

but stimulating, volume, which provides a good introduction to a highly complicated topic for the non-specialist reader.

University of New Mexico

GUNTHER E. ROTHENBERG

William St. Clair, *Lord Elgin and the Marbles*, Oxford University Press, London, New York and Toronto, 1967. Pp. viii + 309 + one map + 14 plates.

In the Epilogue to this scholarly and well-written book, Mr. St. Clair touches on the vexed question whether the Elgin Marbles (which are so excellently cared for and displayed by the British Museum) should be returned to Greece. He tells us that since 1890 the question has been raised on an average every five years and that on every occasion the debate on either side of the question has been emotional and ill-informed. Emotional, certainly: it could hardly be otherwise; and should the Marbles ever be returned —and many English hope they will be— the decision will be taken on purely sentimental grounds, perhaps even on artistic grounds, but never on the principle that all works of art should automatically be returned to their place of origin, or even on the legal ground that the Marbles were illegally acquired. We have indeed examples of restitution of stolen works of art. In 1815, but not in 1814 —the European Powers at first were quite content to allow France to retain Napoleon's loot— it was decided that the restored Bourbon monarchy should return to their owners all the treasures that had been stolen. Again after the late war Germany was forced to relinquish the collections made by the Nazis. In these two cases the issues were clear. Two of the world's tyrants had looted territories they had invaded: both were decisively beaten; and it was not only highly reasonable, but indeed feasible, to compel France and Germany to restore the loot. In the case of Lord Elgin's collection, however, the question is not so simple. First of all, his aims, like those of nearly all the early collectors, were entirely honourable: he wished to discover, preserve, and assemble as a collection the best examples of classical Greek art; and he thought that the study of his collection would lead to an improvement in European artistic standards. He certainly had no wish to make personal financial gain; he asked only for reimbursement of his expenses, and he received in fact only rather less than half. Moreover, he obtained as much legal authority as he could from the Turkish Government to remove the trea-

asures: true, the famous *firman* was somewhat vague and it was certainly necessary for his agents to bribe the local authorities when they began their assault upon the Parthenon freeze and metopes. Finally, it may be argued that if Lord Elgin had not removed the Marbles when he did they might possibly even have survived, be in a worse condition than they are today: in any case, if he had not removed them others would have done so.

As Mr. St. Clair points out, the story of how Lord Elgin acquired his collection and eventually sold it to the British Museum is largely irrelevant to the question whether or not the Marbles should be returned to Greece. What is not so irrelevant, however, is the logic that demands all the surviving Parthenon sculptures should be assembled so that they can be seen together. As Mr. St. Clair says, "... it is surely incongruous that the Parthenon sculptures, which are fragmentary enough, should be scattered in three major museums and several minor ones throughout Europe... If the Parthenon sculptures are as valuable as nations now think they are, surely some arrangement can be made whereby the world can see somewhere the few remnants that can be put together." If this argument is valid, then surely the "somewhere" must be Athens. One would wish to see them where they once belonged — on the Parthenon itself. But it is very doubtful whether they could be put back without enormous cost (especially as much damage was done to the building when they were taken down), and it is also doubtful whether, having regard to their preservation, it would be wise to attempt to do so; but at least they could be housed nearby in their right surroundings, while the Caryatid (whose removal the local Greeks lamented at the time) could, no doubt, be restored to the Erechtheum porch, which fortunately for lack of shipping Elgin was unable to remove entirely.

Although the story of Elgin's acquisition of the Marbles may be irrelevant to the problem we are discussing, it is nevertheless a fascinating if somewhat depressing one, and it is told with great clarity and vividness by Mr. St. Clair in this excellent book. In telling it the author, while making use of earlier studies (among them A. H. Smith, "Lord Elgin and his Collection," *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 1916 and I. Genadios, 'Ο Λόρδος "Ελγιν, 1926), draws on new sources, notably *The Letters of Mary Nisbett, Countess of Elgin* (1926), *The Farington Diary*, the *Hunt Papers*, and certain material in the Public Record Office, London. The *Hunt Papers* are of especial interest: they contain drafts of letters from the Rev. Philip Hunt, Chaplain to Lord Elgin's Embassy,

to his patron, describing the missions which he and Professor J. D. Carlyle made to the Troad, Mount Athos, and to Athens in search of antiquities and manuscripts. It was Hunt who, after the visit to Athens, initiated the famous *firman*, which came to be regarded as an adequate authority for the removal of the Marbles; it was Hunt who, on a visit to Mycenae, "cast covetous eyes over the Lion Gate but decided regretfully that it was too far from the sea for there to be hope of removing it." It was Hunt again who proposed that the whole Caryatid porch of the Erechtheum should be taken to England and there reconstructed.

To the insatiable appetites of the despoilers much of this study is directed and Lord Elgin's place among them is sympathetically examined. Of especial interest, however, is Mr. St. Clair's account of the controversies to which the Marbles gave rise when a part of the collection was exhibited in a shed behind Piccadilly in June 1807. Some of the artists considered these treasures superior to those of Italy—to the Apollo Belvedere, the Laocoon, and the Medici Venus, which had been generally considered to be "Greek" and the noblest examples of "Ideal Beauty." But the majority of the patrons and connoisseurs accepted Richard Payne Knight's view that the Parthenon Marbles were Roman of the time of Hadrian—that they were mere architectural sculptures fashioned by workmen and not by artists. These views were readily accepted by the Society of the Dilettanti and, strange to say, by Lord Byron.

But though Byron did not rate highly the artistic value of the Marbles he raged furiously against Lord Elgin for despoiling a building which had stood for over two thousand years. As Mr. St. Clair rightly points out, "*Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and *The Curse of Minerva* have coloured the world's view of Lord Elgin's activities ever since they first appeared." Indeed, Elgin's reputation received a blow from which it has never recovered, and, one might add, from which it will never recover, for Byron's invective will always be read when scholarly studies like this have been forgotten.

Birkbeck College

DOUGLAS DAKIN

Robert Stephens, *Cyprus: A Place of Arms*. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1966; London: Pall Mall Press, 1966. Pp. 232.

This is a short book; but its width of view, clear arrangement