PHOTOGRAPHED BY THE AUTHOR BY MOONLIGHT, FEBRUARY 29, 1896. EXPOSURE, ONE HOUR (FROM TEN TO ELEVEN P. M.).

EAST FRONT AND SOUTH SIDE OF THE PARTHENON.

HOW A RIDDLE OF THE PARTHENON WAS UNRAVELED.

[THOSE Americans who gathered in Athens in the spring of 1896, at the time of the Olympian games, accounts of which, as well as of the Athens of classic times and of our own day, have recently appeared in THE CENTURY, had occasion for patriotic pride in the success of the American youths who took part in those games; they, with the Greek winner of the Marathon race, may be said to have been the heroes of the hour. But there had been, earlier in the year, another successful feat, which was in fact a curious mingling of athletics and scholarship, and of which the hero was a young American from Cornell University, a student in the American Classical School at Athens. This youth accomplished what high authorities had declared impossible in unraveling the riddle of the nail-holes in the architrave of the east front of the Parthenon, thus adding an interesting paragraph to Athenian history, and writing his own name on the most precious of human structures in better fashion than that followed by the profane and scribbling tourist. Perhaps this young student might not have succeeded so well in his daring enterprise had there not been some boyish practice in high climbing among the beams of a neighboring railroad bridge—a personal detail not recorded in the modest paper, written at our request, and printed under a title given it by the editor.—THE EDITOR.]

ONE cold afternoon in December a group of shivering men and women followed a lecturer in and out among the blocks of marble that strew the Acropolis of Athens, and listened as he explained the problems which the great building before them presents. It was an illustrated lecture on the Parthenon, with the Parthenon itself for illustration—one of the outdoor archæological lectures which Dr. Wilhelm Dörpfeld of the German Institute gives every Saturday afternoon during the winter. The lectures are primarily for the men of the institute, but members of the other archæological schools receive a kindly welcome; and Englishmen, Italians, Americans, and Greeks avail themselves gladly of the opportunity to wander through the ancient city with such a guide. Boreas was asserting his sway in his own dominion in vigorous fashion that week. As his ulster-clad victims tried to keep out of the reach of the cutting blasts that swept the bleak waste of rock, and as the hum of the city, bearing a street-cry here and there, swirled up to them with the dust-clouds from the plain, the legend of Oreithyia, the maiden snatched away by the North Wind from the hillside across the valley, suddenly took new

DRAWN BY MALCOLM FRASER.

TAKING DOWN A SQUEEZE.

meaning, and the rise of such a story was easy to understand. It was my good fortune to be a member of the American school, and therefore one of the audience. We were gathered before the east front of the temple. With heads tilted back and aching necks, we followed the lecturer where his words were leading us, while the problems of column, architrave, triglyph, and the rest were made so plain that we forgot the ache, and wondered why we had never understood it all before. Learned men have written great books about the building that rose before us; mighty battles of logic or opinion have been fought over almost every detail; each of its marble blocks has been measured with a painstaking accuracy that would be ridiculous were it any other building than the Parthenon: but «all the Old World's culture culminated in Greece, all Greece in Athens, all Athens in its Acropolis, all the Acropolis in the Par-

thenon.» Racked by earthquake and torn by explosion, bombarded and pillaged by Christian and Turk, for centuries a rich mine for lime-burner and museum-pirate, its fair white brow turned golden brown with the suns and winds and driving rains of more than two thousand years, it yet stands peerless in all the world. Our architects have not caught up with those old pagans who built this temple for their virgin goddess twenty-three hundred years ago. They are still imitating it, and trying to master the principles of its construction and the art of the man who planned it. Again and again it has been covered with elaborate and expensive scaffolding, that no detail be missed. We were unprepared, therefore, to learn that anything remained to be found out about the building; a riddle was the last thing that we expected. Our attention was directed once more, however, to the architrave, normally a smooth surface of marble, an unbroken band of brown, a hundred feet long and four feet wide, running across the whole front just above the tops of the eight columns. It is the surface of the great marble beams which span from pillar to pillar. Above it runs a belt of about the same width composed of fifteen three-barred triglyphs alternating with fourteen sculptured metopes. There is a triglyph over each column, and one in the middle of each of the intervening spaces. Under each metope there is a hole, four inches by two, cut in the marble of the architrave, and under each of twelve of the triglyphs is a close group of smaller holes arranged with no apparent system.

«The large holes,» explained the lecturer, «once served to hold great metal shields in place against the marble. The weathering about the holes shows that the shields were approximately four feet in diameter, and the contrast with the weathering outside the four-foot circle shows that they remained some time in place. Between the shields groups of metal letters were fastened, as these nail-holes that dot the spaces show, but what the letters were, or what they spelled, is not known. It is, without doubt, possible to determine from the relative positions of the holes what the letters were, and thus to recover the inscription. Such things have been done,[1] and it is time that this were done.»

The suggestion was inspiring, and as soon as possible permission to undertake the work was obtained from Mr. Kabbadias, General Ephor of Antiquities.

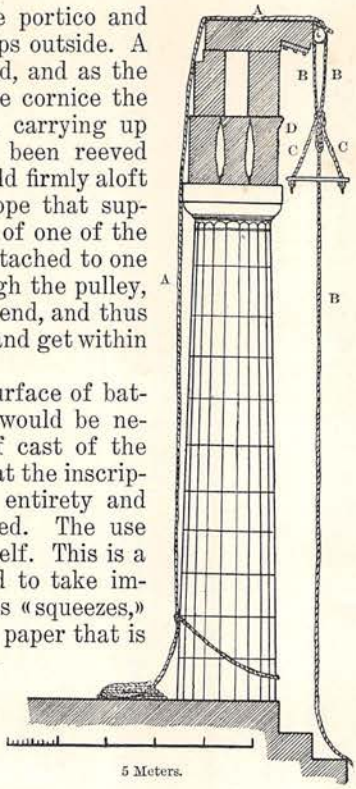
During the bombardment of the Acropolis in 1687, the Turkish garrison, supposing that the Christians would not turn their cannon on a building which had once been a church, kept each day's supply of powder, with the women and children, in the Parthenon. As soon as this became known to the Venetians, they centered their artillery fire on the great temple, and, to their delight and to the sorrow of the world ever since, succeeded in dropping a shell into the store of powder. The explosion blew out the middle of the building, and left it much as it stands to-day, the two ends separated from each other. During their occupation the Turks made the Parthenon a mosque and built a minaret in its southwest corner. The top of the minaret, which was once a prominent feature of all views of the Acropolis, disappeared long ago; but its spiral stairway is still in place, and renders ascent to the top of the west end an easy matter. The east front, however, stands alone, and has escaped the visits of the man who scratches his pitiful name on the homes of the gods; for its top is inaccessible, except by means of ladders, scaffolding, or ropes. All attempts, therefore, to obtain an accurate transcription of the holes have been made from below, with the aid of opera-glasses or long-range cameras. The height, forty-five feet, and the fact that at such a distance spots of Turkish bullet-marks are not easily to be distinguished from nail-holes, have combined to make these attempts uniformly unsuccessful, and direct access to the architrave seemed to be not only desirable, but necessary.

The use of ladders was out of the question. All building in Greece is done from scaffolds the levels of which are connected by inclined planes of boards, and there is probably not a ladder fifty feet long in all the kingdom. A scaffold seemed too cumbrous and expensive to be considered as a possibility. It was necessary, therefore, to get a rope over the top. A stone with a string attached was thrown over, stronger cords were drawn after it, and at last a stout Manila rope was dragged across the cornice, and lay with

[1] Inscriptions long ago torn from temples at Assisi, Pergamon, Troy, and Nîmes (the Maison Carrée), and from the arch of Septimius Severus in Rome, have been reconstructed in this way. At Adalia such an inscription was found in place on an arch of Hadrian when a Turkish wall in front of the arch was pulled down. The letters are of bronze and gilded. Some of them are in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford; some in Berlin; and others in Vienna. The dovetailed tenons which project from the backs of the letters are still covered with the lead that held them in the holes in the marble.

one end hanging down in the portico and the other dropping to the steps outside. A pulley was tied to the latter end, and as the rope was hauled back over the cornice the pulley mounted to the edge, carrying up with it a rope which had been reeved through it. The pulley was held firmly aloft by making the end of the rope that supported it fast around the foot of one of the columns. Sitting in a swing attached to one end of the rope that ran through the pulley, I could pull down on the other end, and thus raise myself to the architrave and get within reach of the puzzle.

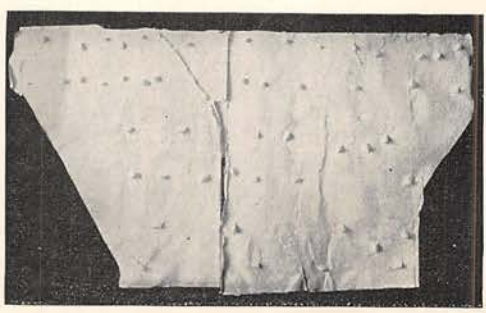
A glance along the great surface of battered marble showed that it would be necessary to make some sort of cast of the different groups of holes, so that the inscription might be studied in its entirety and a comparative method followed. The use of squeeze-paper suggested itself. This is a wood-pulp paper which is used to take impressions, known technically as «squeezes,» of inscriptions cut in stone—a paper that is plastic when wet and stiff when dry. From the ground each group of holes is strikingly like the top of a pepper-box in appearance; but when one swings before them, it is seen that the holes are well cut, as a rule three quarters of an inch long by half an inch wide, over half an inch deep, and from two to three inches apart. A sheet of paper was spread over the stone, wet with a sponge, and pounded tight to the surface with a brush. It broke through wherever it stretched across a hole. Two strips of paper, wet and crossing each other at right angles, were pushed in by their middle through each break to the bottom of the hole, so that each hole was lined with a double U of paper. The four projecting ends of the strips were turned back flat on the paper, and another sheet was put against the first. Both sheets were next thoroughly wet and pounded into a coherent mass of pulp, and the ends of the strips were thus held firmly between. If the wind did not blow the squeeze down during the night, it was stiff and strong in the morning; a little careful use of a paper-knife pried the knobs out of the holes; and a cast was secured which showed with entire accuracy the relative position of the holes, their shape, depth, and direction. It took all day to make a cast of one group of holes, and there are twelve groups. At that season of the year the chances were that a wind would rise during the night, and that I should find the great sheet of paper, torn and rumpled, snugly wedged among the blocks of marble about the corner on the south side of the Parthenon. As a rule, two could be secured in a week and carried safely to the school, a mile away. Any one who knows anything of the Greek temperament can imagine that the sight of the great white paper covered with knobs and flapping like a sail in the wind—for of course it could not be rolled—never failed to arouse the most active interest in its procession through the busy street of Æolus, up Hermes street, and across the promenade before the palace. After a month and a half the great pile of knobby papers in the library of the school was complete, and it ceased to be my first care in the morning to examine the east architrave of the Parthenon with a field-glass from a window of my room, to see if the squeeze had survived the night.



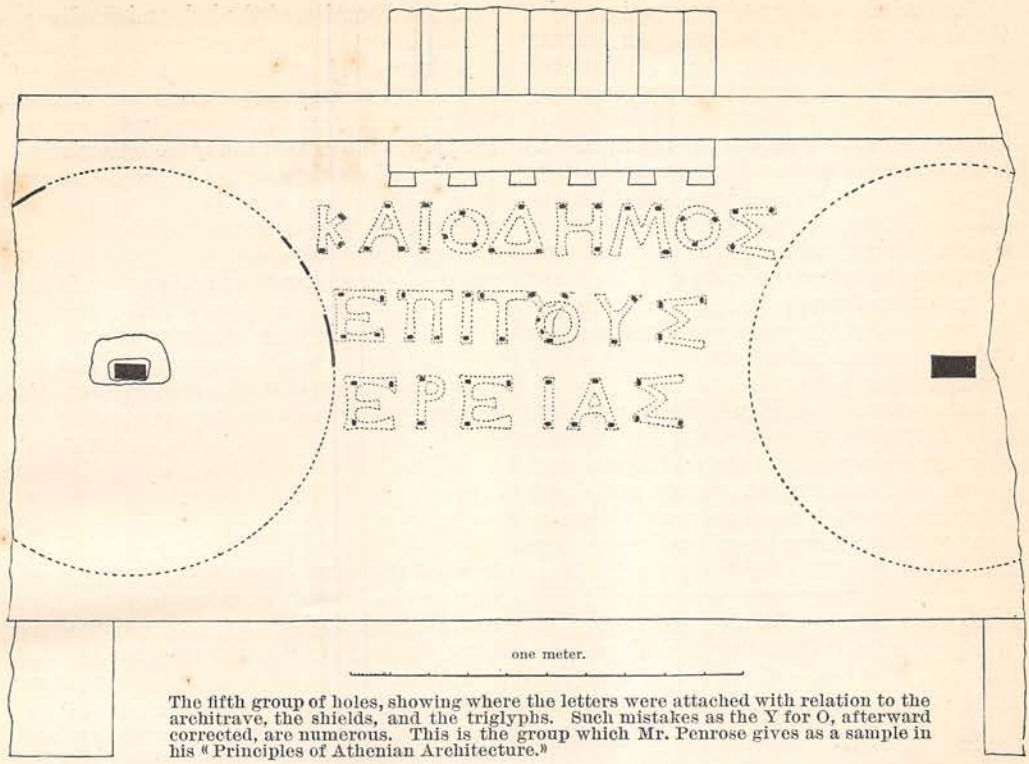
SIDE VIEW OF A COLUMN.

A, rope supporting pulley (first rope over); B, rope through pulley; C, swing; D, place where the holes are.

The work, without doubt, owes its completion to Dr. Dörpfeld's kindness, which made it possible to substitute a strong rope-ladder belonging to the German school for the swing at the end of a rope running through a pulley. This ladder was long enough to reach to the top of the building, and it was thus possible to determine from which of the projecting blocks it would be unwise to suspend any weight. Two were found to be badly



A SQUEEZE SHOWING IN REVERSE PART OF NERO'S NAME.



The fifth group of holes, showing where the letters were attached with relation to the architrave, the shields, and the triglyphs. Such mistakes as the Y for O, afterward corrected, are numerous. This is the group which Mr. Penrose gives as a sample in his «Principles of Athenian Architecture.»

broken, but fortunately the string which was thrown over at first had fallen on a block that is firm. The swing was now hung from the ladder, and by climbing to the top and lifting the ladder along, it was comparatively easy to gain access to any part of the architrave. The rope at the upper end of the ladder crossed over the top of the cornice, dropped down on the inside, and was made fast around the foot of the nearest column, just as had been done with the rope from the pulley. When the use of the pulley was discontinued, after only two impressions had been obtained, the rope which held it aloft was found to be cut half through by the edge of marble over which it had hung. The access which the ladder gave to the top made it possible to protect the ropes from similar cutting by wrapping them carefully with cloth.

The paper casts were hung in order about a room in the school, and thus the inscription could be studied with greater convenience than even from a scaffold running the whole length of the architrave. It has been generally assumed that the letters spelled the clever message that Alexander the Great sent to Athens, only a hundred years after the Parthenon was completed, with the three hundred suits of armor from the booty of his first Asiatic victory at the Granikos:

ALEXANDER, SON OF PHILIP, AND THE GREEKS, EXCEPT THE LACEDÆMONIANS, FROM THE BARBARIANS WHO INHABIT ASIA.

The suits of armor were sent to be placed in the Acropolis in honor of Athena, and the message was to be erected with them as a dedicatory inscription. What more natural than that the Athenians, gratified that Alexander, even if he was a Macedonian and their own conqueror, should desire to have it appear that he had undertaken the conquest of Persia in the name of Greece; and in the name of all Greece, except hated Sparta, should hang the shields in exultation on Athena's very temple, and write between them the words which proclaimed them the first-fruits of revenge on the grandsons of the Persian invaders? The most casual review of the nail-holes, however, was enough to convince one that this could not have been the Alexander message; for, while that contains in Greek only ninety-four letters, the Parthenon inscription had evidently contained not less than two hundred and fifty letters, arranged in three lines.

The Parisian makers of the great model of the Parthenon in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York evidently recognized this difficulty. When they attempted to reproduce the inscription between the shields on the east front, they found that the Alexander message would fill only about one third of the spaces. (It should be observed that they assumed thirteen groups of letters instead of twelve.) They considered themselves obliged, therefore, to introduce matter of their own invention, reference to other victories of Alexander for the most part, sufficient to bring the number of letters up to three hundred and thirty-five.

But to return to Athens. There was little time wasted in guessing. Groups of holes which were repeated here and there were picked out, measured accurately, and classified. In a short time there were almost as many of these different combinations as there are letters in the Greek alphabet. What letter each combination represented, however, was still a puzzle. Some of the groups appeared more frequently than others. For instance, there was a number of combinations of three holes in the form of a triangle (Fig. 1), and a great many just the reverse (Fig. 2). The former may be Λ, Δ, or Λ, and the latter Υ or T. Finally in the seventh group of holes there appeared Fig. 3. If Fig. 1 is Λ, Fig. 2, next to it, can be either Υ or T. If the first is Δ or Λ, the second is probably Υ, since a vowel would naturally follow a consonant. The third (Fig. 4) occurs several times, and the two upper holes are regularly twelve centimeters apart, and have their longer dimension vertical, while the corresponding holes in the letter before it are only eight and one half centimeters apart, and run horizontally, as indeed do all the other holes in that group. (It will be remembered that the holes are oblong.) A suspicion was aroused that Fig. 4 should be read Fig. 5, since the cross-bar of the T would naturally be longer than the distance between the ends of the diverging branches of an Υ of the same alphabet. The difference in direction seemed to be constant. That is, whenever Fig. 4 appears, with the distance twelve centimeters across the top, the upper holes run up and down; but where the group Fig. 2 with the shorter interval appears, the holes run horizontally. It seemed possible that the direction of the holes might depend on the direction of the letter-strokes which met them—that, in short, the holes had been cut nearly at right angles to these strokes. This was yet merely a theory, but it seemed to apply in the case of the three letters under consideration, and they read Fig. 6, which is of course good Greek. The O which seems to be demanded to complete the familiar stem is furnished by Fig. 7, and a trial of the perpendicular-stroke method makes of the next Fig. 8. In a few minutes it all emerges (Fig. 8A), *autokra*, apparently the beginning of some

Fig. 8A.

form of the word *αὐτοκράτωρ* («emperor»), whence the English word «autocrat.» This was encouraging, and at the same time somewhat disappointing—encouraging in that something had been made out, disappointing in that the inscription should seem to have to do, not with free Greece, but with the later period of Roman domination, which was the only time when Greece had emperors.

If the inscription was to be read straight across the top lines of all the groups, the T which must follow ΑΥΤΟΚΡΑ should appear at the beginning of the top line of the next space; if, however, each three lines must be read through, like the page of a book, before going over the shield to the next group of letters, the T should be found at the beginning of the second line of the same space. As a matter of fact, there was evidently a T at each place! Thus the work with this word was interrupted for a time.

The combination Fig. 9 occurs twice, each time in the group Fig. 10 at the end of a line. Evidently the last two letters are ΟΥ, and comparison with the Fig. 11 of ΑΥΤΟΚΡΑ made it probable that the new letter is Fig. 12. ΒΟΥ suggests ΒΟΥΛ, and indeed Fig. 1 appears directly following each ΒΟΥ, each time at the beginning of the line in the next space. We are to read across the shields, therefore, in all probability.

The first ΒΟΥΛ is followed by Fig. 13, without doubt Η, the vowel required to complete the word ΒΟΥΛΗ («council»). The second has only

Fig. 14, but there is little doubt that this is also an H, and that the word ΒΟΥΛΗ (*boulē*) may be read twice. If the last H is correct, it is evident that the workman did not always use the same number of holes to fasten the letters—that some might be omitted. The letters between the two words may be, therefore, Fig. 15 (*καὶ ἡ*, «and the»). As is usual in ancient inscriptions, there was no spacing of words.

Fig. 14.

Fig. 15.

Two hypotheses were now on trial, viz.: that a letter might not be represented always by the same grouping of holes, and that the letter-strokes were at right angles with the longest dimension of the holes. Further experiment enabled the letters preceding the first ΒΟΥΛΗ to be read ΕΙΟΥΠΑΓΟΥ (*eioupagou*). The Π is confused, and was read only when the other letters were reasonably sure. A great piece of the surface has flaked off the architrave, beginning a few inches before the E, and has taken with it all but five of the nail-holes at the beginning of the inscription; but the three that are left at the beginning of this line adapt themselves to another H («the») to accompany the first ΒΟΥΛΗ, which demands such an article. The space intervening is just large enough for the letters ΕΞ ΑΡ (*ex ar-*), which are needed to complete the familiar words with which the inscription evidently begins: Η ΕΞ ΑΡΕΙΟΥΠΑΓΟΥ ΒΟΥΛΗ («The Council of the Areiopagos»). Indeed, two holes which seem to have belonged to a P are left at the edge of the break (Fig. 16).

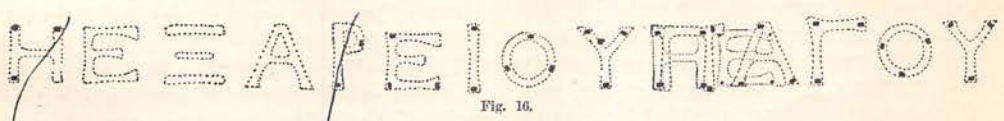


Fig. 16.

The confusion at the beginning of the word ΠΑΓΟΥ has been noticed. Examination shows that the extra holes are the result of a correction—and a correction of peculiar interest. Four holes which could not have been intended for the attachment of a Π are exactly right for an H. Directly following are four small round holes bored in the marble to the depth of the larger holes, and arranged as if for an E. It seems beyond question that the workman who put up the letters began the inscription at this point, had the holes for the initial H finished, and the holes for the E which follows bored but not yet squared out, when it occurred to him or to some one else that there would not be room at the other end of the architrave if he began here, and he moved over to the next space to the left for a fresh start.

There are a great many decrees preserved in the collections of Greek inscriptions which begin with the formula, «The Council of the Areiopagos, the Council of the Five Hundred (or Six Hundred), and the Athenian People.» Following the second ΒΟΥΛΗ are the holes Fig. 17. The first is evidently a T, and the last, on trial of the perpendicular-stroke method, becomes Χ, the Greek numeral 600. The letters following the T are therefore Fig. 18, ΩΝ, and the second council was Η ΒΟΥΛΗ ΤΩΝ Χ («The Council of the Six Hundred»).

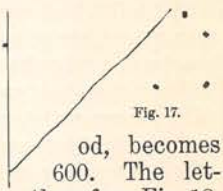


Fig. 17.

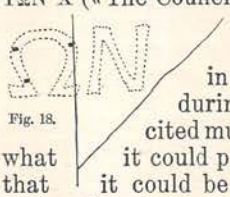


Fig. 18.

The combination Fig. 19 occurs three times in the inscription, and during the classification excited much wonder as to what it could possibly be. Now that it could be assigned with reasonable certainty to the Ω (omega) page in the alphabet-book, it was not long before it was revealed which emperor it was whose name had been blazoned on the Parthenon's brow. The next Fig. 19 after ΑΥΤΟΚΡΑ is in the group Fig. 20. This spells out Fig. 21, and the third letter comes again before the P, with a possible E intervening. The letter is probably N, and the word Fig. 22—that is, Nero.

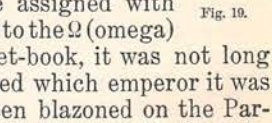


Fig. 19.

Fig. 20.

Fig. 21.

Fig. 22.

The word ΝΕΡΩΝΑ is in the accusative case. It must be in the same case as the word «emperor,» and we may complete with confidence the first word, ΑΥΤΟΚΡΑΤΟΡΑ, and expect to find all of Nero's names, which inevitably follow, also in the accusative. They are quickly deciphered: ΜΕΓΙΣΤΟΝ ΝΕΡΩΝΑ ΚΑΙΣΑΡΑ ΚΛΑΥΔΙΟΝ ΣΕΒΑΣΤΟΝ ΓΕΡΜΑΝΙΚΟΝ ΘΕΟΥ ΥΙΟΝ («Greatest Nero Cæsar Claudius Augustus Germanicus, Son

of God»). This last rather staggers one, spelled out in Greek; but one has only to reflect that all this is merely Latin translated into Greek, and that Nero styled himself *Divi Claudi filius* («son of divine Claudius»). Roman emperors usually became divine at death—*ex officio*, so to speak. The first four letters of the word ΓΕΡΜΑΝΙΚΟΝ flaked off with the ΕΞΑ at the beginning, but the missing letters are supplied readily, and the gap has been bridged twice.

More than half yet remains to be read, but with so many letters identified and at our command, the deciphering goes fast, and the rest is soon legible. After Η ΒΟΥΛΗ ΤΩΝ Χ there emerges the third legislative body, ΚΑΙ Ο ΔΗΜΟΣ Ο ΑΘΗΝΑΙΩΝ («and the Athenian People»). The formula is complete, and it is evident that the inscription commemorated the erection of a statue of Nero, probably at the entrance of the Parthenon:

THE COUNCIL OF THE AREIOPAGOS AND THE COUNCIL OF THE SIX HUNDRED AND THE ATHENIAN PEOPLE [ERECT A STATUE OF] EMPEROR GREATEST NERO CÆSAR CLAUDIUS AUGUSTUS GERMANICUS, SON OF GOD, WHILE TI[BERIUS] CLAUDIUS NOVIUS SON OF PHILINOS IS ACTING AS GENERAL OVER THE HOPLITES FOR THE EIGHTH TIME, AND WHILE HE IS OVERSEER AND LAWGIVER.

This Novius is prominent in the history of his time, and held several offices besides those enumerated; but he seems to have thought that it would be unwise to occupy more than half of the inscription with his own titles, even if they were used ostensibly to date the event. Neither the eighth year of his generalship nor the name of the priestess for the year, which is given, but has not yet been deciphered, would avail to date the inscription accurately, were it not for the fact that there is in existence another inscription which not only states that Novius was general for the eighth time, but deigns to give the name of the archon—Thrasyllos—who was in office that year. Phlegon, in one of his «Wonder Stories,» tells of a four-headed child that was brought to Nero in the archonship of Thrasyllos, while Cæsonius Pætus and Petronius Turpilianus were consuls in Rome. The year of their consulship was 61 A. D., and this chain of references locates the Parthenon inscription in the same year. Paul had just arrived at Rome to begin the long series of imprisonments, trials, and releases which finally resulted in his death. Ten years before he had been in Athens, had roamed among the countless statues and altars which crowded the Acropolis, and had gazed at this fairest of «temples made with hands,» as yet unsullied by any Cæsar's name.

Had it been necessary to resort to conjecture for the date, a year not far from 61 would have been selected. At that time the Greeks had every reason to think that Nero's rule would be favorable to them. From the first he had shown himself an enthusiastic disciple of the Hellenism that had spread from southern Italy to Rome. As soon, however, as he felt secure enough on his throne to kill his mother, and thus to free himself from the last restraining influence, his fondness for music, poetry, the circus, and the stage speedily developed into a mania. The business of state was left more and more to his freedmen, and, with all the resources of the civilized world at the command of his caprice, he had but one thought and but one ambition—to make Rome as Greek as possible, and to win for himself applause and prizes as singer, poet, musician, and athlete.

When Rome conquered Greece, Romans came in contact with Greek culture, and learned to consider their own civilization rude in comparison with it. The result was that Greece became a nation of schoolmasters. Athens was the university city of the world, and Roman youths were sent there to acquire the final polish that should stamp them as gentlemen. The Greeks found it exceedingly profitable thus to be the fashion, and Athens especially profited by the flood of gold that poured in from all parts of the empire with those who came to be taught. Nero's attitude toward everything Greek was therefore most gratifying.

When, however, in the year 60, Nero established the Neronia,—quinquennial games at Rome patterned after the national games of Greece,—it is easy to believe that the conquest of Hellenism in Rome seemed complete, and that the feelings of gratitude toward Nero found immediate and enthusiastic expression in all parts of Greece. The Olympian games occurred the next year, in 61. Invitations to attend them were sent out to persons of note, and in all probability Nero was urged to be present and compete, with every assurance that he should be declared victor. Indeed, there is reason to believe that victor's crowns were sent him in advance, not only from Olympia, but from the other Greek cities where games were held. The whole country eagerly anticipated his coming, and it was natural that the demagogue of Athens should seize the opportunity to cater to the popular pro-Roman feeling by erecting a statue of Nero in the front portico of the

Parthenon, and at the same time to make good his own chances of obtaining favor when the emperor should come, by publishing the dedication in glittering letters across the front of the temple, coupling Nero's name and titles with his own.

It is always profitable to cultivate the party in power, and Greeks bowed very low from time to time in their servility to Rome; but never did a sycophant Greek with a Latin name have such a chance as that which Novius found. He must have considered himself a very clever fellow when the idea suggested itself. Temples in Asia Minor often bore metal inscriptions dedicating them to some Roman emperor. The Parthenon was the choicest treasure of Greece, the pride of every man whose tongue was Greek. Bright shields adorned the architrave, but no name had ever been there. What a stroke of genius for Novius thus to set the emperor's name between the shields, and write his own humbly underneath!

But Nero did not come in 61. Perhaps he preferred to wait until he had become more accustomed to appear in public; for he always affected great awe of the judges of the games. He made preparations to attend the games at their next celebration, in 65, and meanwhile built gymnasiums and gave magnificent shows.

In 64 he started for Greece, and selected Naples as the port from which to sail, since it was a Greek city, and he could therefore secure a final rehearsal before a Greek audience on Italian soil. For some unknown reason he changed his plans and returned to Rome, giving orders that the Olympian games should be postponed until he could be present! Soon afterward Rome was destroyed by a disastrous conflagration; and the rebuilding of the city and the celebration of his own games, the Neronia, in 65, prevented him from leaving Italy until late in 66.

During the rebuilding of the city he had sent his agents throughout Greece to seize any works of art, even statues of the gods, which they should consider it desirable to have at Rome. This was only one of the acts by which, during the years since 61, he had taught the Greeks to await his long-deferred visit with anxious misgivings. Once in their country, he speedily showed them that they knew not a third of his powers of wickedness. With his great army of followers, he made a triumphal circuit of all the games, which at his order had been forced into a single year, contrary to all precedent and all religious law. The programs of the games likewise were changed to suit his convenience, and events were introduced in which he considered himself proficient. The judges awarded him the prize, no matter how wretched his performance. No one dared to attempt honest competition with him, except one singer, and he was strangled by Nero's followers before he could leave the stage. The country was laid waste as by a hostile invasion. The despairing people asked one another whether a destroying Xerxes could have been more terrible than a singing Nero. Property was confiscated right and left, and if the owners seemed likely to make trouble they were killed. Nothing was sacred to the ravaging horde. Temples were plundered, and women were torn from their families, until the very name of Nero became a frightful thing. Perhaps Novius had cause to regret that his name was joined so conspicuously with the name of the robber-emperor, and to wish that those letters which kept him in such unpleasant prominence were down. In all probability he had not long to wait. After a year of undreamed-of insolence and outrage, Nero departed. He had not visited Athens at all, and the bright letters on the Parthenon's architrave were destined never to attract his approving glance. There was too much that weighed heavily on his conscience for him to dare to approach the city where the avenging Furies were worshiped and were said to dwell.

Another year, and the imperial maniac, turned coward, sought the sword of a freed slave to escape the vengeance of an outraged empire. Before he died the Roman senate had declared him a public enemy, and his name was chiseled carefully out of almost every stone in Greece that bore it. In the outburst of joy that swept over the empire at his death, Novius himself may well have helped to tear down the letters which he had been so glad to erect. The stone bears not the slightest mark of the letters, no trace of stain or weathering to indicate that they were long in place. Not a vestige of metal was left even in the nail-holes, and the Christians who used the Parthenon for a church in later centuries, and painted pictures of saints on the walls, probably had little idea that the accursed name of Nero, spelled even in nail-holes, had a place on the building. But the holes remained, and at last they have told to our inquisitive century the story of how a proud people, grown servile, did a shameful thing, and were sorry afterward.

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