When we think of Greek vases we generally have in mind Greek pottery, which has survived in quantity. Clay, one of the most perishable of materials, becomes one of the most indestructible in the firing. In fact, much of our knowledge of ancient civilizations is derived from the potsherds that are found in successive layers on ancient sites; a pot, once fired, may break into a hundred pieces, but each piece survives practically intact without disintegrating. Bronze vases, on the other hand, though they were also widely used in antiquity and were less breakable than terracotta, have mostly disappeared; for bronze is apt to corrode and the metal can be melted down and reused.

A Greek bronze vase in good condition is therefore something of a rarity, and the recent acquisition by the Museum of a well-preserved Greek water jar (hydria) is a welcome event. Moreover, the graceful shape and the decoration—which includes a sculptured relief—make it an object of beauty and interest (see opposite page and p. 188).

The body of the vase, hammered out of a sheet of bronze, is left plain, whereas the handles, foot, and overhanging lip, which are cast, are profusely decorated. That is the regular scheme. We find it again in two other outstanding bronze water jars in this Museum (see pp. 186 and 187), both somewhat earlier than the one recently acquired. A comparison of the three vases will teach us much regarding the development of the Greek sense of form.

The earliest dates from about 460 B.C.—that is, from the time of the Olympia pediments—and it has the robustness of the works of that distinguished period. The body is broad, the forms of the handles substantial. The chief ornamental motives are palmettes on the handle attachments, a tongue pattern on the shoulder, rosettes on the two disks, and the bust of a woman rising above the rim. All is conceived in a simple, monumental style.

The second jar is about fifty years later and belongs to the post-Pheidian period. The shape is essentially the same as that of the earlier jar, a rounded body with one vertical and two horizontal handles and with ornamental and sculptural motives discreetly applied. But the forms have changed. The body is almost as broad as it is high, with a continuous, rich curve from lip to foot; the foot and the attachments of the side handles are decorated with leaf and palmette patterns; the side handles curve sharply upward and the vertical one has a sculptured relief on the lower attachment. Here and there are silver inlays. The whole conception has become less sturdy, more elegant.

The newly acquired vase dates from the second half of the fourth century—the period of Praxiteles, Skopas, and Lysippos—and it again shows a change in taste. The body is now more elongated, the neck higher, the mouth and foot more flaring. The scheme of decoration is similar to that of the late fifth-century jar, with a relief under the vertical handle, tongues and beading on the lip, and leaves alternating with palmettes on the foot and on the attachments of the horizontal handles. Silver and niello inlay adorn foot and lip. The effect of the whole is lighter, more graceful, and less monumental than that of the two other vases.

These variations within a given scheme are typically Greek. The Greek artist, instead of continually inventing new forms, was content to adhere to comparatively few types, achieving variety by subtle distinctions in curves, proportions, and ornaments. The relation of the several parts to one another was carefully studied, and much of the attraction of Greek vases is due to the resultant harmony of design. Chrysippos's famous definition, "Beauty consists in the proportionate distribution of parts," bears out the Greek preoccupation with this subject.

The interest of the newly acquired hydria is enhanced by the relief under its vertical han-
Bronze water jar, iv century B.C. Rogers Fund, 1944
die. It represents a winged youth, apparently Eros, arranging his hair while he holds up a mirror and leans against a small female statue. His mantle is loosely draped around his legs with some folds bunched under his elbow. His attitude—leaning on a support, his body forming a pronounced double curve and one leg passing across the other—is characteristic of figures assignable to about 340-320 B.C. The pose was evidently derived from such ripe Praxitelean creations as the Sauroktonos, the Hermes, and the Capitoline Satyr, and became
popular with Praxiteles’s immediate successors. It is a common attitude of figures on Attic vases of the late Kerch period. We therefore obtain an approximate date for our hydria and for others that resemble it sufficiently to be about contemporary. As we so often have to judge Praxitelean sculpture by Roman copies and adaptations, it is refreshing to have here an original Greek product of that time and school.

The little female figure is also noteworthy. She is in the characteristic attitude of an archaic Maiden, grasping an offering in one hand.
A winged youth, probably Eros. Detail of the jar shown on page 185

and holding up a fold of her drapery in the other. She wears a belted peplos, shoes, a necklace, and a bracelet at each wrist. Since she stands on a round, molded base, she is evidently intended for a statue, and since she is associated with Eros she is presumably a votary of Aphrodite, or perhaps an image of the goddess herself. The style is archaistic, as is often the case in
figures acting as supports for fourth-century statues. Drapery, features, hair are rendered in imitation of late archaic works, except that she wears not the usual chiton and short mantle, but a peplos with girded overfold. Greek archaistic works are often difficult to date, and so it is helpful to have here an example which can be placed fairly accurately and can serve as a clue for the assignment of others.

The hydria is said to have been found a number of years ago in a tomb at Eretria, in Euboea, together with some very fine gold jewelry, and was evidently once the precious property of a woman.

A number of other hydriai similar in shape and decoration are in museums in Athens, London, Berlin, Chantilly, Sofia, and Istanbul. They form a clearly defined group, which was provisionally called Rhodian or East Greek because several examples have been found in Rhodes, in neighboring islands, or in Asia Minor. But bronze vessels in antiquity were extensively exported, and they traveled hither and yon. The place where a bronze jar is found is therefore not necessarily a clue to the place where it was manufactured. And we must remember that we are dealing with a small remnant of an originally rich output and that in consequence our evidence is far from complete.

The use to which our hydria was put is also not definitely known. Vessels of this shape, though they served primarily as water jars, were used also for other purposes—for instance, as ballot boxes, prizes, and cinerary urns. Since, however, the present example evidently belonged to a woman and since women were the water carriers of antiquity—as they still are today in the Near East—we may surmise that our handsome jar served its mistress as a water container on special occasions and then accompanied her into the grave, along with her best set of jewelry.

_The hydria, acc. no. 44.11.9, is 19³⁄₄ inches (50.2 cm.) high; the height of the relief with its plinth is 5¹⁄₄ inches (14.6 cm.). Originally when the color of the bronze was a golden yellow the effect of the silver and niello inlays must have been more striking. The only restorations are a few pieces along the juncture of the shoulder and the body of the vase. Some of the jewelry said to have been found with the hydria has also been acquired by the Museum and will be described and illustrated in a subsequent number of the Bulletin. The hydria and the group to which it belongs will be discussed at greater length in an article in the American Journal of Archaeology._