

ARTICLE XI.

ACROPOLIS OF ATHENS BY E. BEULÉ.¹

THIS is a work of Art which has recently come to our notice, although it was published twenty years ago. The two volumes are devoted to descriptions of the old walls and fortifications of the Acropolis itself; the Propylæa and temple of Wingless Victory, the Parthenon and Erechtheum. They are written with great care, in a simple and graceful style. The descriptions are accurate and graphic, and although often elaborate in their details, neither tedious nor obscure. The author's candor and courtesy of spirit, when dealing with the opinions of other writers at variance with his own, are admirable.

M. Beulé portrays the buildings as they are now in their ruins, and as they were once in all their beauty and magnificence. He brings to light the exquisite skill and nicety with which the Greeks adapted architecture to sculptural ornament, and made sculpture avail itself of architectural principles. Thus, in the porch of the Caryatides, the beautiful figures, like the columns of the temple, incline slightly inward, and their limbs bend in correspondence to their position. Those on the right of the portico facing the spectator bend the right knee, and the group on the other hand bend the left. Such a posture gives an aspect of resistance to the outer side of the Caryatides. Even the arrangement of the hair is made to give an additional support to the head. In order that the entablature may not press too heavily on the maidens which sustain it, there is no frieze, and the cornice rests upon the architrave.

For a long time the existence of sculptured figures on the frieze of the northern portico was not known. It was inferred from holes in the black stone for attaching bass-reliefs; and also from an inscription in the British Museum, — which is the Report of the Commissioners appointed by the Athenians long ago to give an account of the state of the Erechtheum, — the expenditures, etc. The Commissioners say: "Around the temple is a frieze in Eleusinian marble. It has figures attached in bass-relief." Recent excavations near the Erechtheum have discovered fragments of small figures corresponding to the height of the frieze; about the same time the accounts for the completion of the edifice were also discovered.

¹ L'Acropole D'Athènes par E. Beulé Ancien Membre de L'Ecole D'Athènes publié sous les auspices du Ministre de l'Instruction Publique et des Cultes. Paris: Firmin Didot Freres, Libraires imprimeurs de l'Institut. 2 vols. 8vo. 1854.

"We have bought," say the directors of the works, "two talents of lead for fastening the small figures of the frieze at Sostratus, of the burgh of Melitus, 10 drachmas." They also designate eleven or twelve pieces, name the artists which were charged with these, and indicate the price which was paid for them. These curious details deserve to be transcribed entire.

"*Phyromachus of Kephisia*: The young man with a cuirass, 60 drachmas; *Prazias of Melitus*: ... and the person seen from behind who drives him back, 120 drachmas; *Antiphanes of the Ceramicus*: The chariot, the young man, and the two horses which are yoked to the chariot, 240 drachmas; *Phyromachus of Kephisia*: The man leading a horse, 60 drachmas; *Myrmion of Agryle*: The horse, the man who strikes him, and the column which he has added later, 120 drachmas; *Soclus of Alope*: The man holding the bridle, 60 drachmas; *Phyromachus of Kephisia*: The man standing near the altar, leaning on his staff, 60 drachmas; *Iasos of Collytus*: The woman before whom the young girl is kneeling, 80 drachmas."

Among the pieces preserved in the little Museum of the Acropolis are two mentioned in this inscription: the young girl kneeling, work of Iasos, and the three rearing horses abreast, which were yoked to a chariot.

The question whether these marbles were painted is discussed very fairly; and that they were painted is, to our mind, satisfactorily proved. First, there are traces of colors, such as blue and green, about the triglyphs of the Parthenon, and ornaments of the ceiling and friezes of the various temples. Secondly, the accounts containing the very sums paid to the painters have been found and deciphered; thus: scaffoldings for the painters of the interior ceiling; painters — for having painted the cymatium on the interior architrave at the rate of five oboli a foot; gilders — for having gilded the conchs; to a painter who has painted the cymatium on the interior architrave at the rate of five oboli a foot, 113 feet; gold bought for the conchs, 166 leaves at 1 drachma the leaf, of Adonis, living in Melitus. These registers establish the decoration of the upper parts of the temple, but only of the upper parts.

Antiquity tells us that Phidias sculptured the great Chryselephantine statue of Athena. But we are left to conjecture whether the colossal statues of the pediments, the reliefs of the metopes, and the exquisite bass-reliefs of the frieze of the Parthenon are wrought by his hand, or designed by his genius. M. Beulé says: "I admit that, by the wish of Pericles, Phidias chose the men and distributed the works. But as it happens today in similar enterprises, each master, once called and his programme accepted, remains free and sovereign in his atelier surrounded by his pupils and workmen." Public opinion gives the name of Phidias more particularly to the frieze. His part in the vast work may have been the general design, the execution of some pieces for models, and a direct in-

fluence on the studies of his pupils. His inspirations, his counsels, his surveillance conducted the execution and sustained in an unknown manner the pupils whom he initiated in his art.

The elaborate description which these volumes contain of the Parthenon suggests many hints with regard to the architecture of Christian churches. The very structure of this temple indicates introspection, thoughtfulness, calmness, and dignity of spirit. Men who go into such a house of worship do not go in for the sake of looking out of the windows. The whole plan of the Parthenon is seen at once, and makes a permanent impression on the mind. There are fifty elaborate church edifices which we have looked at a hundred times, long before and long since we examined the Parthenon, but we cannot, even now, form in our minds an exact picture of those churches. Some of them even now are entirely indistinct in our memories; but the size and form and proportions of the Parthenon are indelibly impressed on our mind. It is certainly a great perfection of architecture that such rare beauty is allied to such admirable simplicity.

The Parthenon has been the delight and wonder of all ages. The beauty of its remaining stately columns still pleases the eye of the traveller. The blocks of marble are so firmly united that they look like one shaft. The shattered fragments tell how they were once put together. Each block had a square hole in the centre, into which was fitted a piece of hard wood, of a somewhat cylindrical form. The wood in the lower block had a round hole. The wood in the upper stone was prolonged into a pivot corresponding to the hole in the lower drum. These two were then placed the one over the other. In order to make the adhesion perfect, the surface of each of these blocks was divided into zones. The inner and outer were polished. The two others were hammered or slightly grooved, so that, in moving the top drum round upon the other like a mill-stone, all unevenness was ground into a powder, and every crevice was filled; not even the blade of a pen-knife can enter the joint. Many unfinished blocks lying on the ground have two ear-like projections on the rough stone for handles. After the operation of grinding is completed, these are taken off, and when the column is in place it is fluted.

It is scarcely forty years since the curvatures of the stylobate, architrave, etc., have been discovered. It is for want of these same curves that the Madeleine Church in Paris looks flat and sunken on the roof and elsewhere.

[The preceding is one of a Series of Articles on Art to be continued in future Numbers of the Bibliotheca Sacra].