of it, "In respect of its size, refinement of drawing, and interest of its very unusual subject, this pyxis is one of the most important known."

It then disappears again; nor do we hear of it till 1904, when it is put on exhibition by its owner, a Mr. John Edward Taylor, at the

Burlington Fine Arts Club, which in that year gave an exhibition of objects of Classical Art. It was considered one of the "chefs d'oeuvre" of the Greek vases in that exhibit, and is again published, this time in the magnificent illustrated catalogue which the Burlington Fine Arts Club issued, and which was written by Mrs. S. A. Strong, a leading authority on Ancient Art, especially well known for her researches in the field of Roman Sculpture. She is now Assistant Director of the British School at Rome. She was very much impressed by the beauty of this vase, and says of it, "This admirable picture is carried out with great wealth of detail, and yet with astonishing sobriety of effect." How it came to America, and when it left Mr. Taylor, does not concern us now; we should rejoice that it is in a museum, where it will always remain, and where its beauty will be a source of delight to the visitor and the student.

Sir Cecil Smith is quite right in saying that the marriage of Herakles with Hebe is rare on vase paintings. Very few vases can so certainly be assigned to the marriage with Hebe as can this. On the other hand, the Apotheosis of Herakles is a very common subject indeed in the Greek vases. Of this subject, there are two methods of representation which predominate: the "Chariot Type," most commonly found in the Attic black-figured technique, in which Herakles is driven, usually by Athena, to Olympos, while other divinities attend the procession; and the "Assembly Type" where Herakles is presented to Zeus, and takes his place in the company of the gods. This type occurs frequently in the black-figured, but is more characteristic of the red-figured technique. It is quite natural, therefore, for interpreters of Greek vase paintings to see, in one of the attendant goddesses in these types, Hebe, ready for betrothal. A close study does not convince one that the figure is really Hebe; and in any case the vases in which she is thus brought in cannot properly be called representations of her marriage to Herakles.

Let us now consider four black-figured "Chariot Type" vases which are plausibly called representations of the marriage of Herakles and Hebe. In these examples, the female identified as Hebe is in the chariot with Herakles. We may, I think, call these true representations of this subject in the black-figured technique. In three of these vases Athena is present as an attendant divinity. The four specimens are the following.

Amphorae: Berlin, 1827 and 1858; Petrograd, 112.

Hydria, formerly in a collection in Paris.¹

In another black-figured hydria, No. 253 in the collection of the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris,² in which Herakles is shown in a chariot, a female figure is inscribed with the name Hebe. This is a very early vase, and may be thought of as the earliest possible representation of the betrothal of the hero and the cupbearer of the gods.

A fragmentary black-figured kylix in the Museum on the Acropolis at Athens³ shows a woman without any divine attributes and therefore possibly Hebe, tenderly greeting Herakles, whose chin she strokes.

These six vases are the only examples in the black-figured technique that show the marriage of Herakles and Hebe. Of the red-figured technique there are only four vases besides this pyxis in which Hebe surely appears, and in two of these she cannot be thought of as being betrothed to the hero. These two are merely representations of the Apotheosis, in which Hebe is surely identified by the pitcher which she holds in her hand. In one of them, she seems to have been inscribed by name, but most of the inscription is gone. Both of these vases are in Berlin: one, a kylix, or drinking cup, is signed by its maker, Sosias. It is No. 2278 in Furtwängler's catalogue.⁴ The other, a stamnos, or wine-jar, was acquired by the Berlin Museum since the publication of the catalogue.⁵

The other two vases which surely can be said to represent the marriage of Herakles and Hebe are both late in the red-figured technique, whereas the two that I have just described antedate our pyxis by about fifty years, if not more. One of these two is Attic, and contemporaneous with the vase in Philadelphia; it is a Krater, or mixing bowl, in the British Museum, No. F74.⁶ The other is of Apulian manufacture, and is a large Krater with volute handles, in Berlin, No. 3257.⁷ In short, this pyxis shows the subject treated in a more compact form than on any other vase of its time that has come down to us.

¹ Published by Gerhard, "Auserlesene Vasenbilder," pl. 325.

² Published in *Archäologische Zeitung*, 1866, pl. 209.

³ Published by Graef in his catalogue, No. 1896 on pl. 83.

⁴ Best published in Furtwängler and Reichhold, "Griechische Vasenmalerei," pl. 123. Also in *Monumento dell' Instituto*, I, pl. 24, 25.

⁵ Published by Gerhard, "Auserlesene Vasenbilder," pls. 146-147.

⁶ Published in Moses "Antique Vases," pl. 13. This is a rare publication, that I have never seen.

⁷ Published by Gerhard, "Apulische Vasenbilder in Berlin," pl. XV, and also pl. B, 1-5.

Three other red-figured vases must now be described, which probably also show this subject, although it is not certain. Each of them has Herakles between Athena and another woman, who is very plausibly identified as Hebe. Two of these vases have supplementary figures. All are of the late red-figured technique, either contemporaneous with, or just antedating, the pyxis in the University Museum. They are as follows.

Krater, of South Italian manufacture, published by Millingen, "Vases de Coghill," pl. 25, and Reinach, *Répertoire des Vases Peints*, vol. II, p. 8. This vase is now lost. Hermes and Iolaos are the supplementary figures.

Reinach interprets this vase as the betrothal of Hebe and Herakles by Athena.

Amphora of the form called a "pelike" in Berlin, No. 2626, of a period contemporary with the pyxis, in which a winged Victory and Iolaos are the additional characters.¹

Pitcher, in the Conservatori Palace, Rome. There are no other characters in this vase than Herakles, Athena, and the woman identified as Hebe.²

There are several other examples, made after the art of painting on vases was forgotten, with a design in relief of the marriage of Herakles with Hebe. They are all shallow cups, of the form called in antiquity *phialae*. As they are of a degenerate age in the history of pottery, and as none of them are of Attic manufacture, they do not merit a place in a list of painted vases showing this subject.³

One more vase demands notice, a Krater in Bologna, No. 300 in the latest catalogue.⁴ In this painting, which is of the late red-figured period, a nude maiden is shown at her toilet, with various spectators. This is supposed by some, including Reinach, to be Hebe preparing for her marriage to Herakles, in the presence of Zeus and Hera; but to the writer this interpretation seems far-fetched.

It has been shown, then, that this is a very rare subject indeed in the Greek vases. There are at most only fifteen vases of

¹ Published by Furtwängler, "Sammlung Sabouff," pl. 67.

² Published in the *Bulletino della Commissione Archeologica Comunale di Roma*, XXXIX, 1911, pp. 68-99, and Figs. 1-2.

³ Among them are: British Museum G187; Castellani Sale Catalogue (1866) 232 (perhaps the same vase as the preceding); and *Annali dell' Istituto*, 1871, p. 18.

⁴ *Catalogo delle Necropoli Etrusche*, published 1912. The vase is published in the *Museo Italiano di Antichita Classica*, II, pl. 2, and Reinach, *Répertoire des Vases Peints*, I, pp. 522-523.

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classical times that can possibly be interpreted as representing the Marriage of Herakles and Hebe, not including the Hellenistic relief vases. Of these several are very doubtful. In none of the vases is it so well or so completely portrayed as upon the vase in this Museum, which, as scholars have noticed from the time that it was first published in the Forman Sale Catalogue, is one of the most important vases of its period that has come down to us.

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