

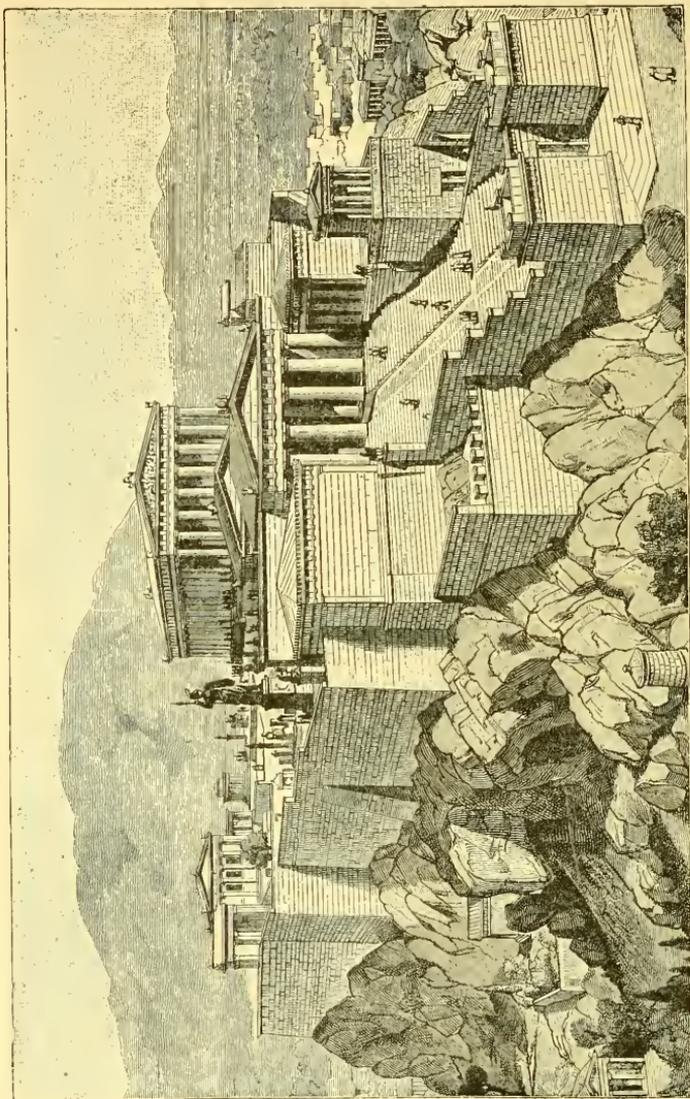
THE PARTHENON AND ITS POSSIBLE RESTORATION.

BY YORKE TRISCOTT.

AN International Archæological Congress is shortly to be held in Athens. Surely no more fitting place could well have been chosen for such a gathering. Athens, once the seat of intellectual cultivation, of refined learning, of artistic thought. Athens, full of splendid memories, of inspiring associations, home of all that is perfect and sublime in everything appertaining to art in its truest and highest sense.

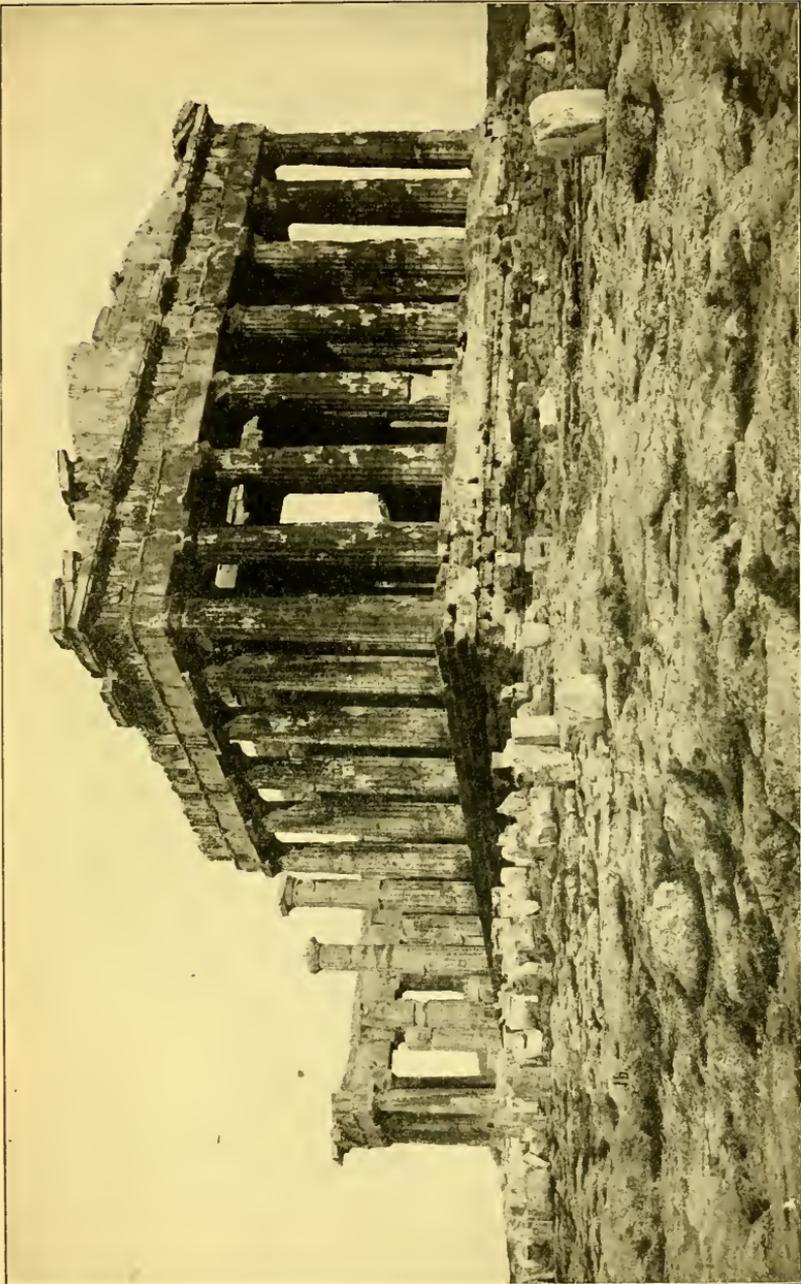
The original capital of the famous kingdom of Attica boasts of a most respectable antiquity, in that it can be traced backwards to the year 1550 B. C. Known at that period as Cecropia, and to the Turks as Setines, it was at a later date dedicated to the goddess Minerva, and rechristened Athene, that being the name by which Minerva was known to and worshipped by the Greeks. Minerva being then titular deity of the city, it becomes no cause for wonder that the chief temple therein should be dedicated to her and that the masterpiece of the greatest living sculptor of the time, Phidias, should take the form of a statue representing the same goddess. That sculptor, of whom Cicero wrote, "Nothing is more perfect than the statues of Phidias." This temple of Minerva is better known by its name of the "Parthenon," and it occupied the highest point in the Acropolis or Citadel of Athens. So magnificent was this building, that even now, after a lapse of over two thousand years, the still remaining ruins are a never-ending source of wonder and admiration, of study, too, and of learning. Within the walls of this temple stood the ivory and golden statue of Pallas Athene, representing a standing figure of the goddess, with the Ægis, or shield, on her breast, holding in one hand a spear, and in the other an ivory figure of her charioteer, Victoria. Formerly there existed a doubt as to whether the original work of Phidias

depicted the holding of a statue in the right hand of the goddess, but the discovery of some ancient Greek coins go to prove that such indeed was the case. So accustomed is the modern eye to



THE ACROPOLIS, RESTORED. (After Springer.)

the representation of the human figure in marble alone, that oftentimes one forgets the fact that the majority of statues in those ancient days were made of marble or of ivory, invariably intermixed with gold. The latter being a combination which was greatly ad-



THE PARTHENON IN RUINS.

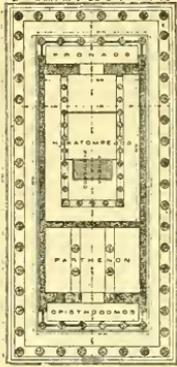
mired; possibly, perhaps because the tint of ivory is warmer and more flesh-like than that of marble and also perhaps, because it is capable of taking a better polish.

"Like polished ivory beauteous to behold,
Or Parian marble, when enclosed in gold."—*Dryden*.

The ivory and golden statue of Pallas Athene reached the marvellous height of forty-two English feet.

Among the many interesting subjects under discussion at the coming Congress, will be one relating to the proposed restoration of the Parthenon; possibly, too, of the white marble Erechtheum, with its two smaller temples, and probably, also, of the Propylæum, otherwise the magnificent entrance to the Acropolis. Representatives of scientific research and thought from all parts of

Europe and America will naturally have much to say on such an important artistic question. The pros and the cons will be many. Fragments of these buildings and relics of their statuary are scattered all over the civilised world. Nations and people value them, the learned and the erudite are taught much that is most precious, through the inestimable privilege of studying the originals themselves. Plaster casts, too, are to be found in most museums, notably in that of the Vatican, Rome, and in collections in both Prussia and Russia. This incontestably proves how immeasurably valuable and instructive are these studies from the antique. If the Congress agree to the restoration of the buildings and notably

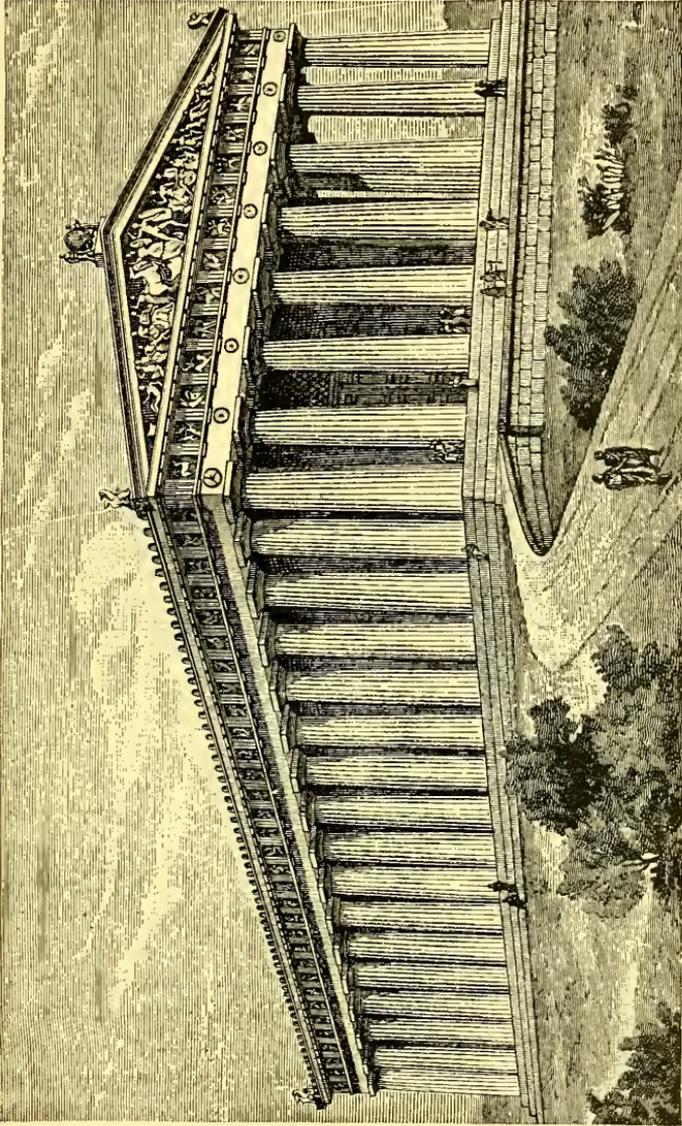


GROUND-PLAN OF
THE PARTHENON.

of the Parthenon, and it be decided that the original remains be used, then would the question become one of great importance to the whole artistic world, especially to that section of it, whose respective governments possess fragments of the actual statuary and of the original buildings which once adorned and beautified the heights of fair Athene.

In what is *par excellence* the Museum of Europe, namely the Louvre, Paris, there is a large and lofty hall, known as La Salle de Phidias. Here are seen displayed many most valuable specimens of Greek plastic art, the majority of which are the works of Phidias or of his school, and thus date from the fourth century B. C. There are several examples of statuary, of basso-relievos, some admirable vases and an ancient and very rare Greek inscription. But what is more interesting to the subject under discus-

sion, are some original fragments from the Parthenon itself. Notably a portion of the frieze which ran round the inner walls of the Temple, and represents a procession of women and priests.



THE PARTHENON FROM THE NORTHWEST. (After F. Thiersch.)

Also a valuable metope originally decorating the south side of the Parthenon.

To obtain, however, a better idea of the former size and grandeur of this beautiful building, to understand the perfection and

grace of its once decoration, to realise aright something of the richness and purity of Greek design, a visit should be paid to the British Museum, London, where is displayed possibly one of the finest and richest exhibitions of Greek plastic art in existence.

This Collection is known by the name of the "Elgin Marbles," owing to the fact that it was brought from Athens by the late Lord Elgin, who, about the year 1803 was British Ambassador at Constantinople. The story of its removal from Athens, the disastrous passage to England, the difficulties and obstacles encountered by Lord Elgin as to a just recognition of the value of these precious marbles, the great expense incurred, all of this is worth recording; the recital, however, will probably not encourage wealthy and patriotic Britishers to trouble themselves overmuch about art and all that pertaineth thereto. Having obtained a Firman from the then Sultan of Turkey, authorising him to remove from the Acropolis such relics as he desired, no restrictions being placed on quantity, Lord Elgin proceeded to ship to England as many chest-fulls as could be managed. To this end, for a whole year more than four hundred workmen were kept busily employed. After endless difficulties and wearisome delays the ships at last set sail, but only to encounter terrible storms and continuous bad weather; in one case even, the ship being wrecked and the valuable contents going to the bottom of the sea. These were, however, afterwards recovered by divers. In the meanwhile, Lord Elgin had been taken prisoner, thrown into jail at Paris, and remained in durance vile for the space of two years. The marbles, when they at last reached England, received even less hospitality. Lord Elgin had at least a roof over his head, albeit that of a prison; his Collection, however, could not even obtain the shelter of a roof, friendly or otherwise. From house to house they were carried, in each case only to be thrown carelessly into damp and dirty cellars. And when after nearly two years of similar treatment they were ultimately displayed to the public, the culminating point was reached, when so-called connoisseurs and scientific men jeered to such an extent at their supposed value, that "Lord Elgin's Marbles" became the laughing stock of London. To Benjamin Haydon is due the credit of first discovering and acknowledging the preciousness and beauty of the Collection, and when to his authority was added that of Canova the famous sculptor, and also that of Visconti, Director of the Musée Napoléon, the recognised leading Archæologist of the day, contemptuous scorn changed to just appreciation, the necessary volteface was expeditiously and creditably performed by the

public, Government was induced to buy, at what might be termed "half price," and "Lord Elgin's Marbles" found a hard won resting-place in the British Museum, London.

In all there are nearly 100 pieces; these are admirably arranged and displayed in a large and lofty hall, where the precious relics are neither cramped and overshadowed through the near neighborhood of walls and roof, nor is the student hampered by want of space and light.

It is with feelings of awe and reverence that we enter the Elgin Hall, and gaze at these mementos of the past. If stones had speech, what history, what tales could these mighty relics unfold! The year 444 B. C.! Imagination fails to grasp the far-off perspective, the solemn distance which that date conveys. One almost hesitates to try to realise how the world looked when these time and war-worn marbles first stood up white, lovely, perfect, under the blue and sunny Eastern sky. 444 B. C.—1901 A. D. It is a long, long stretch, a seemingly immeasurable gulf between the Then and the Now.

The Forty-eighth Olympiad, or about the middle of the fourth century B. C., was certainly the Golden Age of Athens. Science and art were at their zenith, intellect and cultivation had reached an exceedingly high standard; Pericles, the great statesman, was in power, and Phidias, the leading sculptor of his or of any time, reigned supreme in the realms of art.

The Parthenon was in course of erection.

In the Elgin Hall there is an interesting model of Minerva's Temple, showing exactly the state in which it stood after the Venetian bombardment of 1687. Before studying the original relics, a few moments may well be spared in order to examine this model. We shall be thus enabled to take our bearings, so to say, and the better be able to appreciate the marbles displayed in the Hall.

From this model we gather that the Parthenon was enclosed with a double row of Doric columns, the famous frieze was within the vestibule thus formed, and the wonderful metopæ decorated the outer walls themselves. Col. Leake, R. A. F. S., the well-known authority on archæology, gives the height of the outside row of pillars as 34 ft. with a diameter at the base of over 6 ft. The columns taper somewhat towards the capitals. The same learned chronicler records the dimensions of the Temple as 228 feet by 102. The model shows the original grace of form still visible in the eastern and the western pediments, although the latter is not in a good state of preservation. The Karyatides, one of

which noble figures is also exhibited in the Hall, supported the roof of the Erechtheum, the original position of which in the inner sanctuary, as also that of the afore-described statue of Minerva, is clearly indicated in the model before us.

The original frieze of nearly 550 feet is displayed to great advantage, running as it does completely round the walls of the Hall. Through a very happy forethought it has been remembered to indicate the points of the compass; the slabs, too, are placed in their original order, and the student is thus enabled to follow the story depicted with so much skill, from beginning to end. With the exception of the afore-mentioned fragment in the Louvre, and a similar one at Athens, we see before us the original frieze which formerly decorated the vestibule, within the double row of columns of the Parthenon itself. The relief is somewhat low, but impresses the observer with a wonderful sense of action and life. It represents scenes from the Panathenæa or solemn feast, held every fourth year in honor of the goddess Minerva, the chief act of which was the presentation by chosen Athenian maidens of the Peplos or woven and embroidered robe. We see the crowded procession, the priests and people, the horses, the chariots, everybody jostling and pushing. Excitement, haste, joyousness is discernible by the quickly running feet, the flying robes of the pedestrians, by the straining and the curvetting of the fiery steeds. Bulls and lambs are being led to the sacrifice, youths and maidens carry precious gifts, and musicians join in with tuneful sounds.

Thus we read the story which was written in stone two thousand years ago.

Next in interest are specimens of the beautiful metopæ, 15 of the original 92, which embellished the fronts and the sides of the Parthenon, being here exhibited. Some chroniclers aver that these metopæ are the work of more than one master, but space forbids our going satisfactorily into that question. It is, however, almost universally acknowledged that the majority of these beautiful compositions are by Phidias or by some of his many talented pupils. They represent the battle between the Centaurs and the Lapithæ, and the relief is much higher than that of the frieze, some of the figures indeed being almost detached from the background. Each metope is a veritable picture to itself, and offers separate scope for study and admiration.

The eastern and western pediments next claim attention, and of these the former is in the better state of preservation. From ancient documents and drawings we gather that this group of sub-

lime and wonderful figures represented the birth of Minerva as she sprang fully armed from the head of Jupiter. Surrounding the central scene are easily recognised the well-known representations of many gods and goddesses. Hercules with the lion's skin, Iris, the quick-footed messenger, the gracefully draped reclining forms of Proserpine and her mother Ceres, Selene, the goddess of the moon, the whole surely forming one of the most glorious specimens of plastic art.

The western pediment has suffered much from exposure and possibly too from the effects of the enemy's artillery. We read, however, that the scene depicted in the tympanum was that of the dispute between Minerva and Neptune as to the possession of the city of Athens. The central figures of this group are said to have a height of 12 feet, which speaks at once of the size and the marvellous conception of the scene, the relics of which alone we see before us.

With the mention of a fine Ionic column from the Erechtheum, and the afore-mentioned Karyatide, the latter being one of the original six beautiful figures, supporting the marble roof of the same building, this slight sketch of the Parthenon draws to its close. It will, however, have failed of its purpose if the reader has not gathered therefrom how intensely interesting the coming discussion concerning the restoration of the Parthenon will be to the whole of the artistic world.

Antiquities such as these belong conjointly to all students and savants alike, there surely being no nationality in the kingdom of art. Those governments which are the fortunate owners of similar treasures deeming it naturally the highest of privileges, the greatest of honors, to have such possession recorded of them.

It will be a moot point and a delicate to decide whether these many precious fragments would bear the strain and the jar of a voyage back to Athens.

Would it be more practical to take casts of all these old-world treasures, and leave the original relics to the safe care and the peaceful repose of their present homes?