Theseus meanwhile put in to the shore and himself offered up the sacrifices he had vowed to the gods at Phalerum when he sailed away, and sent a herald to announce his homecoming. The messenger found many of the people mourning the king's death, and others who were naturally enough overjoyed and ready to welcome him and crown him with garlands for their deliverance. He accepted the garlands and wreathed them around his herald's staff, but on his return to the seashore, he found that Theseus had not yet poured his libations to the gods, and so, as he did not wish to disturb the sacrifice, he waited outside the precinct. Then after the libations had been made, he announced the news of Aegeus's death, whereupon Theseus and his companions hurried with cries and lamentations into the city. So it is, the tradition says, that to this very day at the festival of the Osphoria the Athenians do not crown the herald himself, but his staff, and at the libations the bystanders cry out 'Eleleu! Eleleu!'; the first of these is the cry of eager haste or of triumph, the second of trouble or confusion.

After the funeral of his father, Theseus paid his vows to Apollo on the seventh day of the month Panepistōmia, for this was the day of their safe return to the city. The custom of boiling different kinds of pulse, which is observed on that day, is said to have originated from the fact that the young men whom Theseus had rescued mixed up all that was left of their provisions, boiled these in a single pot and ate the whole lot up together. At this festival the Athenians also carry the so-called Eiresione, which is an olive-bough wreathed with wool—such as Theseus had carried as a suppliant—and laden with various offerings of first-fruits, to signify that the time of scarcity is past. As they walk along they sing,

Eiresione brings figs for us and leaves of the finest wheat-flour,
Brings us honey in pots, and oil to rub off from our bodies,
And a beaker of heady wine for us all to go mellow to bed on.

Some writers claim that these ceremonies are performed in memory of the sons of Heracles, whom the Athenians received and entertained as suppliants in this way, but most report the tradition as I have done.

23. The thirty-oared galley in which Theseus sailed with the youths and returned safely was preserved by the Athenians down to the time of Demetrius of Phalerum. At intervals they removed the old timbers and replaced them with sound ones, so that the ship became a classic illustration for the philosophers of the disputed question of growth and change, some of them arguing that it remained the same, and others that it became a different vessel.

It was Theseus, too, who founded the Athenian festival of the Osphoria, or carrying of the vine-branches. The story goes that he did not take with him all the young girls who had been chosen by lot on that occasion. Instead he picked out from among his friends two youths, who possessed plenty of nerve and spirit, but at the same time had fresh and girlish complexions. He gave them hot baths and kept them out of the sun, dressed their hair, made their skin smooth and improved their complexions with unguents, and in this way completely transformed their appearance. He also taught them how to imitate girls in their speech, their dress, and their walk, until they could pass unobserved, and he then included them among the girls destined for Crete without anybody discovering the secret. On his return, he and the young men led a procession, dressed in the same way as those who now carry the branches at the Osphoria. They carry these in honour of Dionysus and Ariadne, because of the part which these two played in the story, or rather because Theseus and his companions returned to Athens at the time of the vintage. The women known as Deinophornoi — supper-carriers — join in the procession and take part in the sacrifice to represent the mothers of the young men and girls who were chosen by lot, because they kept visiting their children to bring them bread and meat. At this festival, too, fables are recited, because these mothers used to tell their children stories to comfort them and keep up their spirits. These are the details, at any rate, which Demon has recorded for us. A sacred precinct was also set aside for Theseus, and he laid it down that those families which had given up their children as tribute for the Minotaur should pay for a sacrifice for himself. This sacrifice was presided over by the Phytalidai, whom Theseus rewarded in this way for their hospitality to him.

24. After Aegeus's death Theseus conceived a wonderful and far-reaching plan, which was nothing less than to concentrate the inhabitants of Attica into a capital. In this way he transformed them into one

1. Regent of Athens for king Cassander of Macedon from 317 to 307 B.C.
2. See Ch. 12.
people belonging to one city, whereas until then they had lived in widely scattered communities, so that it was difficult to bring them together for the common interest, and indeed at times they had even quarrelled and fought one another. So he now travelled around Attica and strove to convince them town by town and clan by clan. The common people and the poor responded at once to his appeal, while to the more influential classes he proposed a constitution without a king: there was to be a democracy, in which he would be no more than the commander of the army and the guardian of the laws, while in other respects everyone would be on an equal footing. Some were convinced by his arguments without any difficulty, and others, because they feared his power, which was already great, and his enterprising spirit, preferred to be persuaded rather than forced into agreement. He then proceeded to abolish the town halls, council chambers, and magistracies in the various districts. To replace them he built a single town-hall and senate house for the whole community on the site of the present Acropolis, and he named the city Athens and created a Pan-Athenaic festival as a ceremony for the whole of Attica. He also founded the Metoecia, or festival of the resident aliens, on the sixteenth day of the month Hecatombaion, and this is still celebrated. Next he laid down his own royal power, as he had undertaken to do, and set to work to draw up the constitution, invoking for this purpose the authority of the gods. He had sent to Delphi to consult the oracle about the future of the city and this was the answer he received:

Son of the royal line of Aegeus and Pirithous's daughter,  
Many the cities whose bounds and destinies shall be encompassed  
Within your citadel's walls, for so has my father ordained it.  
Be not oppressed with fear, but be counselled by bold resolution,  
The bladder shall buoyantly ride the surging waves of the ocean.

And later on, so it is said, the Sibyl prophesied to Athens in the same strain, when she cried out:

The bladder may be submerged, but shall not drown: this is appointed.

25. As he was ambitious to increase the size of the city still further, Theseus invited people from every quarter to settle there on equal terms with the Athenians. In fact, the current phrase, 'Come hither, all ye peoples!', is supposed to have originated as a proclamation, employed by Theseus, when he established a commonwealth which embraced all sorts and conditions of men. But he did not allow his democracy to fall into the disorder and confusion which an indiscriminate influx might have produced. He was the first to divide the city into three distinct classes, consisting of noblemen, husbandmen, and artisans. To the noblemen he assigned the care of religious rites, the filling of the magistracies, the teaching and administration of the laws, and the interpretation of all sacred matters, and for the rest of the citizens he established, as it were, a balance of privilege, on the assumption that the noblemen would excel in dignity, the husbandmen in utility, and the artisans in numerical strength. Aristotle says that he was the first ruler to incline towards democracy and give up the royal power, and this judgement seems to be confirmed by Homer too, for in the Catalogue of Ships in The Iliad it is the Athenians alone to whom he refers as 'a sovereign people'.

Theseus also struck a coinage and stamped it with the figure of an ox: here he may either have been commemorating the bull of Marathon, or possibly Taurus, Minos's general, or else he may have wished to encourage farming among the citizens. At any rate it was from this coinage that the phrase worth ten or worth a hundred oxen originated. He brought the territory of Megara securely under Athenian control and afterwards he set up that famous pillar on the Isthmus of Corinth, and carved on it the inscription which marks the frontier between the two countries. This consisted of two trimeters, of which the one facing east bore the legend:

Here is not the Peloponnese, but Ionia,

and that facing west:

Here is the Peloponnese, not Ionia.

He also founded games here to rival those of Heracles; his ambition was that just as the Greeks at Heracles' instance celebrated the Olympian games in honour of Zeus, so through his own initiative they should celebrate the Isthmian games in honour of his reputed father, Poseidon. The games which had previously been established at the Isthmus in honour of Melicertes were held at night and were organized more in the form of a religious rite than of a spectacle or a great public gathering. Some writers, however, have made out that the Isthmian games were founded in memory of Sciron, and that Theseus wished in this way to atone for his murder because of the
kinship between them, for Sciron was a son of Canethus and Henioche, who was the daughter of Pittheus. Others say that their son was not Sciron but Sinis, and that it was in his honour that Theseus founded the games. However this may be, Theseus established the festival and made an agreement with the Corinthians that Athenians who came to visit the games should be provided with a place of honour in as large a space as could be covered by the sail of the state galley, which brought them there, when it was stretched out on the ground. This is what we are told by Hellanicus and by Andron of Halicarnassus.

26. According to Philochorus and various other writers, Theseus also sailed to the Black Sea and took part in a campaign with Heracles against the Amazons and here he was given Antiope as a prize for his valour. But most authorities, including Phercydes, Hellanicus, and Herodorus, tell us that Theseus made an expedition of his own there after the time of Heracles and took the Amazon prisoner, and this is a more convincing story. For there is no record that any of his companions captured an Amazon, while Bion mentions that even this one was carried off by a trick. The Amazons, according to him, were by nature well disposed to men and did not try to escape from Theseus when he landed on their coast. On the contrary, they even sent him presents and he invited the bearer of these to come on board his ship; then, as soon as she did so, he put out to sea.

that they saw the apparition of Theseus, clad in full armour and charging ahead of them against the barbarians.

36. After the Persian wars, when Phaedo was archon, the Athenians consulted the oracle at Delphi and were instructed by the Pythian priestess to bring home the bones of Theseus, give them honourable burial in Athens and guard them as sacred relics. It was a difficult task to discover the grave and take away the remains because of the inhospitable and savage temper of the Dolopians, who at that time were the inhabitants of Scyros. However, Cimon captured the island, as I have described in his Life, and made it a point of honour to find the spot where Theseus was buried. He caught sight of an eagle, at a place which had the appearance of a mound, pecking at the ground with its beak and tearing it up with its talons, and by some divine inspiration he concluded that they should dig at this place. There they found a coffin of a man of gigantic size and, lying beside it, a bronze spear and a sword. When Cimon brought these relics home on board his trireme, the Athenians were overjoyed and welcomed them with magnificent processions and sacrifices, as though the hero himself were returning to his city. He lies buried in the heart of Athens near the place where the Gymnasion now stands, and his tomb is a sanctuary for runaway slaves and all those who are poor and downtrodden and fear the strong, for Theseus all through his life was the champion and helper of the distressed and always listened kindly to the petitions of the poor. The principal sacrifice which the Athenians offer in his honour falls on the eighth day of the month Pyanepson, the day on which he returned from Crete with the Athenian youths. Besides this day they also honour him on the eighth day of the other months, either because he originally came to Athens from Troezen on the eighth day of the month Hecatombaeon, as Diodorus the Topographer has recorded, or else because they regard this number as being peculiarly his own, as a reputed son of Poseidon. The reason for this is that they pay honours to Poseidon on the eighth day of every month. The number eight is the first cube of an even number and also the double of the first square. It is therefore an especially appropriate symbol for the immovable and abiding power of this god, whom we call the stay and upholder of the earth.

1. 476–475 B.C.
2. Cimon, Ch. 8.
3. Built by Ptolemy Philadelphus and described in Pausanias, i, 17.