



PTOLEMY PHILADELPHUS AND ARSINOE II. BRONZE STATUETTES IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM

TWO BRONZE PORTRAITS FROM EGYPT,

[PLATE XVIII.]

THE bronze statuettes which are reproduced on Pl. XVIII. form part of the small collection of Greek and Roman antiquities in the Egyptian department of the British Museum.¹ They are practically entire, though the surface of the bronze has suffered considerably from oxydization. I am much indebted to the authorities of the Museum for allowing me to publish two such interesting pieces.

The provenance of the two bronzes is indicated by their place in the Museum: they come from Egypt. It is evident too that they have been made as a pair. At first sight they might be taken for Olympian deities, but looking more closely one sees that the heads are intended for portraits. They must therefore represent a deified king and queen, and there can be little doubt as to what royal couple they do represent. The male figure is Ptolemy Philadelphus and the lady is his elder sister and second wife, Arsinoe II.

The king stands in an easy attitude, his right hand resting on a long sceptre or spear. In his left arm he holds the club of Herakles. He wears cothurns, and his head is covered by a cap consisting of the skin of an elephant's head. The features, the short whiskers and the hair round the forehead are exactly the same as on the coins (cf. especially *B.M. Cat.*, Pl. VII., No. 5). The elephant-cap is a significant attribute. It is the characteristic headdress of Alexander the Great on the early coins of the Ptolemaic series, and in later times it became the distinctive mark of the city-goddess of Alexandria. For the ruler of the new state of which Alexander was the founder it was therefore an appropriate symbol. And if the elephant-cap means that Ptolemy claims to be the rightful successor of Alexander, the club which he carries in his left arm reminds us that he counted descent from Herakles.² In the eulogy of Theocritus, xvii, 13-33, it is with the same pair of heroes, Alexander and Herakles, that his father Soter is

¹ Nos. 38442, 38443. Mr. H. R. Hall kindly supplies the following details: Height of Ptolemy 1 ft. 3½ in.; of Arsinoe 1 ft. 2 in. They are apparently hollow cast, but it is not possible to say whether each figure was made in one

piece or several. The pupils of the eyes are incised. The object hanging from Ptolemy's arm might be either a lion's skin or a cloak.

² See the beginning of the Adule inscription (c.g. Mahaffy, *Hist. of Eg.* p. 105).

associated. It is also possible that the cothurns are intended as a mark of affiliation to Dionysos, a very popular deity in Alexandria and one with whom the Ptolemaic family claimed some relationship.

The face of the queen is too much damaged to be used for comparison with the coin-portraits. Her hair is arranged in the usual fashion (though this is not quite apparent in the photograph), and is surmounted by a low stephane. She wears shoes. The drapery, which consists of a sleeveless chiton and a rather tightly drawn mantle, showing the contours of the body, should be contrasted with that of the more matronly figure on the faience vases.³ The sceptre which she held in her right hand was in all probability not the papyrus-sceptre of Egyptian queens, but one of the same type as those which appear on Ptolemaic coins. There is indeed nothing Egyptian in either of the two statuettes. The double cornucopiae which rests in the queen's left arm is a well-known emblem on her coins (*B.M. Cat. Pl. VIII.*). Athenaeus tells us that it was first invented as an attribute of the statues of Arsinoe in allusion to her riches and generosity⁴; her horn of blessings, as it were, held double. The flattery is in much the same spirit as a passage of Theocritus in the poem already referred to:—

ἀλλ' οὔτις τόσα φύει ὄσα χθαμαλὰ Αἴγυπτος . . .
οὐ μὰν ἀχρεῖός γε δόμῳ ἐνὶ πῖονι χρυσός . . .

Portraits of the Ptolemies are by no means common, and any addition to the list is welcome.⁵ But it is as whole-figure portraits in the round that the two bronzes are chiefly interesting. Small as they are, they give us a good idea of the character of Greek statues of the *θεοὶ ἀδελφοί*, of the mixture of realism and glorification which such works required. The stolid, human features of the king in particular make an odd contrast with his heroic pose and the symbols of divinity with which he is loaded. In this respect, as well as in mere style, the bronze in question is very different from another work of the same order, the Lysippic statuette of Alexander with the spear, a figure which is heroic all over but which belongs to an earlier stage of art when faithful portraiture was not one of the things demanded of the court-sculptor.

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³ *E.g.* Wallis, *Eg. Ceramic Art*, p. 50, Fig. 103.

⁴ xi. 497. The context and the monuments combine to show that it is the *δίκερας* and not the simple *κέρας* of which he is speaking. δοκεῖ δὲ σκευοποιηθῆναι ὑπὸ [οἱ ἐπὶ] πρώτου τοῦ Φιλαδέλφου Πτολεμαίου βασιλέως φορήματα γενέσθαι τῶν Ἀρσινόης εἰκόνων. τῇ γὰρ εὐωνύμῳ χειρὶ τοιοῦτον φορεῖ δημιούργημα πάντων τῶν ὠραίων πλῆρες, ἐμφαινόντων τῶν δημιουργῶν ὡς

καὶ τοῦ τῆς Ἀμαλθείας ἐστὶν ὀλβιώτερον τὸ κέρας τοῦτο. μνημονεύει αὐτοῦ Θεοκλήης ἐν Ἴθυφάλλοις οὕτως

ἐθύσαμεν γὰρ σήμερον Σωτήρια
πάντες οἱ τεχνίται·
μεθ' ὧν πῖον τὸ δίκερας ὡς τὸν φίλτατον
βασιλέα πάριμι.

⁵ A list, which might be considerably enlarged, is given by Mr. Wace in *J.H.S.*, 1905, p. 90.