

Obituary Notice

MRS. ARTHUR STRONG. Born 25th March 1860; died 16th September 1943.

If proof be needed that Rome is essentially far less a modern national capital than she is the heart and centre of the civilized and cultured world, we find it brilliantly set forth in the career and work of Mrs. Arthur Strong (*née* Eugénie Sellers), who died in that city on 16th September 1943. An Englishwoman, educated at Girton College, Cambridge, one of the most distinguished of British archaeologists and art-historians of our day and of the Fellows of this Society, Mrs. Strong was also a Roman in the deepest sense of the term. She lived continuously in Rome from 1909 until her death (true to her character, she would not forsake the city when Italy entered the war), first as Assistant Director of the British School at Rome and from 1925 onwards in her own flat in the Via Balbo. Throughout these years her rooms were both the scene of unremitting study and of an uninterrupted output of published work and an intellectual and social centre for scholars, students, and distinguished persons of all types and of all nationalities. Her kindness, enthusiasm, and charm pervaded these cosmopolitan gatherings, at which the youngest tiro, just embarking upon archaeological or historical work, was no less welcome than the most learned veteran. The conversation, carried on in four or five different European languages, in itself served to convey to the new-comer Rome's international role. Mrs. Strong took unbounded pains to assist the work of students: many (the present writer among them) owed their *entrée* to some of the city's collections entirely to her influence and support.

Every true classical archaeologist is both Hellenist and Romanist, and Mrs. Strong was no exception. After leaving Cambridge she gave lectures and demonstrations on Greek art and archaeology at the British Museum, and later studied under Dörpfeld in Greece and Furtwängler in Germany. The bulk of her earliest publications dealt with Greek subjects, the most notable of these being her English edition of Furtwängler's *Meisterwerke der griechischen Plastik* (1895). Yet her commentary on *The Elder Pliny's Chapters on the History of Art* (with a translation by Miss K. Jex-Blake), published in 1896, formed a link between Greece and Rome, while a series of reviews of books on Roman subjects (1895-9), and a public lecture on Roman art delivered in London in 1896, the year before her marriage, revealed her growing interest in 'Romanità'. But the year 1900, in which her translation, with preface, of F. Wickhoff's *Roman Art* appeared, may be said to mark a turning-point in her career. For of all her many services to archaeology the most important and the most distinctive was her revelation of the art of the Roman Empire as a subject compelling attention on its own merits and for its own sake, whereby she demolished for ever the notion of it as a mere appendix, or even anti-climax, to the art of classical and Hellenistic Greece. It is of comparatively little moment whether we trace the secret of this imperial art to some native Italic quality which consciously, as it were, resisted, and maintained itself against, the tide of Hellenic influence sweeping down upon it; or to Rome's genius for synthesis, to her power to use and absorb everything which she found, and, in appropriating it to the service of the imperial idea, to turn it all into something new. What matters is that, thanks to Mrs. Strong, Rome's artistic achievement has now won universal recognition, not only as the culminating phase in the long and brilliant history of antique art, but also as a link of the utmost significance between the classical and Christian worlds.

Mrs. Strong never lost her interest in things Hellenic and had a wide knowledge of Byzantine history and art; but from 1900 onwards publications on Roman subjects followed one another with ever-increasing rapidity. Only the most important of them can be mentioned here—*Roman Sculpture from Augustus to Constantine* (1907), of which an enlarged and revised edition in Italian appeared in 1923–6, while a new study in English was in preparation; contributions to the *Catalogue of Ancient Sculptures in the Municipal Collections of Rome*, by members of the British School at Rome (1912 and 1926); *Art in Ancient Rome from the Earliest Times to Justinian* ('Ars Una' series, 1929, in English, French, and Italian); and two chapters entitled 'The Art of the Roman Republic' and 'The Art of the Augustan Age' contributed to volumes ix (1932) and x (1934) respectively of *The Cambridge Ancient History*. Mrs. Strong's periodic reports in *The Times Literary Supplement* on recent archaeological discoveries in Italy were eagerly awaited and still more eagerly read. Nor is it without interest that of her numerous contributions to *The Journal of Roman Studies* the first and the last—'The Exhibition illustrative of the Provinces of the Roman Empire at the Baths of Diocletian, Rome' (vol. i, 1911) and 'Romanità throughout the Ages' (a study of the 'Mostra Augustea della Romanità', held in Rome in 1937–8, vol. xxix, 1939)—should both have stressed Rome's unique position as the source from which art and culture flowed through central and western Europe and the Mediterranean lands. For, while centred in the capital, Mrs. Strong travelled extensively in Rome's former provinces and at one time projected a general survey of Roman provincial art. *Apotheosis and After-Life*, published in 1915 and based on lectures delivered on the Norton foundation of the Archaeological Institute of America in 1913, is, in many respects, the most impressive of all her works, as marking a significant stage in the author's own spiritual development. For it reveals that sensitiveness to the symbolic and religious atmosphere pervading imperial art which made her so attractive an interpreter of the underground basilica of the Porta Maggiore in particular and coloured so much, in general, of her later work.

Mrs. Strong's activities were by no means confined to the classical field. As librarian to the Duke of Devonshire at Chatsworth from 1904 to 1909 she had interested herself especially in drawings of the Old Masters; and from 1918 onwards she devoted considerable time to the study of baroque architecture and art. Her excellent monograph *La Chiesa Nuova* (S. Maria in Vallicella) appeared in 1923. In 1924 she contributed a paper on 'The Popes and the Arts' to a Cambridge volume of essays on the Papacy, and in 1926 a paper on 'S. Francis in Rome' to *S. Francis of Assisi: Essays in Commemoration*. The manuscript of her monumental work on the Vatican is believed to have been completed by the time of her death. So, too, she entered fully into the life of modern Rome. She represented the University of Cambridge at the opening of the University City of Rome in 1935. She was a frequent contributor to the Roman press and to Roman archaeological journals. In 1938 she was presented by the Governor of Rome with the Gold Medal of the City. Instinctively disposed to welcome and embrace new ideas, she followed with keen interest, not unmixed with shrewd criticism, the political and cultural developments of recent times.

To hear Mrs. Strong talk or lecture on Roman subjects, or to visit the treasures of Rome and the neighbourhood in her company, was to be inspired for ever with devotion to the Eternal City. She was, in a true sense, an apostle of the continuity, the vitality, the indispensability of Rome.

JOCELYN M. C. TOYNBEE.