

THE SEVEN WONDERS OF THE WORLD.

BY BENJAMIN IDE WHEELER.



HERE can be no doubt of the general desirability of having wonders, if for nothing but to relieve the monotony. Most people need to have the good pictures starred and double-starred for them in the catalogues; and Baedeker's list of the «chief sights» often brings peace to the troubled mind. If you have seen these you have acquired a part of the common language of intercourse, and learned some of the standard measures which civilization uses, and upon which society depends for an existence. If society is to get on much, it must have some good staples to confer about beside the weather, and something to measure by beside the human body, with its feet and spans and elbow-lengths. Here wonders come in to play their part; and while there is no particular need of limiting their number to seven, it must be allowed that it is a great convenience to have a canon established, so that one may know when one is through—just as some might consider it a relief to have completed the circuit of the seven deadly sins.

Seven was not a peculiarly favorite number among the Greeks. Agamemnon seeks to conciliate Achilles with gifts of seven tripods, seven towns, and seven women; Ajax's shield has seven layers of ox-hide; seven years Ulysses carries with the nymph Calypso; but ten and twelve were much more likely to be with them the round numbers. The Greek calendar had no week of seven days; for, as its moon was simply crescent, full, and waning, the threefold division of the month yielded approximately ten, and not seven, days, as did the Oriental calendar, with its four quarters of the moon. Seven planets helped the matter, too. Hence Cadmus's city Thebes and its seven gates have often been suspected of Phenician antecedents.

It may well have been a Semite who created the canon of the Seven Wonders; but that we cannot tell, for we have no clue as to whose handiwork it is. But this we do know, that its origin belongs in *time* to the century after Alexander's conquest, when East and West were intermingling, and in

place to that new Greece or greater Greece of western Asia and the Ægean in which Alexandria, Rhodes, and Babylon were the great centers of life.

A cycle or canon, like a creed, is hard to revise; for both are expressions of the outlook and the confidence of one particular period, and both represent the self-orientation of a given body of civilization in the material of its own horizon. The canon of the Seven Wonders has come down to us, virtually unrevised, as an unadulterated product of the Hellenistic third century B. C. The seven sages of Greece, Thales of Miletus, Pittacus of Mytilene, Bias of Priene, Solon of Athens, Cleobulus of Rhodes, Myson of Chen, and Chilon of Sparta, were all living in the first half of the sixth century B. C., and represent a definitely marked period of the Hellenic middle age. Their wisdom was of a peculiar brand, not much to the taste of Socrates' times; and yet, despite all the injustice to the wise men of Plato's and Aristotle's days, the syndicate, once formed, held its own by grace of tradition and of pedagogy.

We have no indication of the existence of a cycle of seven wonders until about the end of the second century B. C. Then appears, in an epigram of Antipater of Sidon, an enumeration of seven great works, which prove to be the very ones later appearing as the seven wonders. They are: (1) the Walls of Babylon; (2) the Statue of Zeus at Olympia; (3) the Hanging Gardens of Semiramis at Babylon; (4) the Colossus of Rhodes; (5) the Pyramids of Memphis; (6) the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus; (7) the Temple of Diana (Artemis) at Ephesus. Within the next century, Varro, by his leisurely allusion to the *septem opera*, betrays that the saying had already assumed current proverbial form. Diodorus, in the second half of the same century (first B. C.), speaks, too, of «the so-called seven works»; and Strabo, a little later, uses the very phrase, «the seven wonders.» From this time on, at least, the *septem miracula* have an assured place in all the common lore of Rome. The little Greek treatise, «On the Seven Wonders,» which has come down to us in incomplete form, and under the name

of Philo of Byzantium, an engineer of the second century B. C., is really, as its style and artificial purisms amply show, the work of some rhetorician of the fifth or sixth century after Christ, and in no wise chargeable against the otherwise blameless record of the excellent man of facts and machines. The list it gives is the same as that we found in Antipater's epigram.

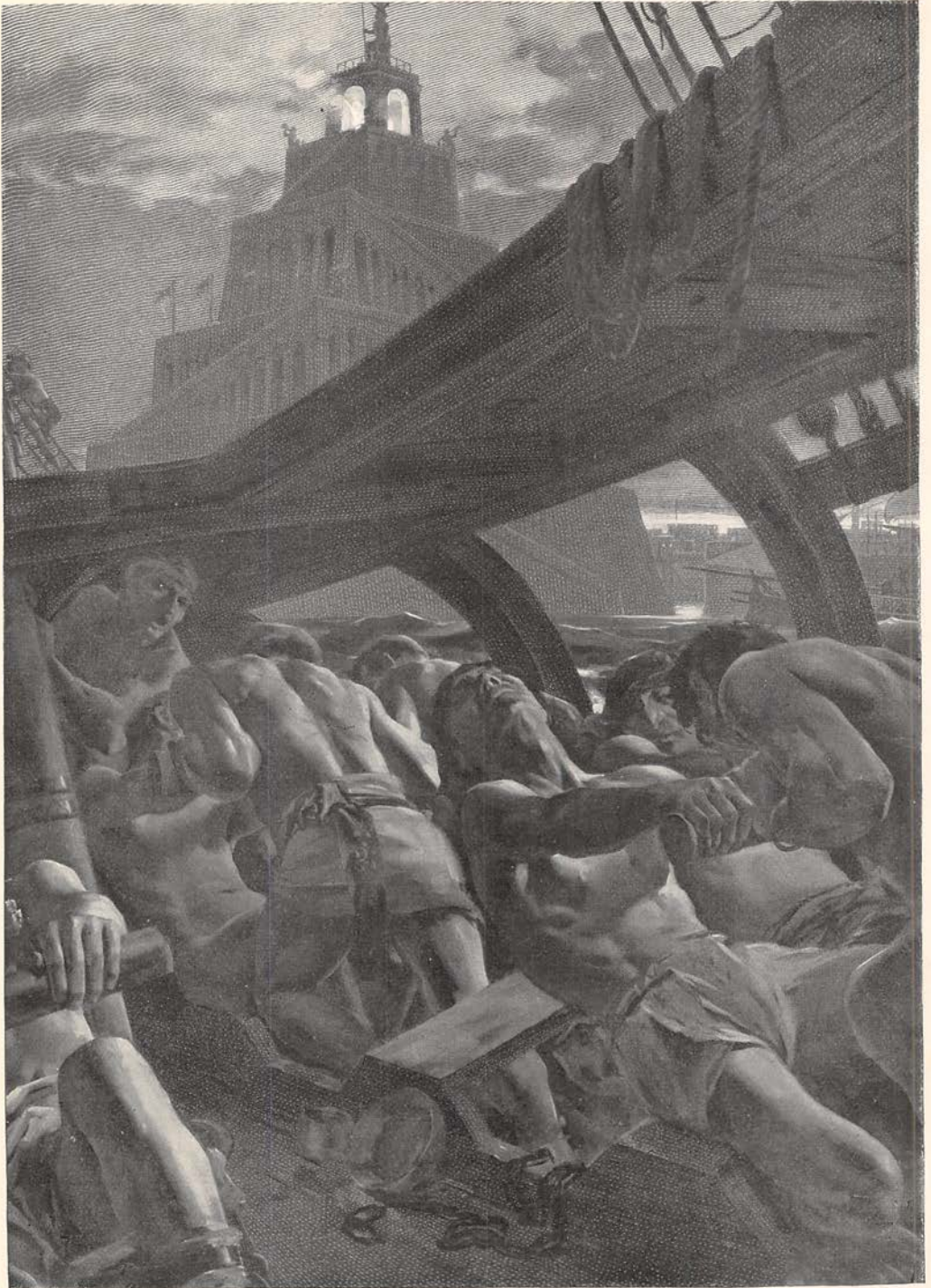
An approximate date for the first formulation of the cycle is offered by the brief career of the famous Colossus of Rhodes, which undoubtedly had a place in the original list. After standing less than sixty years in its place by the harbor of Rhodes,—and not astride the entrance, as common tradition has it,—it was overthrown by the earthquake of 227 B. C., and was never raised again. This gave opportunity for setting some rival wonder in its place, as Martial, for instance, does in naming the altar of Apollo at Delos. Either in this way, or because rival lists were in vogue before crystallization had fairly set in, some variation appears in the tradition; but yet, thanks to its early fame, the Colossus generally maintains its place. A list which received wide acceptance in the Roman Empire, and was so handed down to the middle ages, is the one probably accepted at Alexandria. It restricts Babylon to one count by omitting the walls of Babylon, and gives Egypt two by inserting the Pharos of Alexandria. Thus it stands: (1) the Pyramids; (2) the Hanging Gardens of Babylon; (3) the Statue of Zeus at Olympia; (4) the Colossus of Rhodes; (5) the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus; (6) The Temple of Artemis; (7) the Pharos of Alexandria. The first six are safely canonical. Other rivals for the seventh place are the altar of Apollo at Delos, the Æsculapian temple at Epidaurus, the labyrinth of Crete, the bronze statue of Athena on the Acropolis at Athens, the palace of Cyrus, or even the temple at Jerusalem.

It is to be noted in the vulgate list that only one of the wonders is located on European soil, while two are in Egypt, and three on or near the southwestern coast of Asia Minor. None of the works which we now deem greatest among the products of Hellenic skill and art are mentioned. Athens, Delphi, Corinth are passed calmly by. Nothing could illustrate more distinctly how the centers of life and interest had shifted since the conquests of Alexander, leaving the old Greece, much as recent movements of American life have New England, in the background of provincial isolation and of archaism. It illustrates also, on the other hand, the gen-

eral fact that the Greece which Rome knew, and from which she borrowed, had its capital at Alexandria or at Rhodes rather than at Athens. The Greek things which Rome adopted were the things approved at Alexandria. The Greece which, with her arts and letters and culture, conquered Rome was Hellenistic, not Hellenic. It was the Renaissance that first gave Europe free access to the Greece which lay behind the barrier raised by the closing years of the fourth century B. C.

Leaving out of account now the local factor, it may be asked what general principle governed the selection of these objects as the representative wonders of the Hellenistic world. It surely was not the consideration of beauty. Bigness pure and simple played certainly some part. All the structures are «big» of their kind. Even the Zeus statue, which threatened to raise the roof if ever the god should essay to leave his seat, gave a peculiar impression of bigness to the spectator. But that is not all. As the ancient descriptions show, it was a certain uniqueness as to construction, rather than as to size, that attracted attention. The work involved some peculiar devicefulness, some striking departure in method of building, or overcame some extraordinary difficulties, or adapted itself to some new purpose. It was the skill of the engineer rather than of the artist that was admired; for this was beginning to be an age of machinery as well as of bigness.

Once the basis of estimate was established in bigness and mechanical device, it was not to be expected that the world farther to the west would sit calmly by and leave the wonders all unchallenged. Pliny, after describing the old-world wonders, comes to tell of those which Rome can boast, and to show how, in great buildings, «as in other things, we have beaten the world—a thing, indeed, which, it will appear, we have done about as many times as the wonders are in number which I shall have to enumerate. Why, if all the buildings of our city were taken in a body, and all set down together in one place, their united grandeur would make one think we were describing another world, all assembled at one spot.» This mood was not pent up in Rome. The small provincial city took it up; and one loyal son of Pompeii scratched in bad Greek upon the walls of the local amphitheater, and left there for the inscription-gleaner of the nineteenth century, the expression of his high conviction that «this is one of the Seven Wonders.»



DRAWN BY ANDRÉ CASTAIGNE.

THE PHAROS OF ALEXANDRIA.

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THE French and Italian names for lighthouse, *phare*, *faro*, look back to the prototype of all lighthouses, Ptolemy's tower by Alexandria. Its place among the wonders may be in some dispute; but if natural right is to decide, there can be no question, for it combines all the claims. It was at once unique, grand, and useful. On the score of serving preëminently a practical purpose, it stands, indeed, alone among its colleagues.

The idea of a lighthouse was a development out of the beacon-fires which, in remoter antiquity, were often kept burning at the entrance to harbors to guide belated ships. Such we hear of at the mouth of the Piræus harbor, and on Sigeum, at the entrance to the Dardanelles. In Homer's time, the mariner overtaken by the night was glad to steer his craft by any chance watch-fire gleaming on the shore. So the Iliad (xix. 375) has it: «Or as when, o'er the sea, there cometh to the sailors' eyes the gleam of burning fire. There it' is, burning on high among the mountains in some lonely camp, while they, against their will, are being carried by the storm-blasts o'er the sea, the home of fishes, far from them they love.»

In classical times, fleets of war-ships, sailing in the night, followed the beacon-light blazing on the prows of the admiral's ship; but this was practised only in emergencies; for when the night was dark ships sought a harbor, if they could. The trips from port to port in the Ægean were usually short, and navigation was mostly daylight work.

In the second decade of the third century B. C., Ptolemy Soter, Alexander's famous general, then King of Egypt, began the construction of the great Pharos tower; and it was completed about 282 B. C. under his successor, Ptolemy Philadelphus. Sostratus of Cnidus was the architect; and, as the story goes, he carved his name, as the builder, deep upon its stones, then plastered it over, and set the king's name in the more transient material. The story may not be true; but, at any rate, future ages read upon the stone the plain inscription: «Sostratus of Cnidus to the rescuing gods, in behalf of those who sail the seas.» The stories told about its size, both in antiquity and in the middle ages, by the Arabs, pass the

bounds of the credible. Each of its four sides was said to measure at the base a stade—about six hundred feet. It was built of a white stone, in many stories, each narrowing toward the top. Its upper story had large openings toward the sea, through which the light of the great pitchwood fires gleamed out upon the treacherous approaches to the harbor. Far off at sea it could be seen, lifting itself like a planet in the sky, hours before the low coast of the Delta could be descried; hence Statius's verse:

Lumina noctivagæ tollit Pharos æmula Lunæ.¹

Josephus claims the light could be seen three hundred stades, *i.e.* over thirty miles, out at sea. The statement that the tower was over five hundred feet high is made by at least two late authors, but that is too much to believe. That its construction cost eight hundred talents (Ptolemaic), or well over a million dollars, is vouched for on the best authority; and this alone proves that, with skilled labor at twenty cents a day, no mean building was likely to result.

The island of Pharos, on the eastern end of which it was built, and from which it and all lighthouses of the Roman world after it were named, was separated from the mainland, on which Alexander founded his city, by a half-mile or more of shallow water. A wide mole, the *heptastadion*, built to join the island and the land, has since grown into a wide neck of land, bearing the present Mohammedan quarter of Alexandria. The exact spot where the famous lighthouse stood can no longer be determined. Perhaps it is covered by the present Fort Kaït Baï; more likely it is a thousand feet or more to the east, and now covered by the sea. The structure remained standing down into the fourteenth century of our era, and then disappeared from mention. But it had done its work. For sixteen centuries it had guided to land the wandering craft of the Ægean; but, better than that, its fame and its example had gone out into all the lands. In Pliny's time already it had begotten many successors,—two of them famous ones, the one at Ostia, and the one at Ravenna,—and the generations of its successors have been coming on ever since.

¹ «Pharos lifts its lights and vies with the night-rambling moon.»