TRIUMPHAL ARCH OF THE EMPEROR TRAJAN AT BENEVENTUM.

THE ROMAN EMPEROR AND HIS ARCH OF TRIUMPH.

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WHEN Princeton cast off the title of college to call herself a university, and celebrated the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of her foundation in so memorable a fashion, the authorities erected a triumphal arch to span the main street skirting the campus. It was only a temporary wooden structure, but its proportions were admirable, being modeled on those of the triumphal arch of Trajan at Benevento, to which I had happened to call the designer's attention. Arches had been growing in favor with us even before the erection of the marble arch in Washington Square had added a gem to the few really beautiful public monuments of New York. With our growing love of pageants, anniversaries, exhibitions, and commemorative monuments, the arch has probably come to stay, and it would be the part of wisdom for our architects and designers to study the best arches built by those inventors of it, the Romans. It may seem paradoxical to say that the most beautiful of all these ancient arches had remained almost unknown until, in 1895, the permission of the Italian government was given me to have molds taken from it on behalf of the new American School of Classical Studies in Rome.

Benevento, the old Beneventum, is now a

sleepy little city in the southeast of Italy, and yet its past history is long and interesting. It is full of Roman inscriptions and remains of Roman monuments, for it was the principal city on the long road from Rome to Brundisium, on the Adriatic coast, and afterward it became the seat of a Lombard duchy. The middle ages have bequeathed us a fine cathedral and other churches. Still, its interest centers preëminently about the triumphal arch of Trajan.

TRAJAN CROSSING THE DANUBE AND PROCLAIMING DACIA A ROMAN PROVINCE.

When I went to Benevento two years ago to study this little-known monument, I did not suppose that I should find anything that would be of special importance for the history of Trajan's reign. The question was whether from the artistic standpoint it would be advisable for the American School to have molds and casts made of the principal sculptures. After the first glimpse there remained no doubt in my mind on this point. I knew that I had found the most beautiful, expensive, and well-preserved work of Roman sculpture—unique, also, in the varied interest of the subjects represented in its reliefs. Still, it was not until more than a year had passed that I began to solve the puzzle of many of its reliefs, and finally flattered myself that I had deciphered them all. In the meantime the molder, Piernovelli, had come from Rome with his workmen, the scaffolding was erected, and I was able to study every detail at close quarters, and have good photographs made of each relief.

It is an unusual privilege to be able to bring to light a bit of the life of one of the great men of history, especially when what has been known of him serves rather to whet than to satisfy the world's desire. Most students of Roman history will acknowledge

that the greatest emperor after Augustus was Trajan, even if they do not, following in the wake of Montesquieu, regard him as the greatest ruler in history. Yet, by a strange fatality, almost all the literary sources for his reign, with the exception of Pliny's letters and panegyric, have disappeared, so that most of our information comes at second-hand, in later or abridged compilations, with stray bits, here and there, in inscriptions and on coins.

THE CAPITOLINE GODS WELCOMING TRAJAN BACK TO ROME AFTER THE SECOND DACIAN WAR.

Trajan was the first notable emperor of provincial blood. After the bloody and moody reigns of Tiberius, Caligula, and Nero, and the puerile and suspicious tyranny of Domitian, it was a good omen when Nerva had the sense to take Trajan as his colleague in the empire, in A. D. 97. His death, shortly after, left Trajan sole emperor until the year 117. When the new emperor's firmness had completely pacified Germany, he went to Rome, in 99, and the fact that no trouble occurred during his long absence from the capital shows how respected and feared was this dweller in camps.

After taking a firm grasp on the reins of government, he began preparations for war on the Dacians, who were continually threatening Rome across the Danube, and whose defeat of Domitian, not long before, had left a stain on Roman honor that must be wiped away. It was in 101 that this war began, to be continued until the submission of Decebalus. The name of this heroic and able Dacian king should be placed by the side of that of the German historic hero Hermann on the roll of national heroes of the barbaric struggle with Rome. The peace which followed was really only a breathing-spell before the final struggle in 105; for Decebalus could not be satisfied as a vassal of Rome, and Trajan would not rest until he had completely con-

quered the Dacians. "Oh, when," he would exclaim—"when shall I turn Dacia into a Roman province!" And so the second war came, after Trajan had made it possible to attack Dacia in a more vulnerable spot by building the most famous bridge of ancient times across the Danube.

The arch selects the beginning of the second Dacian war as the starting-point for its scenes. A first arch had been erected at the beginning of Trajan's reign as a memorial of his earliest successes in Germany. A second monument had probably recorded the first Dacian war. So it was unnecessary for the historic sculptor of our arch to go back any further. In fact, the monuments in the forum of Trajan—the most perfect group of works of art produced by the empire—had given in detail the various incidents of the second Dacian war in the reliefs of the memorial column, while on the arch in the forum stood statues of captive Dacians, and reliefs of the principal battles. The designer of the Benevento arch, therefore, decided to treat the subject of the Dacian war not realistically, as had been done before, but with a touch of Greek ideality, in the line of four upper reliefs, with their figures of colossal size. On one side is the beginning of the campaign, with Trajan passing the Danube over his famous bridge, and raising the kneeling figure of Dacia, which awaits him on the other side. He then proclaims Dacia a Roman province, and places it under the protection of Bacchus, Ceres, Diana, and Silvanus, whose exquisite figures appear in the opposite relief. A country famous, as Dacia always was for its vines, its wheat-fields, its forests, and its plains, would naturally fall under the jurisdiction of these gods. Then, after the completion of the conquest, comes the triumph. We have several descriptions of triumphs, as, for example, that of Paulus Æmilius in Plutarch; but none gives its pageantry in such details and with such realism as the sculptor does in the triumphal frieze which completely encircles the Benevento arch. For specialists this frieze will henceforth be the main source of information for everything connected with Roman triumphal processions. Several scenes connected with the triumph are given in separate large reliefs on account of their importance: under the shadow of the great arch is the sacrifice of thanks for victory, in which the Emperor officiates as pontifex maximus; and on the upper part of the arch, opposite the scene of the conquest of Dacia, are represented the return of the Emperor to the Capitol, and the welcome given him by

TRAJAN PRESENTING TO ITALY THE POOR CHILDREN EDUCATED BY HIS BOUNTY.

the Romans, and by seven gods, headed by Juno, Minerva, and Jupiter, who extends toward Trajan his thunderbolt, as if giving to him divine powers and universal rule. With Trajan's return the first cycle of reliefs closes.

The seven years of peace that followed the conquest of Dacia form the second notable period in Trajan's reign—that in which he accomplished nearly all his reconstructive administrative work. The senate, in after years, was in the habit of expressing the wish, at the beginning of a reign, that the new emperor might be as fortunate as Augustus and as good as Trajan. Trajan gained this reputation mainly through his unwearied efforts to ameliorate the condition of the people, especially in Italy. He had found the senate snubbed and discontented, the tenure of property insecure and at the mercy of spies and informers, the population rapidly diminishing, impoverished, and with relaxed fiber, the discipline of the army poor, commerce reduced, agriculture depressed, and the supply of grain insufficient. Some of the steps which he took to rectify all this are commemorated on the arch, in the middle line of four large reliefs on both of its faces. In order to encourage commerce, and especially the importation of grain, he turned his attention to the Italian ports. He greatly enlarged the port of Ancona, the largest on the Adriatic coast, and this event was recorded on a beautiful honorary arch, erected there to Trajan in 115. He added a new basin to that of Claudius at the port of Rome, thus completing a harbor system larger and finer than any even in modern times. At Civita Vecchia he opened up a new port, called, from him, Portus Trajani. These superb public works were commemorated in a relief of our arch, where Trajan is receiving the deputations of the three ports, whose protecting deities are enshrined in the background on a rocky ledge.

The Emperor perfected Nerva's idea of state aid in the education of poor children, and combined with it a plan to encourage agriculture. Large sums of money were loaned to communes from the imperial treasury, at a low rate of interest, and were used to bring new land under cultivation on mortgages, the income of which was used to give regular support to poor children of both sexes in the commune, especially to boys. These children were at once enrolled in a tribe, and at the proper age the young men were drafted into the army. As this institution was kept up by succeeding emperors, we conclude that it served its purpose of reviving agriculture, encouraging the poor to raise large families, and providing loyal recruits for the army. Two reliefs on the arch are remarkable attempts to express all this in sculpture. On the right Trajan presents a boy and a girl to an allegorical female figure of Italy holding a plow, the emblem of agriculture, while Mars stands approvingly in the background—showing the usefulness of the new institution in both peace and war. The other relief is perhaps the only known representation of recruits entering the Roman army. A youth, with feet bared and placed close together, with straining muscles and erect, stiff attitude, stands before the Emperor, while his measure is taken by a beautiful allegorical figure in full armor, representing the genius of the army. Another youth is awaiting his turn. This scene brings to mind the wonderful sympathy between Trajan and his army. There was no other Roman commander that had it as much, if we except Cæsar. And the two were alike in the strict discipline they imposed, in sharing the fatigues of the common soldier, in knowing each by name, and bearing in mind the individual exploits of each. But while Trajan was not as brilliant a general as Cæsar, he was a superb legislator and organizer for the army, and it was this which made possible the peaceful reign of Hadrian, and the long immunity from military disturbances which followed. The designer of the arch was right in illustrating Trajan's relations to the army as among the most important activities of his reign.

When the army had done its share in conquering Dacia,—and this is picturesquely described in the reliefs of the famous column of Trajan,—there was not much of its population left: nearly all were killed, captives, or emigrants. So Trajan attempted the colonization of it on a large scale, to make of it a bulwark of the empire against Western barbarians. He brought in people from all parts of the empire, especially from the East, founded a number of cities, worked the old mines and quarries and opened new ones, created a system of roads, and encouraged the growing of wheat and the vine, for which the country had always been famous. If the Rumanians and Wallachians who occupy this region at the present day speak a Romance language, it is due to the abiding influence of this bold and successful attempt at colonization. It was evidently the sculptor's intention to bring all this to mind in

the last relief of the middle line of sculptures. Two representatives of the new province are before Trajan, presented by two patron deities, while in the rear stands the Province, holding the standard with five eagles, which symbolizes the Roman army of five legions, by which it was conquered.

This scene closes the series of reliefs devoted to the peaceful triumphs of the seven years spent in internal administration. The lower line of sculptures illustrates the early scenes of the Parthian war which followed, and in which Trajan lost his life. Ever since Crassus lost so many legions in the East, in B. C. 53, the Romans had clamored at intervals for the conquest of the Parthians. It was a true Roman characteristic to strike back: Carthage, Gaul, Macedonia, had found Roman memories tenacious and Roman arms long. But there was another reason. Rome was jealous of Alexander's glory. Nearly two centuries of its literature before the time of Trajan are full of allusions to Oriental conquest. The Greeks taunted their new masters with the defeat of Crassus as proving the great military inferiority of the Romans to the Greeks; for Alexander had conquered the Persians, while the Parthians, whose power was only a faint shadow of theirs, had defied Rome.

Seven years passed before Trajan gave an ear to these voices. Perhaps it was mere restlessness on his part. He had lived a military life ever since the age of sixteen. Internal administration could not satisfy every side of his active spirit. In the autumn of 113, relying mainly on the legions already stationed in the East, he set sail from the port of Brundisium for Greece. At Athens he received the ambassadors from Chosroes, King of Parthia, and sent them away, saying he would give them an answer in Seleucia. After landing, he proceeded at once to Antioch, and there established his headquarters for the winter, and entered into negotiations with a number of minor rulers in Mesopotamia, Armenia, and Asia Minor. The first-fruits of his policy appeared in the spring, when, on his advance toward Armenia, he received the submission of a number of rulers of the regions of the Euxine, the Caspian, and the Caucasus, and so gave safe communications and a base of supplies to his army of operation. This is

TRAJAN CONFERRING AUTHORITY UNDER ROMAN SUZERAINTY TO KINGS DURING HIS CAMPAIGNS IN THE EAST.

the subject of the first of the four lower reliefs on the Benevento arch, which give the principal events of the campaign of 114. Here are four Eastern kinglets receiving investiture at the hands of the Emperor, under the auspices of Jupiter.

After pacifying Armenia, Trajan returned toward Antioch, and on his way was approached by Abgarus, King of Osrhoene, who hoped to obtain his favor by rich presents. He brought a thousand battle-horses, with rich trappings and arms for the horsemen, but, above all, relied on the personal charms of his son Arbandes, whom he presented to the Emperor. Knowing the Emperor's weakness for handsome youths, this was a keen stroke, and we are told that it was eminently successful. This presentation of the young man in picturesque costume to Trajan by his old father is the theme of the next relief.

On his return to Antioch for the winter of 115, Trajan had completed all the necessary preliminaries for his attack on the Parthians. It was to be delivered, not as Crassus delivered his, across the desert, but from the north, by the longer and safer route. With pacified or friendly countries in his rear, success seemed certain. His entrance into Antioch was triumphal. The city was crowded with dignitaries from every part of the empire, who came to confer with Trajan on public affairs, or to receive his commands. The Emperor had been acclaimed three times imperator by the army. He entered the city, his head crowned with laurel. In one of the lower reliefs of the Benevento arch we see Trajan, surrounded by his lictors, about to pass through the city gates. Its companion scene is its echo—a public ceremony in Rome by which the senate and the people celebrate the Emperor's successes, and offer up vows for his safe return, the triumphal crown being carried by an allegorical crowned figure. This is the latest of the events chronicled on the arch, which was finished at the beginning of the year 115.

Trajan continued his Eastern campaign for more than two years, and when, after varying fortunes, he was about to set sail for Italy, he fell ill and died. The triumphal arch at Benevento, under which it was fondly hoped he would pass, saw only the returning footsteps of Hadrian, who celebrated in Rome, in 119, his cousin's posthumous Parthian triumph, amid the sadness of the army and the people.

To the student of sculpture this great series of reliefs has come like a revelation. It was not supposed that Roman art was capable of producing a work of such breadth of conception, of such an artistic combination of beauty and strength. The skill and picturesqueness of composition, the dramatic quality of single figures, and especially what we can only term their life, are beyond anything done in sculpture since the altar at Pergamon. What we have from the times of Augustus, Claudius, and Titus seems lifeless and monotonous in comparison. With the uncertainty that reigns in regard to the history of Roman sculpture, any work of assured date is welcome. It is amusing to see how many theories are overturned by the arch. For example, the best authorities have been dating Roman busts from the style of head-dress, assigning a special kind of style to the reign of Nero, another to Titus, another to the Antonines, etc. There is now consternation in this camp because all these manners of head-dress are found together on our arch, and this convenient aid to dating has vanished. While I am referring to portraiture, let me call attention to the superb portraits of great Romans on the arch. There is, of course, a collection of fine heads of Trajan himself, which will at least double the number of his known portraits: there is more than one of Hadrian, Trajan's nephew and aide-de-camp; of Licinius Sura, his oldest and most intimate friend, secretary, and chief of staff; and of other men who were the Emperor's companions and lieutenants in his wars. The arch is a mine of wealth of many kinds, and for every one it is a beautiful work of art which may well serve as an inspiration to modern artists as the most perfect work of its kind that antiquity has produced.

A well-known Frenchman said to me, last summer: "I have been asked several times, 'What is the use of an American school in Rome?' and I did not quite know what to answer; but now I see, and this work you have done in molding the Benevento arch is alone enough to justify the founding of the school."