

Early Roman Art Uncovered on Supposed Site of Sallust's Garden

ROME, April 11.—Some peasants who were working in the vineyards of Prince Jerome Altieri, near the Porta di San Paolo in 1863, discovered in a subterranean passage built about fifty-four feet below the level of the high road to Ostia, fifteen marble statues, several of which were recognized as copies of the group which adorned the temple of Apollo Sosianus at Rome and referred to by Horace and Pliny as the work of either Scopas or Praxiteles. This group, originally exhibited in some temple of Asia Minor, probably the Barbesion in Cilicia, is known to have been brought to Rome by C. Sestius, the friend of Mark Antony. No trace of the original group has ever been found. The statues comprising the group represented the so-called "Niobe" with her husband of Mediolan for about 1,200 Roman aceduli or dollars, and they were placed in the Villa Medici at Trinita del Monti. In 1779 the Grand Duke Pietro Leopoldo of Tuscany had them removed to Florence and built the so-called Hall of Niobe in the Uffizi gallery for their reception.

The statues are only part of the copies and probably were made not direct from the original group, for some do not belong to the subject and have not been supplied to make the number. The Praxiteles and one of Niobe's sons are at the Louvre, while two daughters of Niobe from another group are at the Vatican museum. A very fine nude figure in Parisian marble, much injured, the torso and head part of the kneeling son of Niobe looking up, called "Lionora," is at the Louvre; above there is also one of the



STATUE OF NIOBE FOUND IN ROME IN 1907, AND OWNED BY GEORGE SAGE, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF THE BANCA COMMERCIALE.

beauty and number of her children. Explaining her less fortunate sister Latona, who had but two, Apollo and Diana, and was turned to stone, when Apollo kills all her sons and Diana her daughters.

According to Propertius (III, 1, 33) the statues numbered at least fifteen, and might have numbered even twenty or twenty-two if the figures of Apollo, the two Sagittarii, the Pedagogus and nurses were included.

Prince Altieri sold the statues found in his vineyard to Cardinal Ferdinando de

Mediolan on the ground. Still another of the kneeling sons is at the Capitol museum, Rome. It is not decided whether the statues belonged to the same group and whether they formed a pedimental or merely a semi-circular arrangement.

During the recent building operations in Rome, entailing the pulling up of old streets and the raising to the ground of old historic houses, some workmen engaged in laying the foundations of a modern building on the supposed site of the Horti Sallustiani,

discovered in a specially constructed crypt or cellar nearly thirty feet below the street level a marble statue representing a Niobe or one of Niobe's daughters.

The statue is of Grecian marble warmly touched from the effect of dampness, but otherwise in perfect condition and without a blemish, excepting the finger tips of the right hand. The Niobe is represented in a kneeling posture, just struck by one of Diana's arrows, while she presses the folds of her chiton, which has slipped off

her shoulders, to stanch the flow of blood from her wound.

The modelling of the figure is bold, but perfect and graceful, the intention of the sculptor evidently being that of fulfilling his conception of the stricken Niobe, sunk on one knee, in the act of seeking safety from the arrows of Diana. The nude parts of the figure are beautifully modeled.

The general impression among archaeologists is that this recently found statue is

an excellent example of the Hellenistic style, and that the group which it represents has been hitherto unrecognized as a separate group. It is estimated as reliable evidence of the Greek sculpture. But apart from all considerations about the ultimate identification of this statue from a historic or archaeological standpoint, the fact remains that it is undoubtedly one of the most perfect specimens of classic art. The discovery of this statue, which had evidently been carefully concealed by its owner, will very likely reopen the discussion about the reasons which determined the concealment of works of art, instances of which are frequently met with during excavations in Rome. The most plausible explanation appears to be found in the barbaric invasions, but these invasions were as a rule sudden. The sack of the city was invariably followed by a fire, which undoubtedly damaged the architectural sculpture of temples and palaces, but it is unlikely that the barbarians carried away marble statues as part of their spoil. The terror of barbaric invasions can explain the concealment of precious mosaics, and also to some extent of bronzes statues, but certainly not of marble ones.

It seems more likely that such statues were hidden in order to escape the fanatical rage of the Christian iconoclasts. The history of this period of transition from paganism to Christianity is obscure, but that paganism did not die out without a long struggle may be gathered from the study of the legal measures taken against it. The harshness of a law proves the frequency of the crime it is intended to repress and the difficulty encountered in such repression. We know that some imperial decrees ordered the confiscation of houses where incense had been burned before idols, and that statues representing the old gods were destroyed. It is not difficult to connect the burial of statues with the religious transformation of Rome which began under Constantine. The skillful selection of such hiding places and the care bestowed in building vaults or galleries for the reception of the buried statues tend to show that their owners intended that the concealment should be a permanent one.

The beautiful gardens known as the Horti Sallustiani, excavated by Prof. Lanciani between 1873 and 1878, yielded a rich archaeological harvest and gave an approximation of what a Roman garden must have been in the palmy days of the empire. There is every reason to believe that when the exact locality of the Horti Sallustiani is found the yield in statues will be quite as important as that collected from the Horti Sallustiani. The supposition that the Niobe recently unearthed belonged to the Horti Sallustiani may therefore be discarded.

The process of identification of any statue, especially in the case of an isolated discovery, when one example cannot be compared with another, is extremely difficult, and although the subject represented by a statue can generally be ascertained at first blush, still the views of archaeologists are liable to modification, and sometimes to serious revolution. This can be said with more reason in the case of Rome, where the reproduction of Greek statues was encouraged and where the rage for works of art of every sort contributed to the spoliation of Grecian temples of many statues, which were set up in the palaces and public places of Rome. Thus, for instance, a statue of Apollo, by Scopas, was brought by Octavius after his victory at Antium and placed in the temple on the Palatine hill, while Verres, despoiled Athens and Olympia, and Sulla, as Cicero accused him, took many works of art from Sicily and Asia Minor.

Nero is said to have adorned his golden house with no less than 500 statues brought from Delphi, and in the baths of Titus, still in existence, they were built on the ground of the house and gardens of Maecenas, many valuable original Greek statues have been discovered. It is not improbable, therefore, that the Niobe in question may be either an original Greek or a copy of great excellence and in-

Life and Nature as Found in the Social Capital of Desert of Sahara

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BISKRA, Desert of Sahara, May 8.—(Special Correspondence to The Bee.)—I am at Biskra, the Paris of the Sahara. This oasis lies 175 miles south of the Mediterranean sea, in the midst of the desert. At one side of it great sand dunes roll on and on until they are lost in the yellow horizon. On the other are the well worn stones of the Oued, or dry river, Biskra, which becomes a flood during the short rainy part of the year, but which is now so parched under this African sun that it would blister your bare feet to cross it.

Biskra is situated on a low plateau, a little more than 200 feet above the river. To the north of it is the mighty wall of the Atlas mountains, which here rise a thousand feet higher than Mount Washington. In this African sun they are now of a pale yellow, the color of the limestone of which they are made. A little later they will turn to a hazy blue, changing as the sun drops to purple and red and then dying out through a dark purple into the night.

Biskra is an island in this mighty sea of the Sahara. The mountain wall is a part of the shore of that sea and the great cliffs rise almost straight up over it. If one had a glass and would cast his eye along those mountains he would find a break at the right, known as the Gorge of Kantara. It is there that a river has burst through the wall, forming a golden gate to this greatest desert on earth. One comes right out of the mountains into the desert and as he does so goes through the little oasis of Kantara, which serves, as it were, as the green key to that great golden door.

Garden of Allah.

Biskra has been rather voluptuously described in the novel called "The Garden of Allah." Under another name it is made the chief scene of that story and all of its surroundings are painted in more or less glowing colors. They are, as a rule, greatly overdrawn and the tale itself has a mawkish, sensual sentimentality which leaves a bad taste in one's mouth. According to it, the Desert of Sahara is the Garden of Allah and Biskra its capital. It is the European wild waste of sand which can be safely and comfortably reached by Europeans and every winter tourists and health seekers by the thousands come here from the railroad which the French have built. Large hotels have been erected for them and one has here, comfortably at from two to five dollars a day. There are altogether a half a dozen, and, in addition, a casino and theater. There are frequent concerts and cafe chantants, while the casino steadily runs its roulette and rouge at night tables, so that the place might be called the Monte Carlo of the Sahara as well.

Horse and Camel Races.

The season begins in November and lasts until May. It is at its liveliest in February, at the time of the horse and camel races, and camels take part. At that time there are long distance camel races run by Arabs on mearis or fast racing camels, which can make twelve or fifteen miles an hour. These camels are tall and lean and they seem to be all legs. They have saddles with high supports in front and behind, and the rider sits

and down with a "seesaw" corresponding to the ticking of your watch. The starting point is supposed to be the oasis of Toukout, which is 210 miles away, and a fairly good camel ought to cover the ground in less than a day.

The horse races are with Arabian stock and the riders are Arabs, who in their skill might even rival President Roosevelt, and who delight in cross country going, jumping everything on the way.

In French Biskra.

The city of Biskra is composed of two towns. One is known as French Biskra and the other Old Biskra. The former contains about 800 Europeans and two or three times that many natives, while the latter is altogether native and is numbered more by the number of palm trees. It owns than by the number of its inhabitants. It is comprised in six little mud villages scattered throughout plantations which support about 15,000 date trees.

The French town is surrounded by walls and entered by gates. It has several wide streets, the chief of which is the Rue Bertha, which runs from the railroad station past the public gardens and on out toward the oasis of Old Biskra, which is two miles off; and upon it is a street car line over which one can ride the whole of that distance for 2 cents. Another car line will take him to the hot springs three and a half miles away for the same money, and this is far down in the Desert of Sahara, in the very backwoods of the globe. The 2-cent rate is made without tickets, and it is less than half the nickel which we pay at home.

I shall send this letter to the United States for a 5-cent postage stamp, and I can telegraph from here across the Mediterranean to Paris for less than you can send a message from New York to Chicago. My cab rides cost me 50 cents a trip or 50 cents an hour, and if I prefer to move about on a camel the rate will be about \$1 per day.

When I take a Turkish bath in the United States I have to pay \$1, with 25 or 50 cents extra for fees. I had a Moorish bath here today for 20 cents in a bathing establishment which would be considered fine in any American city, and this included a thorough massage and a cup of delicious Turkish coffee at the close. The

men who bathed me were brawny Arabs. They were as yellow as gold, naked to the waist and they spent something like an hour on the job. I do not by that mean to say that it took that much time to get off the dirt; but the hour was used in massage and other extras. Biskra was a famous bathing place in the days of the Romans. It had a Roman name which meant baths, and which probably referred to the hot sulphur springs outside the city.

With the French Soldiers.

Biskra is under military government. It is the chief station of the eastern Sahara and it is called the Territoire de Commandement. One sees French soldiers everywhere, and there are French officers at the hotels and on the streets. They are fine looking and far different from our ordinary idea of the French army. They are straight, broad-shouldered, bronzed men, who have seen fighting with these tribes of the desert, and show it. Some of the officers have the appearance of dudes, and they are noted for their politeness, but no one dares to presume upon their weakness.

The territory of Biskra is about as large

as the state of Ohio, and it has a population of less than 100,000, all told. The natives live in a number of oases scattered here and there over the desert. Biskra itself is commanded by a major, assisted by a captain, three lieutenants and a military interpreter. In the other oases there are captains, lieutenants and interpreters. The town has electric lights and it has schools for both French and Arabs. It has a negro quarter as well.

The French city is made up of flat-roofed white houses of one or two stories. Many of the roofs have walls about them, and the women and children play on the roofs in the evening and the people often sleep there at night.

I wish I could take a walk with you through one of these Sahara towns. Even in French Biskra, the scenes would seem strange. There are Moors who sit right out in the street, or upon the sidewalks, upon mats which they have laid down for the purpose, and play dominoes. They have little tables about as high as a footstool, and thus sitting, with their bare feet under them, they will move the blocks for an hour or more without saying a word. Many of the players are gray-bearded and gray-

headed, but age does not seem to affect their love for the game.

Some Bible Characters.

Everywhere I go here I meet the characters of the scriptures. As I write these notes I can see in one group an old Abraham with the aged Sarah beside him and his buxom Hagar behind. That little baby in Hagar's arms might have been young Ishmael, and I observe that Abraham looks upon him with love. At the same time Sarah seems to be jealous, and glares at both baby and mother out of the tail of her eye.

That Moor coming down the street might be Joseph, the friend of King Pharaoh. Observe his costly raiment of fine silk and wool; he walks with a strut and is evidently a man of authority.

On that donkey trotting toward us is an old man whom one might easily imagine to be Halaam, and lo! the donkey stops and opens his mouth and brays. His message, however, we do not understand, for he has not the power of speech as had the ass of the scriptures. And so I might go on, finding a character at every step which would correspond to one in the Bible. This is the Simon-pure orient, where the na-

tives are about the same today as they were three or four or more thousand years since. They are all Mohammedans and believe only in Allah and the prophet.

How the Oasis is Watered.

But let us go out to the oasis and visit the people who live under the palm trees. We drive along the Rue Bertha by walls of yellow mud enclosing date trees which rise high above them and are loaded with ripe yellow fruit. The walls are as high as my head, and on their top dried thorn bushes have been set in while the mud was still wet, protecting the fruit like so much broken glass.

The gates to these gardens are rude doors of palm wood, and the only other openings are through drains seen here and there where the water flows in or out. This oasis is fed by springs from the River Biskra, which is dry the greater part of the year. Wells have tapped the springs and there is a flow of several thousand gallons a minute. The water is somewhat alkaline, but it puts the sugar into the dates and the sun is so hot that the fruit is delicious. According to the Arabs, so make good dates the head of the tree must be in the burning sun the greater part of the year. The thermometer here, even in midwinter, never falls below 90, and the climate seems just right, although it is not so at Kantara, which is thirty or forty miles farther north. The Arabs, it is annually producing something like 10,000,000 pounds of dates, enough to furnish a handful to every boy in the United States and leave some to spare.

As we ride on into the oasis we can see men picking the dates, or rather cutting them off. They are in enormous bunches and a good tree will produce on the average about 120 pounds annually. The fruit is not good until it is dead ripe. I bit into some green dates today and they puckered my mouth like unroasted persimmons.

In Old Biskra.

I have already written of the oases of Figruig and Taria. Biskra is somewhat the same. Its area is about that of an Ohio township, and it is altogether about six miles in length. It is divided up into little fields of garden patches, each of which is surrounded by these mud walls of sundried bricks. There are no pavements. The streets are dirt roads, with here and there a wide irrigation stream running through and with bridges of palm wood crossing it at intervals of every few feet.

There are villages scattered throughout the oasis. Each of these is entered by a low gate made of mud, bricks and palms and this gate is always closed at night. The houses are mostly mud built with flat roofs. There is some rain here, and the water runs from the roof through pipes which extend out into the street, giving one a douche on the turban or down the neck of one's gown.

I understand that the water supply is comparatively scanty, that water rights are sold in perpetuity and that there are also leases at so much per year, and even at so much per hour. Not long ago one paid \$30 for a perpetual stream half an inch wide and as deep as the rainfall would stand, and \$50 for a stream of four inches. Where the water is let out for the hour so often per week an Arab watch-

