

HERMES WITH THE INFANT DIONYSOS.

BRONZE STATUETTE IN THE LOUVRE.

THE before unpublished bronze statuette here reproduced in its original size, No. 655 of the collection of bronzes in the Museum of the Louvre, is called,¹ by the late M. de Longpérier, 'Nero carrying Britannicus on his left arm.' This distinguished and meritorious archæologist herein followed a tendency prevalent in former days of readily seeing the portrait of some historical person, especially a Roman Emperor, in purely ideal monuments.

It will be seen at a glance that we have in this work a representation of Hermes with the infant Dionysos, and moreover a modified replica of the statue of Praxiteles discovered by the Germans in 1877 at Olympia. Though there are some modifications, this statuette is the closest reproduction of the work of Praxiteles of all the replicas that have come to my knowledge.

If we bear in mind the extremely small dimensions of this figure (a little over three inches) and its present state of corrosion, we can but be struck by the exquisiteness of the modelling and the close reproduction of some of the artistic qualities of the great work of Praxiteles.

The qualities of the Praxitelean work noticeable in this reproduction are, in the first place, the general attitude of the figure, the general outline with a curve in the right hip, and the position of the legs; and in the second place,

¹ *Notice des bronzes antiques du Louvre*, p. 154. Paris, 1879.

the modelling of the nude, especially about the waist and in the thighs.

In this small replica of a statue over life in size, there are several deviations from the original. First, the child appears more turned away from his protector; though considering the minuteness of the dimension its whole attitude, with its right hand on the shoulder of Hermes, is comparatively accurate. Secondly, the chlamys which in the marble statue is hanging over the stem of the tree, leaving the left shoulder of Hermes bare, is here fastened round his neck. This change is accounted for by the fact that in the statuette the tree-stem has been omitted and no freely suspended parts of the chlamys have been allowed to hang under the hand of Hermes. The chlamys had thus to be fastened round the neck, if it were not to appear a formless mass between the arm of Hermes and the child. Thirdly, the right arm and shoulder of Hermes are in a lower position than in the statue. I at first considered it a great loss that the right arm of the statuette was not perfect; for I thought that it might have given us some direct information concerning the position of the right arm of the Praxitelean Hermes and the attribute held in the right hand. Though I believe that the right hand of the bronze most probably held a short caduceus (which, if extant, would have been in favour of Mr. A. H. Smith's conjecture), it is evident that the sculptor of the statuette could not in so small a work reproduce a freely uplifted arm supported by a thin long staff. In so small and portable a work this would immediately break away. He therefore lowered the arm.

In three points this statuette can throw valuable light upon the work of Praxiteles. In the first place, it definitely indicates the position of the legs below the knee that are wanting in the marble. In the second place, though the modeller of the statuette has not been able to reproduce the delicate pose of the neck, we can at least learn from this statuette, what a careful examination of the marble statue will tell us, that Hermes is neither looking at the child nor at anything held in his own hand. Hermes is looking straight before him, and surely when we look straight ahead, while a child on our arm endeavours by movement to attract our attention, this is the clearest and most manifest outer sign of inner dreaming and

abstraction. What the normal relation between the child in the arms of a man playing with it, is, is illustrated by the frequent replicas of the statue of Silenus and the infant Dionysos (in the Uffizi at Florence, the Glyptothek at Munich, the Louvre at Paris, &c.). The assumption that Hermes held a bunch of grapes in his right hand to entice his little ward¹ would alter the whole evident character of the composition. It would become a *genre* scene in which the relation between child and grapes would be the centre of interest. While as a matter of fact Hermes is evidently the centre of interest, and the infant Dionysos is, both in spirit and execution, purely accessory. Moreover, neither the infant Dionysos nor Hermes is looking at the grapes, which would be necessary if the scene were to have any meaning.

Finally, the statuette is interesting in that it supports the conjecture of Mr. A. H. Smith, that the Hermes of Praxiteles may have had bronze wings attached to the head. For in the statuette Hermes has such wings with a strange elevation in the centre. Like the marble Hermes of Olympia, this bronze has a thin groove running from both sides of the wings round the back of the head above the neck, which seems to indicate a band by which the wings were fastened. Probably the same depression in the marble Hermes contained the bronze band which served to hold and fasten the bronze wings above the forehead.²

Wings are also to be found on a marble Hermes similar in size and in many other respects to the Olympian statue to which I should like to draw the attention of archæologists. I have only seen the cast in the collection of the Beaux-Arts at Paris,

¹ Cf. Overbeck, *Gesch. der Plastik*, 3rd ed., vol. ii. p. 37, seq.

² M. Aub. Héron de Villefosse, of the Louvre Museum, has kindly sent me the following note on this point: "*Je ne vois derrière la tête de la statuette aucune couronne, ni bandeau, ni ruban. Du côté droit de la tête, cependant, on peut sentir une légère dépression, qui se continue sous la nuque et se remarque aussi à gauche; elle forme comme la trace d'un serre-tête qui aurait servi à maintenir les deux petits ailes sur-*

montant le front. Mais cette trace est à peine visible et n'a la largeur ni d'un bandeau ni d'un ruban. C'est plutôt une dépression dans la chevelure, à la place même où le ruban devrait se trouver si l'artiste l'avait figuré." As in the marble this band was of bronze, so in this bronze it was most likely inlaid in another material, silver (a very frequent occurrence in small ancient bronzes). The description corresponds exactly with what we see in the head of the marble statue.

and it is reported to be in the Boboli Gardens at Florence. There merely remains the upper part of the figure above the thighs. Hermes holds the infant Dionysos awkwardly on his *right* arm. May not the statue have been found in fragments and have been patched up (as was continually done with such works) and thus the infant, found separate, have been placed on the right arm instead of the left ?

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