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ADVENTUS AUGUSTI:

A DRAWING ATTRIBUTED TO GIOVANNI ANTONIO DA BRESCIA.

BY SIR SIDNEY COLVIN.

THE drawing (reproduced on Plate XXXV.) to which I give this title and attribution was acquired for the British Museum from a private source in 1911, and is of particular interest from its relation to one of the sculptured panels which decorate the attic of the Arch at Constantine at Rome. The series to which this relief belongs has been fully and learnedly discussed by Mr. Stuart Jones (following Petersen and others) in *Papers of the British School at Rome*, vol. iii. pp. 251-268. Mr. Stuart Jones maintains, and may be regarded, I conceive, as having fairly established, the view that these reliefs were originally executed as part of a monument raised in celebration of the German and Sarmatian victories of Marcus Aurelius, A.D. 174, and that eight panels were removed thence by Constantine to decorate his own triumphal arch, where they remain *in situ* to this day, while three others of the same series are also extant in the Palazzo dei Conservatori.

Reproductions of the whole series are given in the plates at the end of volume iii. in illustration of Mr. Stuart Jones's paper, the particular panel which now concerns us figuring as Plate XXIV., No. iii. Its subject, in Mr. Stuart Jones's view, is the entry of the Emperor into Rome after his victories, the buildings in the background standing for the Temple of Fortuna Redux (to the left) and the Arch of Domitian (to the right). Of

this relief, which still keeps its place on the Arch of Constantine, our drawing is a careful copy, finely shaded in pen and bistre, to all appearance by some engraver-draughtsman of the school of Andrea Mantegna working about A.D. 1510-20. (The attribution to Mantegna himself, inscribed on the old mount, is untenable.) The artist has worked with a clear intention of antiquarian accuracy, taking no such liberties either with the detail or the sentiment of his original as we are accustomed to find taken in the rare earlier copies of the antique by Italian draughtsmen. Comparison, however, of his drawing with the photograph of the original to which I have already referred, shows interesting discrepancies. Some of these are due, no doubt, to failure of exact observation on the part of the artist ; others to changes by damage and repair which have happened to the relief itself since his day. The most striking differences occur in the upper part of the composition. The armed warrior on the left, identified by Petersen as Claudius Pompeianus and by Mr. Stuart Jones as the *praefectus praetorio*, M. Bassaeus Rufus, carries a standard, or *signum*, of which a mere truncheon now remains, but which in the drawing is complete, though the artist seems not to have accurately made out its details, as the eagle is missing, and the arrangement of wreath, fillets, tablet, etc., does not correspond to any known type. Similarly in the architectural background, he has mistaken the meaning of what was intended to symbolize a triumphal arch, omitting the wreath which hangs from the capitals of its columns, and treating the arch as though it were the vaulted entrance into a solid building, of which he supplies a flank view in perspective. He has, moreover, changed the proportions of the winged and wreath-bearing Victory above the heads of the figures, making it fill far more than its true space in the composition. In the figures themselves, the warrior on the left supporting the *signum* has a longer beard in the drawing than in the original : the matron next him a little to the back is converted into a man : the younger woman to her right (Fortuna Redux) is shown with much longer and more stiffly curled ringlets of hair than appear in the relief itself : the young warrior farther to the right differs from the relief in that he wears a lofty plumed helmet and with his left hand supports his shield only and no spear ; whence we may conclude that a part of his present helmet has broken away and that his present spear is a restoration of later date than the drawing. Finally, the head of the Emperor himself seems identical with that in the relief, except that it is

not laureated. This, however, might easily have been a detail missed by the artist, and we must conclude either that the present head is that which the draughtsman actually saw, and presumably, therefore, the same which Constantine himself substituted for the original head of Marcus Aurelius; or else, if the present head is a restoration due to Pope Clement XII., that it nearly resembles the true Constantine head as it existed in the artist's day. In the action of the hands both of the Emperor himself and of the armed man on his right there are differences between the drawing and the relief which may point either to imperfect vision in the artist or to the original hands having been broken away when he drew, so that he was left to supply others from invention.

The reasons which have led me to suggest the name of Giovanni Antonio da Brescia as the author of this interesting drawing are: (1) that he was a craftsman of the school of Mantegna actually much occupied in Rome at this date with studies from the antique—see his *Venus*, 'Romae noviter repertum' (Passavant 42), his *Farnese Hercules* (Passavant 41, but here the ascription is not quite certain), his *Laocoon* (Bartsch 15), and several other designs taken from the antique though less literally; (2) that we find in the drawing certain particular tricks of design which are exactly repeated in some of his engraved plates, *e.g.* the rigid corkscrew curls of *Victory* and *Fortune* in the drawing which recur almost exactly in the plate of *Justice* (Bartsch 18); and (3) that the actual method of careful minute pen-hatching in the drawing closely resembles that of his engraved hatchings in his plates of the same period—note particularly the *Laocoon* afore-mentioned. It should be added that in our collotype reproduction the pen-work loses much of its sharpness and the indistinct second line of the inscription in the right-hand corner has disappeared. In the original this inscription can be deciphered as reading *del arco de' trasi* (by which name, as Dr. Ashby was good enough to inform me, the Arch of Constantine is commonly indicated in Renaissance writings).¹

¹ cf. *Papers*, ii. p. 51. The name is found as early as the 12th century, in documents in the Archives of the Church of S. Maria Nova (S. Francesca Romana), published by Fedele in *Arch. Soc. Rom. Stor. Patr.* xxvi. (1903), p. 45, No. cii. (April 7, 1173), p. 101, No. cxlv. (March 27, 1195), p. 102, No. cxlvi. (Nov. 17, 1195) under the forms *arcus de Traso* and *arcus Traso*.—T. A.

Relief from the Arch of Constantine,
drawn by Giovanni Antonio da Brescia