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THE BOSTON COUNTERPART OF THE LUDOVISI THRONE.

IN the last volume of this *Journal* is an article by Professor E. A. Gardner entitled 'The Boston Counterpart of the "Ludovisi Throne."' In the following pages I wish to make clear that had Professor Gardner been more familiar with the marble itself of which he wrote, and had he not based his criticism mainly upon a study of photographs and casts, he could hardly hold the very poor opinion of it which he expresses. His article is difficult to answer point by point because statements of personal feeling are largely mingled with others of fact or assumed fact; aesthetic criticism is interspersed with archaeological statement, and both, I believe it can be shown, with some misunderstanding and error. The article really refutes itself by proposing several alternative origins for the 'Throne.' Such a criticism is worth but little, if the criteria for detecting a forgery are so uncertain that the critic is not sure whether they prove the object Neo-Attic or modern.

That the two 'Thrones' are unique objects, the use and decoration of which are not yet understood in all points, is true. They also differ in style in a very interesting way. But Professor Gardner's suggestion that the Boston 'Throne' is a modern forgery is preposterous. He himself can do no more than point out certain peculiarities in the carving and design, which he calls 'awkward,' 'affected,' and full of 'artistic defects,' as proof of his suggestion. Many of these defects, however, do not exist in the original. Had Professor Gardner had more opportunity to study the original, he would realise that, no matter what terms he applied to the expression of the faces, they are not the expressions visible in the photographs he publishes. Also his suggestion that the surface may have been artificially weathered, as in the case of the Aegina marbles, would scarcely have been made had he been familiar with the original. Thorwaldsen's statement that it was difficult for him to distinguish between the original Aegina fragments and the restorations of his workmen, has little bearing on the marble under discussion. In the first place, Thorwaldsen, when he made the remark, was unquestionably thinking of the statues as finished and set up after their surfaces had been cleaned and re-worked by his assistants so that the restored portions would not appear too obviously new, though they are still perfectly easy to distinguish. The Boston 'Throne' has fortunately not been man-handled in any such way and its surface is in exceptionally pure condition. That Professor Gardner himself is uncertain of his premisses is clearly shown by his stating that, though in his opinion the marble cannot possibly have the

fifth century origin which general consensus of trained opinion gives it, it may be 'later classical, probably Neo-Attic' or 'a modern imitation.' The assumption that it is a modern forgery appeals most strongly to him, for this he says 'best explains' its character. This idea he must, however, put out of his head. Had he applied to the authorities of the Boston Museum or to the well-known collector who purchased the marble, or even to some of us who were in Rome at the time of its discovery, had he, that is, examined all the available evidence, it is most unlikely that he would even have suggested the idea.

Leaving aside, then, the utterly groundless theory that the Boston 'Throne' is a modern forgery, there are left for discussion and criticism Professor Gardner's two other main contentions: the one that the marble is so inartistic and full of defects that it cannot be an original work of the fifth century, the other that it may be a work of the Neo-Attic school. I will discuss the second of these two theories first and it will be seen that Professor Gardner's obvious dislike of the marble has led him into exaggerated and inaccurate statement, and has obviously blinded the critical acumen displayed in his still most valuable *History of Greek Sculpture*.

It will, I believe, be admitted that the Neo-Attic school is distinguished by a lack of simplicity both in the conception of the separate works and in their execution. They are the expression of an over-refined spirit which took pleasure in extreme subtleties of thought and delicacies of technique, rather than in vigorous directness. Most of the bas-reliefs of the school are obviously intended as panels to be set, like pictures, in walls or else to form the ornament of marble vases (like the one by Sosibios in the Louvre) which probably served as decoration for public halls or gardens. The statues of the school show a similar character, as can be seen in the over-modelled and tense Torso Belvedere. In general, it may be said that the bas-reliefs are sentimental and the statues dramatic. Professor Gardner, in his *History* just mentioned, discusses these monuments and speaks of their general use as decorative panels (p. 42) and points out with entire justness how in them one sees the 'quaintness of conventional archaic forms . . . sought after for its own sake' (p. 14). In other passages he calls attention to their 'conventional and imitative character' (p. 299), and finally and rightly calls them 'over-refined and affected.' Were one to read all the monographs by Hauser and others which have been published on the Neo-Attic school, one would learn nothing essential in regard to their quality that Professor Gardner has overlooked. His estimate of them is thoroughly sound and well-stated. He uses but one word I would question, and that is the word 'affected.' This implies a knowledge of the artist's mind which we do not possess. For a work of art to express affectation it must express feelings which the artist does not really have, but which he merely pretends are those which govern him. What would be affected in the critic need not necessarily be so in the artist. I dwell upon this point because Professor Gardner applies the same epithet—affectation—to the Boston 'Throne' and I hope to show that he is unjustified by anything but his own personal feeling in doing so.

If now, keeping the general characteristics of the Neo-Attic school in mind, we study the Boston 'Throne' we shall see at once that no matter how poor a work of art it may be considered it cannot be a product of this school. That is absolutely impossible. No one looking at it with a truly critical eye, can find in the figures which are carved on its three sides, any trace of conventional or imitative forms. Were they so, there would not be the difficulty, which all students have felt, in explaining the meaning of the figures or in deciding to what school the artist belonged. Just as it is still impossible to be sure from what school the sculptor of the Ludovisi 'Throne' came, because there is no other monument which resembles it, so it is impossible to be sure about the Boston 'Throne.' At present these two marbles are unique, and resemble only one another. What, however, can be stated with certainty is that the Boston 'Throne' does not resemble in the slightest degree any known Neo-Attic monument. It has none of the decorative quality, the quality, that is, which shows itself when an artist desires to make a design pleasing in composition, colour, or chiaroscuro, without thought of anachronisms, or of giving any definite meaning to the scene represented. On the contrary, it is evident that the sculptor who carved the figures on the Boston 'Throne' had the intention of conveying a clear story by them, even if we are still unaware what that story was. Nor is there, as will be shown later, any trace of anachronism such as Professor Gardner suggests. Furthermore, the Boston 'Throne' does not *repeat* (even though it may *recall*) a single known type, nor is there any trace of over-elaborated modelling. Finally, there is no sign of the dwelling on archaic forms for the mere sense of their quaintness, which is the characteristic of archaistic work. This is not a mere statement of my personal judgment. Anyone who would prove the 'Throne' to be archaistic, must show in it signs that the sculptor possessed a greater knowledge of form and of technique than he wished the marble to display—that he was intentionally trying to hide his own capacities and reproduce the imperfections of an earlier age. This intentional self-limitation is the chief characteristic of archaistic artists in whatever epoch they may chance to live, and in one way or another they invariably betray themselves. Strange as some of the figures on the Boston 'Throne' are, and inexplicable as the main scene may, in our present state of knowledge, seem, it is still obvious that the sculptor in no way contradicted himself, and that the 'Throne' is aesthetically and technically united and self-contained.

Having now controverted Professor Gardner's arguments for the modern or Neo-Attic origin of the 'Throne' let us consider the evidence he brings forward against its being, as has been heretofore believed, a work of the fifth century B.C. It is, of course, admitted by everyone, that, whatever the original purpose of the Ludovisi and Boston 'Thrones,' they were in all probability pendants one to the other, and were made by different artists. Professor Gardner mentions the frieze of the Siphnian Treasury at Delphi as showing great differences in style between different portions, but overthrows the suggested comparison by pointing out that it is still a matter of

dispute whether the differing fragments really belong to the same frieze. There are, however, other monuments which show similar differences in style between different portions. For instance, the two pediments at Olympia, and the metopes of the Parthenon. Or, to take a still more striking case, the small marble statue from Sunium, now in the New York Museum, in which we see a pre-Persian body crowned by a post-Persian head. It is obvious that in the fifth century B.C., before the art of sculpture had been completely mastered, the Greeks were not offended by contrasts of this sort. With such examples in one's mind, one cannot agree with the statement in Professor Gardner's article (p. 74), that the 'difference between the Ludovisi and Boston portions' is 'inexplicable.'

Professor Gardner next goes on to discuss the subject of the Boston 'Throne,' and points out (but in a way that seems to imply his disagreement) that 'its very strangeness has been used as an argument in favour of its genuineness.' A perfectly good argument this is too, but Professor Gardner is putting the shoe on the wrong foot. He must remember that he is almost the only archaeologist of note who doubts the genuineness of the Boston 'Throne.' The rest of us, who see no reason to question it, do not bring forward the 'strangeness' of the scene to prove its authenticity, because the 'strangeness' is easily explicable by our ignorance of much of Greek thought, but we would ask Professor Gardner, or anyone else who doubts the marble, to show us any recognised forgery that shows a similar strangeness. The 'Throne' is by no means the only bit of ancient sculpture the meaning of which is not clear, and yet we can scarcely think that Professor Gardner will attempt to prove the Harpy Tomb or the headless figure of a youth found at Subiaco and now in the Museum of the Terme in Rome to be forgeries because he cannot explain them.

The two principal seated figures are called by Professor Gardner 'affected and theatrical to a degree,' and, although he finds similar contrasts in emotion shown in the work of fifth century vase painters, he thinks it unlikely that contemporary sculptors should show any such feeling, and that the explanation lies in the Boston 'Throne' being a 'direct imitation' (I suppose he means of the vase by Duris, which he mentions) or a 'survival in later times of similar mannerisms.' If, however, it is a *survival*, he must admit that such treatment existed in early times. It certainly did, and was very characteristic of the sculpture of the best epochs in Greece. One of the earliest instances is found in the Vaphio cups, which show a marked and intentional dramatic contrast; another is seen in the Olympia pediments. The seated old man in the East pediment, for example, is clearly intended to exhibit a dramatic contrast to the other figures, and several of the Lapiths show the same in comparison to the fighting centaurs. So, too, strongly dramatic contrast is shown in many grave reliefs, and a stronger expression of it would be hard to imagine than in the Athena and Satyr of Myron's famous group.

Beyond these questions of feeling there is the final one of style, and it is in the study of this that Professor Gardner lets his lack of interest in, or

his lack of appreciation for, the Boston marble betray his critical judgment. He points out that the marble does not illustrate as plainly as many others the principle of compressing the reliefs 'as it were, between two planes, the plane of the background and the original front plane of the slab.' This principle is, as he justly remarks, a very common one in many early reliefs. Had he, however, studied the Boston 'Throne' in front of the original itself he would have seen that his statement, that it 'shows no trace whatever of this principle,' is a great exaggeration. So, too, it seems to me exaggerated to say that the figures 'are in the round clumsily flattened against the ground of the relief.' But not only does Professor Gardner go too far in making these statements, he also deceives himself in laying altogether too great stress on the principle of the compression of reliefs between the background and the front plane of the slab. While many sculptors followed this rule, very many others did not, and it is easy to mention several 'genuine early Greek reliefs in which the projection of the figures varies so much and the planes of the relief are so completely ignored.' Before mentioning these, it is worth while to point out one peculiarity of the two 'Thrones' which seems to have escaped Professor Gardner's notice. If the front plane (original plane of the slab) is much more noticeable in the Ludovisi than the Boston 'Throne,' the back plane is much more truly kept in the latter. In fact, when one looks from the end along the main scene of the Ludovisi 'Throne' one will notice that the back plane is not kept at all, but rises forward or sinks back like the surface of the sea. So much for the keeping to the front and back plane of the Ludovisi example. Now let me mention a few genuine Greek reliefs in which the figures project. One such, of a rather earlier date than the 'Thrones,' is in the Boston Museum. It represents a mounted warrior, and it is obvious not only that the figure was not compressed between two planes, as Professor Gardner thinks all genuine early reliefs should be, but also that the head of the horse was in the full round (Fig. 1). Again, in the metope of a fallen warrior from the Treasury of the Megarians at Olympia there is diversity of planes, and one sees traces, though less marked, in the Assos frieze and the Harpy Tomb. Surely the compression between two planes is not the most noticeable feature of the metopes from Selinus and Olympia, and Professor Gardner's condemnation of the Boston 'Throne' on the score that the figures are really in the round and only clumsily flattened against the background falls with equal force on many of these metopes, or on the figure of Apollo in the tomb relief from Thasos, which is in the Louvre. And what would he say to the figures decorating the columns from Ephesus or to grave-reliefs which can be seen in the British Museum?

The next point Professor Gardner takes up is the composition of the Boston reliefs, in which he finds many defects. He points out that the two seated figures of the main scene project beyond the field of the relief. Instead of this being an error in the composition it is a very subtle excellence, for if it were not for this projection that of the figures on the sides would be very ugly when the larger relief was looked at, as one can see

in the Ludovisi 'Throne,' which in this respect is less excellent than the Boston one. Furthermore, the Greek sculptors did not always, by any means, consider themselves bound to consider the edge of the slab as the fixed outside limit of their composition. On the Harpy Tomb the winged creatures and other details project into the moulding on the sides and top, and in the grave stele of a warrior found at Pella and now in the museum at Constantinople, the real field of the design is scarcely considered, yet this stele is neither a forgery nor inartistic. The Hegeso relief in Athens



FIG. 1.—RELIEF OF HORSEMAN IN BOSTON.

is another case where the artist did not mind having the design spread over its assumed frame, and one who would call it clumsy or inartistic would be a stickler for rules and incapable of understanding art or artists. These are just a few of many cases which could be mentioned, which show that it is an uncritical attitude of mind which presupposes rules formulated, more or less, from modern practice and then blames the ancient Greek artists for not obeying them. The easy relation visible in the Boston 'Throne'

between the scene carved and the more or less fixed outline of the block, the bold and original way the material is treated, are typical of the best ancient Greek work and quite unlike Neo-Attic productions or those of modern forgers.

Other criticisms by Professor Gardner of the composition of the figures on the Boston 'Throne' are equally *mal à propos*, or so exaggerated as to be untrue. He says that the wings of the Eros 'instead of filling the vacant space of the background, are awkwardly hidden behind the two seated figures.' This is not the case, as it is only the very tips of the wings which are hidden and one arm partially hides one wing. Furthermore, I would suggest that this manner of composing the figures so that they are shown to be in front of the Eros is not so stupid as it seems to Professor Gardner, but was done to suggest that the Eros was not really visible to the two seated women—much as the spiritual rather than the actual presence of Athena is suggested by her statue placed behind the warriors in the Aegina pediment, and the Apollo partly covered by the Lapiths on the temple at Olympia.

Another peculiarity, says Professor Gardner, of the Eros and the two seated women, is the 'attempt to render them three-quarter face, in the heads of all three and in the upper parts of the bodies of the two seated figures.' This would be a peculiarity did it exist, but it does not do so. The head of the Eros is full front, and so too are the bodies of the women, and if Professor Gardner will ask a model to take this pose he will find that the body turns as nearly as possible full front without any unnatural strain. His criticism of the modelling of the breasts is, one must believe, founded on photographs, the lighting of which has deceived him, for on the original they do not seem 'distorted.' Nor does it seem to me that these seated figures are particularly exceptional in idea. There are several examples of sculpture from the fifth century which show that there were many artists at that time who busied themselves with the treatment of figures seated and turning their bodies. One of the most remarkable is the metope from Olympia representing Athena seated on a rock; others occur in terra-cotta, such as the 'Electra' relief in the Louvre and one in the British Museum, while the Penelope statue in the Vatican is an example in the round. I do not mean to imply that any one of these is in every detail like the Boston figures, but I do mean to say that they all exhibit similar imperfections in the rendering of the pose and that the Boston figures are perfectly true to fifth century style.

As for the expression of the faces in which Professor Gardner sees a 'feeling of caricature,' I can only say that they do not impress me in this way, nor does the obviously intentional differentiation in the expressions seem to me 'alien to early Greek sculpture.' The faces of the figures of the Olympia pediments are full of a similar dramatic contrast in expression, and I think no one will doubt that it existed between the fallen giant and the Goddess striding over him in the metope at Temple F at Selinus. It certainly was common enough a few years after the Boston 'Throne' was

made, and so we can hardly doubt was attempted by the earlier artists. The vase painters who were contemporaries of the sculptor of the 'Throne' represented dramatic contrasts in facial expression often enough, and so even if the artist of the 'Throne' succeeded only in giving 'a feeling of caricature,' as Professor Gardner thinks, still his attempt is exactly what one would expect, and entirely unlike anything to be seen in the Neo-Attic school.

In this part of his criticism, as in others, Professor Gardner also goes too far in mixing supposition with fact when he says, 'Throughout there is the greatest possible contrast to the simple and unaffected treatment of the face which we see in the three extant heads of the "Ludovisi Throne."' The faces of the two side figures on each 'Throne' are in repose, and Professor Gardner admits that there is at least a 'clumsy effort' shown in the youth on the Boston 'Throne' to 'imitate the simplicity of the central figure of the Ludovisi relief.' So far as the heads on the Ludovisi 'Throne' are preserved they show quiet expressions, though to my eye there is a very distinct contrast between the expression of the 'Aphrodite' and the nude maiden. But no comparison is possible in this regard between the 'Aphrodite' group and the 'Eros' one, for in the former only one face is preserved and we have no notion what the expression on the other two faces was. For this reason Professor Gardner's comparison of the Ludovisi side figures or the one head remaining of the chief scene with the group of faces on the Boston relief has little or no point.

The draperies of the two seated women on the Boston relief can, according to Professor Gardner, hardly have been carved except by a sculptor who had 'seen at least the frieze of the Parthenon and the Attic tomb reliefs.' This statement is, of course, more the expression of a general feeling than a real criticism, and I may, perhaps, be permitted to express my feeling that there is more essential likeness to the work of the Parthenon in the folds that play hide and seek with the lower leg of the lefthand figure of the chief Ludovisi relief than in anything shown by the Boston figures. If the sculptor of the latter did know the Parthenon he certainly failed utterly to reproduce its fundamental qualities.

There is, however, little to be gained in a discussion of this sort by merely stating my feeling against Professor Gardner's. What is needed are actual examples and, so far as may be, proofs. So I will only say that I cannot agree with what he says of the difference in the treatment of the hair of the Ludovisi and Boston figures. It seems to me in all essential points the same. The narrow band in the hair of the old woman on the Boston 'Throne' is of the same fashion as that worn by the Myronian Perseus in the British Museum or as that seen on certain Sicilian coins.

In what he says of the hands and feet of the figures Professor Gardner exaggerates once more. As for the hands, those on the Boston 'Throne' do not seem to me either so 'affected' in pose or so accurately realistic as he says. In pose they but show the daintiness that one sees again and again

in early Greek art. The hands on the Ludovisi 'Throne' are noticeable chiefly for their absence, but in shape of heavy wrist and long-jointed fingers those which remain are very like those of the Boston figures, while the spreading of the fingers of the woman playing the pipe is similar to that of the fingers of the lyre-player and due to a similar cause. Nor does the contrast seen by Professor Gardner in the feet on the two 'Thrones' seem to me to exist. Those of the Eros are without doubt bad, but the problem the sculptor had was an almost impossible one to solve and he did it much in the same way as the sculptor of the Athena in the Olympia Metope representing Hercules cleaning the stables and of the Hesperid in the group with Atlas and as the sculptor of the Thanatos on the column from Ephesus did. Of the feet in the Ludovisi relief he says 'the soles are flat and firmly planted on the ground' while on the Boston relief 'they are soft and supple, and adapt themselves to the contour of the surface they rest on.' Now it is not uncommon in early Greek art to find the feet of figures adapting themselves to the surface they rest on, nor does the contrast suggested by Professor Gardner between this detail of the two 'Thrones' exist in fact. For instance, the toes of the figure burning incense on the Ludovisi 'Throne' bend over the foot of the burner in exactly the same way, though not so much, as do those of the Boston lyre-player over the scroll. But even more marked are the feet of the attendant nymphs in the chief Ludovisi relief which bend and conform themselves to the contour of the pebbly ground in a very noticeable fashion. In fact there is a very clear resemblance and no contrast, between the two 'Thrones' in this detail.

Of course one must agree with Professor Gardner when he says that the two scales with the small figures standing on them are strange, but one will find it difficult to agree with his argument about them. His comparison of the figures to works by Burne-Jones need not be treated seriously for it is obviously intended humorously, but he must show some proof much more positive than their mere strangeness before we can agree with him in thinking that they 'alone suffice to prove that we have not here a genuine early Greek relief.' Their length is due to the bodies being stretched out by the figures standing on tip-toe while their arms are held high over their heads. The shape of the head of the left-hand figure and the long thin feet of the one on the right-hand are true to the early style. In the left-hand figure Professor Gardner sees late characteristics in the 'graceful poise of the body, with its curved median line, and the studied absence of symmetry between the two sides, combined with the slender form.' I have already spoken of the slender form and will merely add that from the Apollo of Tenea to the Apollo on the Omphalos, slenderness was often emphasised by the early artists. As for the absence of symmetry I cannot see wherein this differs from that which one sees in many early figures shown in tense positions: while, finally, the curvature of the median line is scarcely greater than in such figures as the Harmodius and Aristogiton and not as great as (though much more intelligent than) that of the small bronze from Ligourio now in Berlin.

Nor is it greater than in a bronze figure (Fig. 2) in the Boston Museum which is also of equally slender proportions. Furthermore, this figure shows an attitude almost exactly similar to that of the Eros and has the same 'cheerful grin' which Professor Gardner would have us believe is 'alien to early Greek sculpture.'

I have now considered in detail the arguments adduced by Professor Gardner to show that the Boston 'Throne' is not only a poor work of art but probably a modern forgery, though he seems shy of saying this in so many words and hedges on its possible Neo-Attic origin. Certainly some of his arguments are exaggerated and based on ill-considered statements. Nor does he add to their force by his suggestion that the 'Persephone' of the Boston 'Throne' is based on the well-known statue of Penelope. As for the likeness of the head-dress he can hardly suppose the Penelope was the only statue ever made with this arrangement, besides which the girl burning incense on the Ludovisi 'Throne' has exactly the same. Lastly, his suggestion that the relation of the distance between the breasts and the distance from them to the thigh of the 'Persephone' is due to the sculptor copying a badly taken photograph of the Penelope can only be called far-fetched. In the first place it is by no means obvious how he took his measurements to make out that 'the width between the breasts is actually greater than the height from the breasts to the line of the thigh.' If he will pose a living model he will find the measurements not so far wrong as he thinks. Finally, why should even the stupidest modern forger use a bad photograph of the Penelope when casts can be easily procured or the original seen every day by anyone living in Rome?

Thus, while we may all agree that the Boston 'Throne' is not as beautiful as the Ludovisi one, and while there are points in it which are as yet not perfectly understood, we may rest assured that the general consensus of opinion is right, and that it is a work of the fifth century.

RICHARD NORTON.

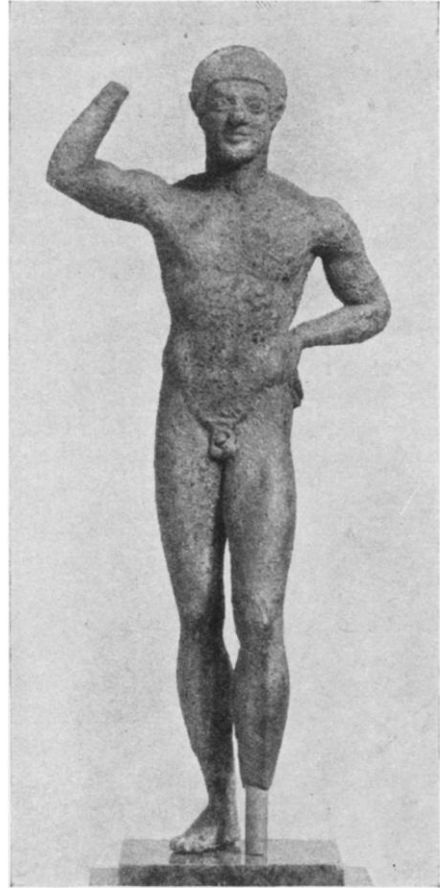


FIG. 2.—BRONZE STATUETTE IN BOSTON.