

Roman Architecture.

II

Following the fate of nations the Greek civilization slowly declined whilst a great power, that of Rome, began to grow in the West. From its first small beginnings as a rude trading town Rome grew to be mistress of Italy and, in the second century B.C. conquered Greece.

Now the Romans were not a very artistic nation. They were great lawmakers, great organizers and empire builders but art they valued only as it assisted their political aims. The Romans worshipped Power and so Roman Architecture when it developed, was an art of Power & grandeur. When good it was very impressive & magnificent - when not good it was very apt to be ~~vulgar~~ vulgar.

But, though they were not great artists, the Romans were great Engineers. The practical needs of life appealed to their sense of order and efficiency and so in building they were the great road makers and bridge builders of classic times. The military roads of the Roman Empire still remain in many lands as a memorial of their power. Mile after mile, in a line as straight as though ruled on a map, they stretch across England and are still in many places used for the traffic of the country. To the Roman military Empire they were as valuable as the ^{frontier} railways now are to Germany, for by them the legions were moved from place to place to protect the borders of the Empire and to advance to further conquest.

Along with these roads and their bridges they ~~were~~ also ~~great~~ built aqueducts, channels by which water was carried ~~from~~ to the cities which they founded. Many

of these aqueducts still remain and one, the Pont du Gard was carried to the cities. When the water channel reached a

valley it was carried across on a bridge and one of these aqueduct bridges, the Pont du Gard, in the south of France is not only a fine engineering work but is very impressive as a work of simple architecture.

It is quite devoid of ornament & consists simply of two tiers of large arches with above them a range of smaller arches supporting the water channel. One could desire no ornament on it for the powerful lines of the arches, the strength and sweep with which they cross the valley are in themselves far more impressive than could be any highly ornamented structure.

Aqueduct
Seporia

Pont du Gard

In these engineering works we meet a new structural form
the arch, ~~and~~

I have already pointed out that what we call a "style" in architecture is simply a different way of constructing a building so, as soon as we find this different construction - the arch - we know that we are dealing with a new style of architecture.

The Greek Architecture was one of columns and posts - the Roman is one of Arches.

This came from a very practical reason - as most good things do. If you are building stone columns with stone beams across them it is not possible to place the columns very widely apart. If you did so, the beam would break.

The Romans wished to build in stone, or in brick and wished to place their posts as widely apart as possible. The only means of doing so was to arch over the space between the posts. This could be done with quite small pieces of stone and yet be stronger than any beam could be. So the Romans produced the first great Arched and vaulted architecture.

But, as the Empire grew rich and powerful the Romans, though not artistic, desired at least to appear artistic so they borrowed the art of the Greeks, ~~the~~ and applied it to their arched buildings. They brought over Greek artists and Greek Architects from Greece and Asia Minor and set them to ornament their buildings.

Colosseum
exterior

So, if we look at the Colosseum, the ~~great~~ building in which the Roman games and festivals were held, we see an arched building, very like the Pont du Gard in some ways, but covered over with columns and entablatures which are very like those of the Greek Temples. The peculiar combination which we find here, the arch framed between two columns and an entablature above, is known as the "Roman Order" and is a form which you will often see in Modern Buildings.

The Colosseum itself is a very wonderful building. It is an ellipse 620' long x 513' broad. and, when full, held some 8700 people. (82AD) Outside it is a great oval wall, pierced with arches behind which are the corridors and stairs leading to the seats. Inside is an arena in which the shows were given, it had every kind of stage machinery & could be transformed from a wild, rocky

Corridor Nisner

desert in which ~~not~~ savage animals prowled, to a lake on which mimic Roman fleets could counterfeited the Roman naval victories.

Colosseum
Interior

Up from the arena on all sides stretched the sloping marble seats for the spectators whilst, from masts at the top curtains could be slung to protect them from the sun.

We often nowadays associate the Colosseum with cruel gladiatorial fights and with Christian martyrdoms. This is however a very partial view. In later times, when Rome had grown too rich and the Roman mob too powerful, no doubt many cruel things were done in this ~~the~~ arena. But the greater part of the shows given here were quite harmless exhibitions of games and processions of wild animals and trophies. The Colosseum was the ~~most~~ principal open air theatre of Rome and the Romans were passionately fond of ~~display~~ display.

Such arenas were an ordinary part of every important Roman town. I have a slide showing the arena at Nimes & many others are known. They must have remained in use long through the Christian Era and the Bull fights of modern Spain are simply a survival of the Roman gladiatorial shows.

Nimes

Polca. Austria

The Roman Religion was a Religion of the State. Patriotism and a love for the Empire was ^{its} the loftiest ideal of the ~~and, in~~ ~~later times, the Roman Emperor himself~~ ~~was~~ was the Romans' loftiest ideal. The gods were the protectors and rulers of the Empire and so, by a natural development, the later Roman Emperors were deified. Of course we must not think that the Roman looked upon his Emperor as a God, in the sense in which we regard the word, The Roman had another religion of the family in which every Roman father was the priest of his own household, The Emperor was a state god, of the State Religion because he was the head of the Roman state family.

To house this religion the Romans built state Temples and for the architecture of these they went very largely to the Greeks. A Roman temple is very like a Greek temple. It is a house for the god, with in front of it a ~~partico~~ verandah or portico

T of Minerva
Aedile.

The roof ends in a Gable, supported on Columns.

Maison Carrée
Muses

As I have said, in these columns and the Entablatures over them, the Romans ~~followed~~ copied the Greek models. As was very natural however they altered them a little. They preferred the more elaborate forms to the simple ones, above all they liked the Corinthian Capital with its rich leaves and turning volutes.

Immense size

The alterations were not altogether improvements. The Roman orders are rich & sumptuous but they lack the delicate individuality of the Greek. Perhaps for this reason they are much more easily copied and much more easily adapted to any purpose. So today the columns and capitals and entablatures which you see on so many of our public buildings are in the main copied from those of the Roman ~~temples~~ Temples. & the "Roman Orders" have for a long time past played a very important part in architecture.

T of Baalbec
Door.
Inside.

Temples in East of immense size. T of Jupiter Baalbec inside Tullethun. 3 stones in foundation averaging 63' long. 12' high & 11' deep raised 20' above ground on a course of stones averaging 30' long.

Circular T

Picturesque Circular Temple.

centuries of the Christian Era, up to the year 330, when the Capital of the Empire was removed from Rome to Constantinople. During this time a very large number of splendid buildings were erected both in Rome and in the provinces. It was the Boast of Augustus that he had found Rome brick and had left it marble and his successors were as energetic builders as he was himself. The Roman forum has now been largely excavated, and its ruins give a vivid idea of the amount of building. Though only the merest fragments are left. This was the civic centre of Rome here were the law courts, & the ancient temples & here was the public meeting place of the Roman People.

Forum.

An important part was played in Roman life by the Public baths. There were more than mere baths for washing they were large public clubs in which, in addition to a full service of swimming baths, hot and cold baths, & Turkish baths, rooms were provided for athletic clubs, for libraries and literary or intellectual

associations. They stood within extensive grounds laid out with trees & paths for walking & even with racecourses.

The buildings themselves were undoubtedly the most splendid, both in conception and design, (executed in classic times). Nothing in Egypt or Assyria, where large buildings were put up, could compare with the skill in construction and the sheer magnificence of a Roman Imperial Bath. In Greece the finest buildings were comparatively small. The ~~Temple~~ or Temple of Theseus at Athens could go inside the ~~the~~ principal hall of the Baths of Caracalla at Rome & leave plenty of passage way all round.

This principal hall, which was the general bathing room measured 79' across and 183' long & was covered with an immense groined vault. The floor was of coloured marbles laid in patterns. The walls & columns were of the same precious material & the vaults were in concrete, probably enriched with mosaic. From this doors led to the swimming pond and to the hot room, both of them of very large size & here ~~the~~ every Roman citizen, at the cost of a few cents, could have all the luxury of a most luxurious age. and go and listen to a philosopher declaiming on the virtue of simplicity in the same building.

The Romans were not only the first people to use the Arch ~~in~~ the groined vault in Europe, they also introduced the dome. That is the hemispherical arched roof. The finest example of this is the famous Pantheon or temple of all the Gods built in Rome by Hadrian ^{from} ~~about~~ 100 to 125 A.D. The building consists of a rotunda 142' diameter and 70 feet in vertical height with walls 20' thick. Upon this is set a hemispherical dome 70 feet high so that the total height is about 140'. The building is lighted by a single opening at the top of the dome. 30 feet in diameter. Although so simple in general design the building is one of the most impressive in the world. The ~~simple~~ direct lighting from the one great eye opening on heaven, the great size and the very simple proportions ~~all act together~~ are far more impressive than any overelaborated work could be.

Baths of Caracalla
Central Hall
(Howa at Washington
Stations)

Baths of Diocletian

to Section

Swimming Pond
B of Caracalla

Pantheon
outside

Pantheon
inside

It was the custom in Rome when a ^{victorious} general returned from his campaign to receive him at the gate of the city that he might enter in triumph amid the cheers of the people. For this reason apparently the gate of the city was regarded as a spot identified with such triumphant entries and the custom arose of building a gate, somewhere in the city or near the Forum as a memorial of victory.

Such gates were called arches of Triumph & in time a very great number of them were built either in Rome or in the larger provincial cities. They are almost all of the same type a square block with a large arch in the centre for the procession and sometimes little additional arches on each side for foot passengers. Above is a space for the inscription and originally on top of all was a group of statuary showing the victorious general in his chariot.

Arch of Titus

The first example I have is the Arch of Titus at Rome, built to commemorate the capture of Jerusalem in 81 AD. The inner walls of this arch have on one side reliefs of the Emperor in a triumphal car, and being crowned by Victory and on the other soldiers carrying the 7 branched candelsticks and other spoils of the temple. So we know that these were brought to Rome, what became of them afterwards is quite unknown.

Arch Orange
End of Road

Arch Orange

The finest of all is the ~~gate~~ Arch of Constantine at Orange in southern France. It is a splendid example covered with carvings showing trophies of arms and with pedestals on top for 3 groups of sculpture. This arch has the three ~~gates~~ gates the large central one & the 2 small at the sides.

Avenue Col.

Another monument sometimes erected for the same purpose was the Column of Victory. This was simply a single immense column standing on a pedestal and with a statue of the emperor on its summit.

~~This and~~ These types of War Memorial were revived in Europe after the XVI century and we shall see several examples later. In London are two arches. Hyde Park Corner & the Marble Arch. In Paris is the wellknown Arc de l'Etoile and here in Montreal we have two columns of Victory, neither of them very large. The Nelson column and the column in Fletchers field.

In the year 79 AD. the towns of Pompeii and Herculaneum were overwhelmed by an eruption of Mount Vesuvius. This calamity has in a very wonderful manner preserved for us the houses of ordinary Roman citizens with their furniture, their wall paintings & their fittings almost untouched by time. It is consoling to know that very few people were killed. The rain of ashes which buried the town of Pompeii seems to have fallen fairly slowly and only a few persons, overanxious to save their property, were caught & perished. Of course the houses ~~are~~ are not now complete. The weight of ashes crushed down the roofs & the heat destroyed the rugs & hangings and wooden fittings but enough is left to let us restore the idea of a Roman house very completely.

The interesting point which we find is that the Roman lived in a verandah overlooking a garden. The Roman house was not like ours a box, or a number of boxes with windows looking out. It was a courtyard with colonnades round it off which opened the rooms & these had no windows to the street but looked inwards.

A good Roman house had two such courts. The first was small with a rainwater pond in the centre which was open to the sky. This was the atrium. It could often, as in the restoration I have, be built without columns & was apparently the state livingroom.

Beyond this was the colonnaded garden. laid out with statues & fountains, a pleasant place in which to work or to lounge through the heat of the day.

This house life of the Romans was very different from ours largely on account of the difference of climate. A verandah is really the best place ~~for~~ to live in in a sunny climate. It was also different in the intense desire for privacy. The Roman no more desired anyone to look into his home than he desired to see what was going on outside. So he closed his house up tightly & allowed no windows to the street.

The mosaic from the entrance floor of a Pompeian house illustrates this. Here is no welcome to the chance visitor but a savage dog

Restored
View
House of Vettii

Atrium

House of Vettii's
Garden

do do -

Wall painting

Weather

Cave Canem

The Roman Ornament was entirely derived from Greece & indeed most of it was probably cut by Greek workmen. It is coarser than the Greek, more florid & ~~is~~ splendid. It would not really be necessary to say much about it were it not that copies or adaptations of Roman Ornament have been extensively used in the decoration of modern architecture.

frieze Trajans Forum. Boy with whip. A Roman Genius or Guardian spirit, an old idea which survived into Christian times as the Cherub. The Griffin, an imaginary eastern animal strong as a lion swift as an eagle. The Acanthus foliage. + Acanthus scroll.

Roman Architecture has had a very strong influence on our modern building. One has only to walk down St James St & look at the banks and Insurance offices on either side to see reproductions of Roman Temples, of Roman Columns & of Roman ornaments. Yet the Roman empire in Rome expired 1600 years ago. How the influence of their Architecture has spanned these years we shall see in a later Lecture.

Greek Architecture is the art of refinement, of delicacy & of restraint. It was a national architecture ~~born~~ ^{grown} & rooted in the soil of Greece. Roman Architecture is the art of Power of pride & of Empire. It was an official architecture which from Britain to the deserts of Palmyra proclaimed the glory of the Roman state. It never varies from place to place.

Leaf for ~~every~~ leaf of the Corinthian capital carved in some remote town of Spain corresponds with that of the proud temple in Rome. It is an Architecture made to official order by a people who loved law & regularity more than any mere charm of wayward beauty. As such it is wonderful and ~~is~~ perfectly expressive. Roman Art is in fact very Roman Roman both in its splendour & dignity and in its occasional vulgarity.