

CLASSIC LIVING BOOK

ARCHITECTURE
SHOWN TO THE CHILDREN

Gladys Wynne

COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED

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ARCHITECTURE SHOWN TO THE CHILDREN

by

GLADYS WYNNE





AMIENS CATHEDRAL
(SEE PP. 82, 93, 123)

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INTRODUCTORY

ARCHITECTURE means beautiful or artistic building. Everyone builds in a fashion. Bees build, beavers build, birds build, men build. Our forefathers did not need much architecture when they lived in caves and dens of the earth; and even when they came to the surface, a tent, or wooden hut, or straw roof supported on poles formed sufficient shelter for them. It was not till thousands of years later that they began to build in stone.

Their first houses would be of the simplest description — just four walls and a roof to keep out the rain, and windows and a door to let them out and in (Fig. 1). But by and by, the love of beauty, which is an instinct in human nature, would assert itself, and they would want to adorn their house.

They might put a little cap above the windows or pillars beside the door; or they might work mouldings between the door and windows or carry the outlines of the roof into gables and turrets, and domes and spires. Till at last, instead

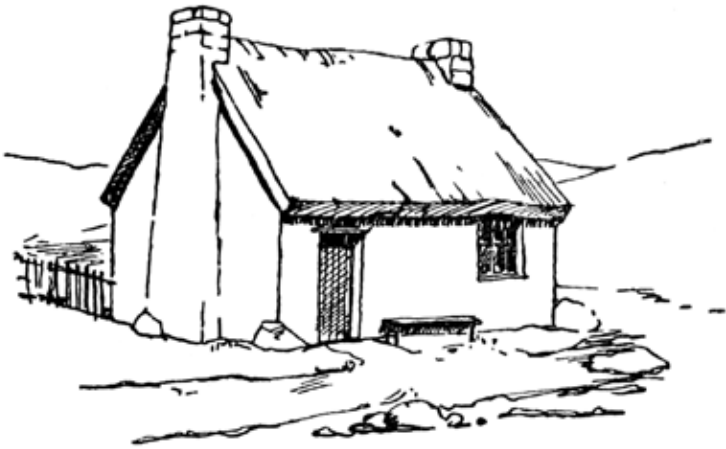


FIG. 1. - CROFTER'S COTTAGE

of a bare up-and-down flat wall, they would have a beautiful building, full of character and interest.

Figure 2 is a perfectly plain window.

Figure 3 has mouldings. If you compare the two, you will see what a difference the mouldings make.

Great architecture is seen best in the temples of the gods, as we should expect. The builders strove with each other which of them should make these the most beautiful, and the one who succeeded best got the name of "ARCHITECT," which means "MASTER BUILDER." We have many builders now, but few master builders. It is of the master builders and their work that we speak when we use the words Architect and Architecture.

GREEK AND GOTHIC

The first thing that strikes one in studying buildings is the variety of styles. Here is one all turrets and gables and round towers, with staircases inside, and all sorts of odd nooks and

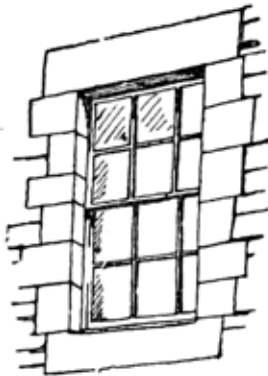


FIG. 2. - PLAIN WINDOW

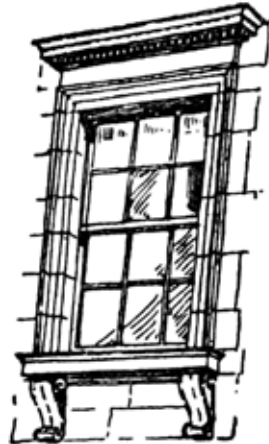


FIG. 3. - WINDOW WITH MOULDINGS

corners that you would like to explore; and then, again, you come upon another that is square and regular and “coldly fair.” The one is Gothic, the other Greek.

These are the two principal styles, and when you know these two, you know a good deal; because the others are more or less related to them — descendants, or second or third cousins, so to speak, twice removed, and with a different name, of course.

There are much older styles than the Greek. There are the Egyptian, the Indian, and the Assyrian; but we cannot study everything, and it is best to begin with the styles nearer home, which we can see examples of in our own country or in Europe. These are:— the Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Romanesque or Norman, and the Gothic. The Renaissance, which followed the Gothic, is a revival of the Greek and Roman.

CHAPTER I

GREEK ARCHITECTURE

THE DORIC COLUMN (FIG. 5)

THIS chapter is about columns. "A column" is the grand word for a pillar. Let us look at one — a real good look, not the passing glance we generally bestow. Columns are like people; they are so much more interesting when you really know them.

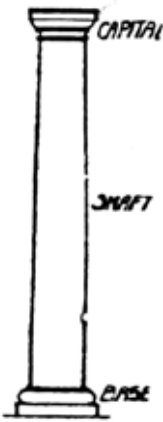


FIG. 4. - GREEK

A column (Fig. 4) consists of three parts:

- A base to stand on,
- A long body called the shaft, and
- A head or capital.

Of these, the base is the least important. It may even be wanting, but we cannot have a column without a shaft or capital, any more than we can have a person without a body or head.

There are many kinds of columns. The

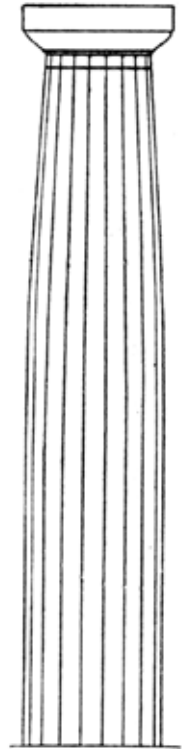


FIG. 5. -
PARTHENON
COLUMN.

three we are going to look at are among the commonest; you will meet them everywhere. But they do not belong to this country. They are strangers in a strange land and have traveled all the way from sunny Greece.

The best-known and the plainest of the three is the Doric (Fig. 5). It is short and sturdy, with a simple capital and no base. To look at it, you would think the Doric column was quite straight, but it grows the least bit narrower towards the top, like the trunk of a tree, and it has a slight swelling about the middle. The narrow grooves or channels all around the column are called "flutings." You will get the idea of a flut-

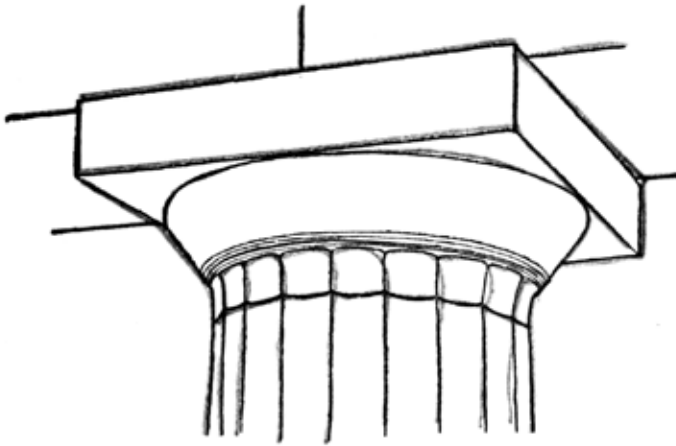


FIG. 6. - DORIC CAPITAL

ing if you divide a reed pipe into two its whole length and then put the two halves back to back with their edges.

The Doric capital is very simple (Fig. 6). It consists of two parts, a sloping one below called the "echinus" and a square slab above, which rests on the lower part like the hat on the top of a head. This is the "abacus," which means a board or tile.

THE IONIC COLUMN (FIG. 7)

The Ionic column is a contrast to the Doric. It is slender and graceful and has a base, a capital, and flutings, which are deeper than the Doric and more numerous. But the capital is its distinguishing feature. It reminds one of rams' horns or, as some people think, of a young lady's curls, the horns or curls being known as "volute" (Fig. 8). One peculiarity of the Ionic capital has been a good deal criticized: namely, the front and the sides are not alike, the profile differing from the full face as much as it does in most humans.



FIG. 7. - GREEK IONIC COLUMN

Every column has its favourite moulding, just as every young lady has her favourite ornament, and the favourite moulding of the Ionic is the "egg-and-dart," so called from its supposed resemblance to an egg and an arrow (Fig. 9). Some people think that this moulding had an allegorical meaning, the "egg" typifying "Life," which usually originates in an egg, and the "arrow" "Death."

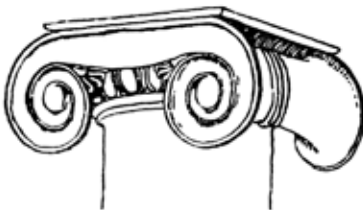


FIG. 8. - GREEK IONIC CAPITAL



FIG. 9. - GREEK EGG AND DART

THE CORINTHIAN COLUMN (FIG. 10)

The Corinthian is the third and last member of our little Greek family. It is the most ornamental of the three, and the greatest favourite, with the Romans at least, who admired it so much that they adopted it. This column has a base and flutings like the Ionic, but its capital is quite different. It consists of two parts, a leafy one below and a square flat slab above (Fig. 11). There is a pretty story told about the origin of this capital. It is said that a young girl in Corinth, having died, her nurse collected all her little toys and ornaments in a basket and put them on the grave, covering them with a tile to keep them from being blown away. This basket was placed on the root of an Acanthus, the Greek thistle (Fig. 12), which, though pressed down by the weight, shot up its stem and leaves in the spring, taking graceful curves and bends at the angles of the tile. Now, it so happened that when it was looking its best, a famous sculptor passed by, and, stopping to admire, suddenly the thought came to him that this basket, with its delicate foliage, would make a beautiful and original capital for a column. So he hastened home and experimented, and the graceful Corinthian capital which you see here was the result.



FIG. 10. - GREEK
CORINTHIAN
COLUMN.



FIG. 11. - GREEK
CORINTHIAN CAPITAL



FIG. 12. - ACANTHUS

THE ENTABLATURE

Such, then, were the three Greek columns, and, according as a temple was built with the one or the other, it was said to belong to the Doric, the Ionic, or the Corinthian ORDER.

But there is more to be considered in the Greek "Order" than the columns. There is the ENTABLATURE.

This is a long word. Let us try to guess the meaning. You will see that the second syllable almost spells TABLE—ENTABL-ature; and the entablature has just this likeness to a table, that both are flat. It is the flat block or beam that rests on the columns and supports the roof (Fig. 13).

Like the columns, the entablature consists of three parts:—

1. The Cornice.
2. The Frieze.
3. The Architrave.

Cornice means "Crown." It is at the top and crowns the whole entablature. The Frieze is the middle, and the Architrave is below all. Architrave means "Chief Beam." It rests

immediately on the columns; that is why it is called Architrave. The Archbishop is the chief bishop, and the Architrave is the chief beam.



FIG. 13. - GREEK DORIC ENTABLATURE

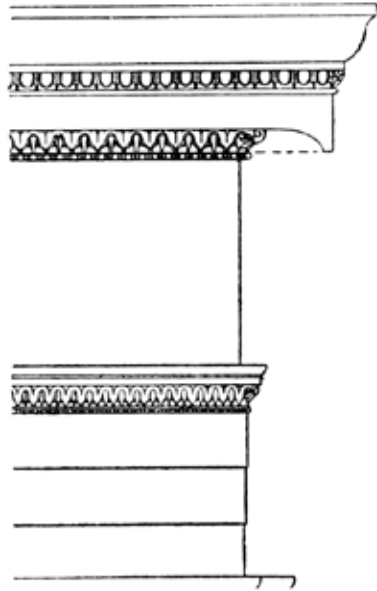


FIG. 14. - GREEK IONIC ENTABLATURE (ERECHTHEION)

Now you know what an entablature means; suppose we compare the entablatures of our little Greek family. You will find that they differ almost as much as their columns, especially in the frieze and the cornice.

The Ionic and the Corinthian frieze (Fig. 14 and Fig. 15) is one continuous piece of sculpture, while the Doric frieze is broken up into square slabs or panels, called METOPES (Fig. 13). And very lively squares they are! (In this particular frieze.) At least "every other one" is lively: the alternate square has a simple ornament consisting of three grooves or channels, called TRIGLYPHS (Fig. 13).

But we are more interested in the lively squares. There are 92 of them, and no two are alike. (Compare that with any modern building.) They represent a contest which took place at a marriage feast between the Centaurs and the Lapiths, the

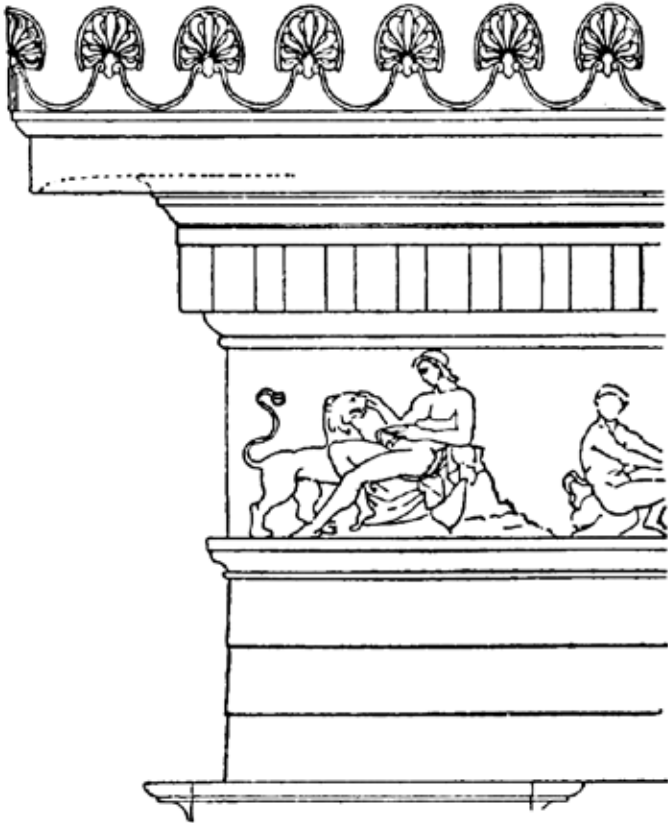


FIG. 15. - GREEK CORINTHIAN ENTABLATURE
(MONUMENT OF LYSICRATES)

Centaurs being fabulous creatures, half horse, half human, while the Lapiths are entirely human. Each Metope or slab is a kind of framed picture in stone, representing a single incident in this great contest. The Centaurs seem to be getting the best of it. Here is one carrying off a Lapith woman (Fig. 16). Notice the pointed ears, so characteristic of a low type. Here is another Centaur in the act of crushing his foe with a wine vessel, while the poor victim, in falling, endeavours to protect him-

self with his shield (Fig. 17).

It is a curious fact that the finest remains of Grecian sculpture represent fabulous events and fabulous animals. These fighting Centaurs, for instance, have been more multiplied than any



FIG. 16. - PARTHENON METOPE

other subject. Perhaps the reason lies partly in the fact that they typify, in a kind of allegory, the first contests between civilisation and barbarism, the Centaurs standing for barbarism and the Lapiths for civilisation.

Ruskin puts it beautifully in one of his books when he says: "The Greeks were the first people that were born into complete humanity. All nations before them had been partly savage — bestial, clay-encumbered: still semi-goat, or



FIG. 17. - PARTHENON METOPE

semi-ant, or semi-stone, or semi-cloud. But the power of a new spirit came upon the Greeks, and the stones were filled with breath, and the clouds clothed with flesh; and then came the great spiritual battle between the Centaurs and Lapiths, and the living creatures became the CHILDREN OF MEN."

THE ERECHTHEUM

On the steep rock in Athens called the Acropolis, there stand the remains of two temples made of the purest white

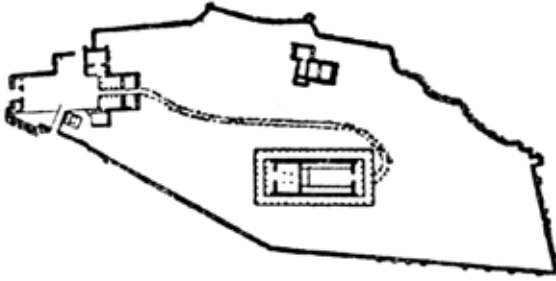


FIG. 18. - PLAN OF ACROPOLIS

marble. Both are Grecian, therefore both beautiful, but with a difference; for the one is Doric, the other Ionic. The one bears throughout the impress of

repose, solidity, and strength; the other of grace and delicacy. In the one, the columns are short, powerful, and closely ranged together. In the other, they are taller, lighter, and farther apart.

Here is a plan of the Acropolis, with the two temples marked on it (Fig. 18). The big one near the middle is the Parthenon, the most perfect building in all Greece.

But we are going to look first at the other temple, the little irregularly shaped one near the north wall. This is the Erechtheum (Plate I).

The most striking thing about this temple is its irregularity.

The typical Grecian temple consisted of an oblong chamber (the NAOS or CELLA), more or less adorned with columns. According to the number and position of these, the temple received different names. For instance, if the columns entirely surrounded the building, it was called peristyle (Fig. 19). This word is derived from the Greek *peri*, meaning "around," and *stulos*, meaning "a column."

PLATE I



THE ERECTHEUM ATHENS, FROM THE WEST
(SEE P. 9)

If, again, the columns were at the two ends only, the temple was said to be amphiprostyle (Fig. 20). (Amphi, meaning “both,” and pro, meaning “in front of”—that is, at both fronts.)

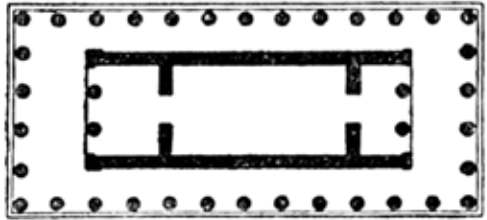
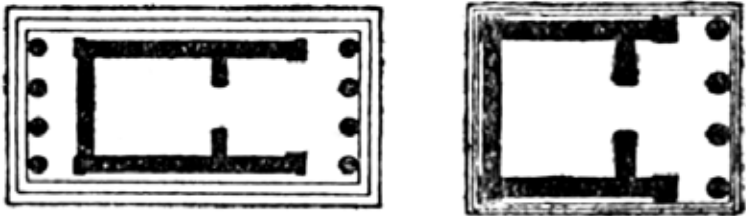


FIG. 19. - TEMPLE PLANS

If at one end only, it was prostyle or pronaos (Fig. 21). (Pro, meaning “in front of,” and naos, meaning “a temple.”)

Such were the commonest forms of a Greek temple, but the Erechtheum was like none of these. It had three porticoes, and two of them in the wrong place from the Greek point of view. Instead of being at the east and west ends, they were east, north, and south. There was a good reason for this, as for everything else the Greeks did.



FIGS. 20 AND 21. - TEMPLE PLANS

You remember what St. Paul said to the Athenians: “I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.” Had he lived in the days of Pericles, when this temple was built, he might still have had reason to say so, for it was to cover two sacred objects, an olive tree and a salt well, that the Erechtheum was built in this particular way.

I know you are wondering who these graceful women are in the porch. They are called Caryatides (Plate II), and a good

name too, for they carry a considerable weight. Some people think it does not look very kind or natural to see women carrying such a heavy burden, but you know women do carry heavy burdens. Some people think they support the whole nation, so why not this little porch?

THE PARTHENON

“Earth proudly wears the Parthenon
As the best gem upon her zone.”

You may have seen buildings something like this in your streets (Plate III). The Parthenon, from which they are copied — or rather, on which they are more or less modelled, for there are not many exact copies — is the most perfect building in all Greece, or, as some people think, in the world.

You would not guess that, would you? It all looks so simple: just an oblong apartment, with a colonnade of columns all around, and a double row at the two ends, and a few statues — or the broken fragments of them — in the gables. You almost feel as if you could make a Parthenon yourself! But there you would be mistaken. There is a great deal more in this building than you think. It is the height of art to conceal art, and there is a great deal of concealed art in this simple-looking building. It is a work of genius, the result of infinite labour, skill, knowledge, and pains. Every little bit of it is carefully planned, thought out, and calculated down to the smallest detail. There is not a thing in the whole building you could alter without spoiling the effect — not a change you could make that would not be a change for the worse. You could not add one inch to the height of a column or take away a fraction from its breadth. Everything is calculated; nothing is left to chance. It is not an accident, for instance, that the

PLATE II



CARYATID PORCH OF THE ERECHTHEUM, ATHENS
(SEE P. 9)

Parthenon has just forty-six columns, and that the columns are of that particular height and breadth. The Greeks did nothing by accident. They knew that these measurements would produce the best effect and make the most pleasing impression — hence they used them.

There is nothing startling about the Parthenon, or eccentric. Its beauty is of a quiet order — quiet and restful. Everything is orderly, symmetrical, well-balanced, and in perfect proportion. The Greeks knew more about the laws of proportion than any other nation, and it would have pained them to see anything that was out of harmony with these laws. The columns are all of the same height, breadth, and distance from each other (that is what is meant by symmetrical). Its lines are horizontal. No soaring vaults here, nor heaven-aspiring spires, as in the Gothic. It is not stimulating but restful. Its quiet beauty will grow on you. The longer you look, the more you will see in it.

Yes, in it! — that is, in the Parthenon, not in any modern imitation of it. For between the two there is a great gulf fixed. The temple *was* a temple — not a bank or storeroom. It was made of the purest white marble, adorned by the greatest of Grecian sculptors, enriched by colour, and warmed by the glorious sun of Greece. Lastly, it contained one of the two most celebrated statues in the ancient world, that of Athena Parthenos, or the “Virgin Goddess,” in whose honour the temple was built. Parthenos means “Virgin” — hence the name Parthenon.

Once upon a time, had you gone inside, you would have seen a colossal gold-and-ivory statue of the goddess, standing nearly forty feet high, with a spear and shield in one hand, a figure of Victory in the other, and the head of the Gorgon Medusa on her breast. This statue was by the world-famous

sculptor Pheidias, the same who designed the Parthenon, and was one of the two most celebrated statues in the ancient world. But it is gone now, along with so much else that was the pride and joy of the Greeks.

A FAMOUS FRIEZE

“To copy the form of the Parthenon without its friezes and frontal statuary is like copying a human being without its eyes and mouth.”
— RUSKIN

In one of his eloquent books on Art, Ruskin says: “I do with a building as I do with a man — watch the eye and the lips; when they are bright and eloquent, the form of the body is of little consequence.”

Now, what does Ruskin mean by the eye and the lips of a building? He just means the painting and sculpture that adorn it, which he considers the principal part because it is the part in which the mind is contained.

The eye and the lips of the Parthenon are its friezes. We saw the frieze of the entablature on this temple, but a frieze is not confined to an entablature. It is the name given to any horizontal band enriched with sculpture, and the frieze we are going to look at now ran all around the temple, on the outside walls or cella, just behind the columns. It was, unfortunately, not in a position to get much light. So, to counteract this defect and give it all the light possible, it was made in very low relief. This means that it does not project much from the wall, scarcely an inch.

You know that flatness gives light, and projection gives shadow. If you want shade on a hot day, you look out for a porch or something that projects, and you avoid the flat wall,



THE PARTHENON, ATHENS
(SEE P. 11)

which gives unbroken light and sunshine. So the Greeks very wisely made this frieze flat, or in low relief, that it might have as much light as possible.

The subject represented is the PANATHENAIC procession — that is, the “ALL ATHENS” procession. Pan is a Greek word for “ALL,” and the PANATHENAIC procession was the procession of Athens and all her dependencies, which took place every four years in honour of the goddess “ATHENA”. The figures in the frieze are marching to place a sacred veil or mantle (the Peplum) before the statue of the goddess in this very temple. The frieze starts from the southwest angle, running east and north, and meets at the eastern front before the assembled gods, who receive the sacred veil from the hands of the maidens.

On the west front, you see them preparing for the procession. Some are standing by their horses. Others have already mounted and are impatient to start. The fiery, irregular movements of the horses contrast with the firm seats and steady attitudes of the riders. In front of the cavalry are the chariots and charioteers, preceded by the old men carrying the olive branches. Here again, there is a fine contrast between the animation of the chariot groups and the quiet and leisurely walk of the old men. In advance of these is a band of musicians, preceded by the bearers of offerings and, next, the victims for the sacrifice. Here is one — an ox “lowing to the skies” (Plate IV). Poor beast! It is going to be sacrificed in honour of the goddess, but it does not know it and looks quite happy. On the eastern front, you see the maidens who have worked the sacred veil, preceded by a group of magistrates who receive the advancing processions. Between these are twelve seated figures of the gods, and in the centre of all is