

XX.—*On a terra-cotta head of Greek workmanship, found on the Esquiline at Rome.* By C. DRURY E. FORTNUM, F.S.A.

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THE head in terra-cotta shown in the accompanying plate was dug up in the summer of 1881, during the course of excavations, levellings, and other earth-work, preparatory to building some of the many streets of houses which now nearly cover the Esquiline hill at Rome. With it were found, near the present Via Paolina, some fragments of terra-cotta mouldings and architectural ornaments, and a pine cone formed of the same material, some 12 or 15 inches high; from this we may infer that the building, of which these were fragments, was probably of a sepulchral character.

The head represents that of a youthful personage turned upwards and with upward look, while leaning on the left hand, the fourth and fifth fingers of which are nearly closed, the latter touching that end of the delicately-formed and expressive mouth.

The face and its leading features are modelled with great care and finished treatment of the surface and outlines, particularly of the eyes and mouth; the hair, on the contrary, is boldly cast in masses of wavy locks, full of the crisp vitality of youth and health. The hand, though skilfully sketched, is not highly finished; nor are the ears. The eyebrows are grandly arched and prominent, throwing the large, oval, melancholy, eyes into deep shade. The nose is unfortunately injured. The mouth, slightly open, with delicately-moulded lips, is tenderly expressive; the sentiment of the whole face being one of abstracted and sorrowful meditation.



TERRA COTTA HEAD FOUND ON THE ESQUILINE AT ROME.

In size it is a full three-quarters; the total height from the broken neck to the top lock of hair being slightly under one foot.

Unfortunately, it has been much broken: the top of the crown is wanting, the lower lobes of the ears are damaged, as is the right cheek and tip of the chin; much of the nose is broken away, and part of the fourth and fifth fingers, the back part of the hand, and the wrist are gone; but enough is left to show that it is the work of no mean artist.

On the forehead and elsewhere portions of the surface are sufficiently preserved to show that some finer surfacing material had been applied over the coarser clay, which is of a light buff or stony tint, and there are traces of what may possibly have been colour.

I have stated that the upper crown of the head is wanting; but it would seem that a quadrate opening, some three inches across, was always there, two smooth sides of which, showing how the clay had been shaped out, remaining visible. This fact would lead to the conclusion that the figure, of which the head is but a fragment, was placed at such a height that its upper part was not visible. This hole doubtless was made to facilitate the baking of the clay, as we see at the back or side of many of the terra-cotta statuettes, etc. from Tanagra and southern Italy.

I should think that it was the head of a statue in semi-recumbent attitude, having the left elbow resting upon some object by his side. But whom did it personify? for we have no remnants of emblematic significance whereby we might infer. It has none of the characteristics of a faun; neither does it agree with any type of Dionysos or Phoebos Apollo that I can remember. But here, I regret to say, my knowledge of antique types, as found in sculpture and on coins, is insufficient to guide me to any sure inference, or even to any approximate suggestion. Judging from the expression and character of the head alone, which is full of poetic sentiment, it would seem to be that of a mourner or sorrowing genius of the tomb in which some loved one was enshrined.

Or might it not have been the head of a semi-recumbent figure on the lid or top of a sarcophagus in the Etruscan manner, perhaps an idealised portrait of the deceased, but the superior artistic workmanship of a Greek hand?

Of its approximate date there is not much difference of opinion among those connoisseurs to whom I have had an opportunity of showing it. Dr. Helbig and Mr. Newton, who saw it when in my possession at Rome, agreed with the late Signor Alessandro Castellani in assigning it to a period between 250 and 300 B.C.,

probably about 280 ; the latter considering it to be a Greco-Etruscan or Italo-Greek work. In this opinion I think that Mr. Murray and other archaeologists mostly concur, though some consider it may be of rather later date.

These fragments were secured immediately after their excavation by my friend the Cavaliere Fabii Altini, the eminent Roman sculptor, to whose liberality I am indebted for their acquisition. The pine cone and other fragments have not yet been forwarded to me from Italy.