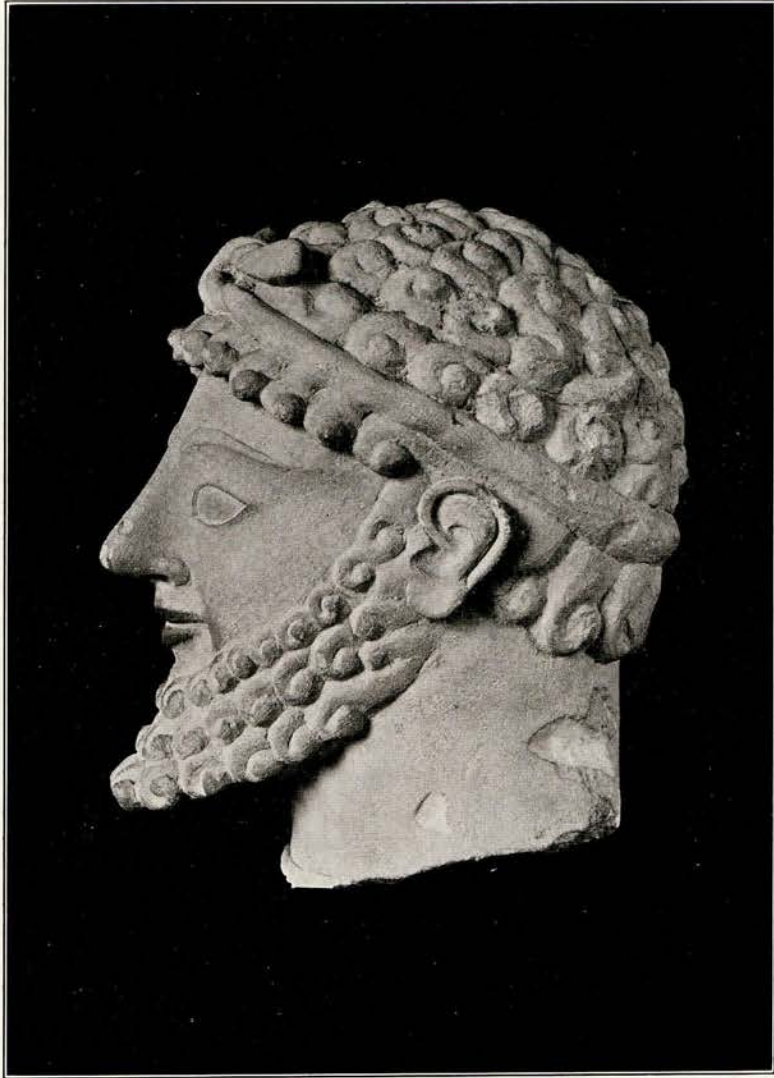


## AN ARCHAIC HEAD FROM CYPRUS

IN the years that followed our Civil War the archaic art of Cyprus was often discussed in Victorian drawing rooms. General di Cesnola, who had served first as a colonel and after his discharge from Libby Prison as a brigadier general, was appointed, in 1865, United States Consul to Cyprus. Archæology was not in those days the serious matter it has since become and Cesnola did but follow the example of his British and French colleagues in devoting himself to the pastimes of digging and collecting. The buried cemeteries and sanctuaries of the island, packed as they were with pottery and sculpture, afforded a happy hunting ground and these diplomat-archæologists soon began to divert streams of vases and statues to their respective countries.

The archaic sculptures that reached New York were but little understood. Critics of that day and even of the eighties were accustomed to marble or bronze as the materials for antique art, so that sculpture worked in soft limestone fell quite naturally under their suspicion and their fears were not allayed when they discovered that colors had been used to enhance the modeling. The very numbers in which these statues were found was also disquieting. It is easy now, in the light of the discoveries at Olympia and of the archaic pediments found by the Greeks on the Acropolis, to smile at the storm of criticism these statues aroused. Anyone who has visited the Acropolis Museum at Athens will recognize at once in the Cesnola sculptures the contemporary art of a smaller center, an art that was at once provincial and cosmopolitan, fraught with no real greatness and deflected from its course by all the waves of foreign influence that swept over the island. The progress made in archæological science since the eighties could not be better shown than by a comparison of the early descriptions of the Cesnola collection with the masterly catalogue of Prof. John L. Myers of Oxford, published in 1914 by the Metropolitan Museum. His analyses of Cypriote antiquities are a complete exposition of the invasions and revolts, the new cults and old rituals, the economic ups and downs which this distracted island witnessed in the course of a millennium and more.

Ardent as were the Victorian diplomats in their antiquarian pursuits, and countless as must have been the nightly raids which illicit diggers have carried on since then on Cypriote sites, sculpture



Profile of Fig. 69.  
FIG. 70.

is still found in Cyprus. In the summer of 1920 an excellent limestone head, modeled in the manner characteristic of Cypriote art of the best archaic period was brought to Philadelphia, and through the generosity of Mr. John Cadwalader was purchased by the Museum. The head is over life size measuring a foot in height and like all Cypriote sculpture is wrought in soft, chalky limestone. The lower surface of the head shows that it was inserted in a statue. Traces of color still remain, blue for the eyes, red for the lips, black for the beard. The eyes and eyeballs are slightly modeled, the nose large, the beard and hair rendered by rows of corkscrew curls. A heavy fillet is tied about the head. The ears are correctly placed. If these details be compared with corresponding details in the statues in the Cesnola collection, the head will be seen to resemble more closely a number of statues dating from the opening years of the fifth century B. C. This is the period immediately following the ill starred revolt of the Ionian States, the moment before the great struggle with Persia in which Cyprus played a confused and inglorious part. Artistically, this period is the best; foreign influences had ceased to distort and stultify, Attic and Ionian models were still at hand to inspire Cypriote craftsmen. A century before the influence of Egypt would have been apparent in Cypriote art, a century later Cypriote sculpture had "perpetuated in lonely stagnation an archaism which it had all but outgrown."

Cypriote sculptures are almost always from sanctuaries, walled enclosures open to the sky and containing shrines before which the faithful prayed. A sacred stone or pillar was perhaps contained within the shrine or tabernacle, the very dwelling place of the god. Spirits of local springs and hills doubtless received homage in such shrines, so also did the earth mother who gives increase, and Zeus the thunderer, who gives light and rain. Neglect of any of these mighty gods so full of vengeance and by no means slow to anger might cause the ruin of a sorely needed crop, the death of a loved child. Prayer was no matter of sentiment, but one of stern necessity. And yet to be always praying and participating in the rites of the sanctuary was impossible; the votary accordingly dedicated a statue which would constantly perform these sacred acts for him. Our Cypriote head belonged to such a statue and represented either a priest, or more likely the donor himself, wearing the fillet with which he bound his head when he went to pray.

E. H. D.