



Temple of Vesta, Basilica.

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AN ATTEMPT TO IDENTIFY THE CIRCULAR TEMPLE OF BAALBECK, COMMONLY CALLED THE TEMPLE OF VENUS.

By the LORD TALBOT DE MALAHIDE, President, R.A.I.

BAALBECK is a small town situated at the base of the Anti-Lebanon, and facing some of the highest peaks of the Lebanon, which are generally capped with snow, and has a population consisting of Metaualis, Mussulmans and Christians. It stands on a slight eminence, and is watered by a beautiful stream, whose source is near the town, and is a favourite resort of the idle and pleasure-seeking. The district is rich and tolerably well cultivated with the usual Syrian crops, and also grows a considerable quantity of potatoes. The groves of poplar, although too near the temples, add to the picturesque effect. Its name among the Greeks and Romans was Heliopolis, or the City of the Sun, and the present name is probably its ancient Phœnician name revived. Baal, the principal deity worshipped, is considered to correspond with the Sun or Jupiter of the Greeks and Romans. The ancient walls of the town are still tolerably preserved, and the enormous blocks of stone used in their construction rank among the wonders of the world. They were probably erected by the Phœnicians. There are the remains of three temples existing at Baalbeck. The principal temple, that of Jupiter, must have been a wonderful edifice. There are still six gigantic columns remaining *in situ*, in spite of the damage done to them by earthquakes, Turks, and Arabs. In the year 1550, Thevenot, the first European traveller, saw twenty-seven still standing.

The second temple is that called of the Sun; it was not so large as that of Jupiter, but it is better preserved, and was constructed in a more elaborate style. It was highly ornamented with decorative sculpture. There is also a

large enclosure in which these two temples were placed, with *sacella* and other pertinencies of the temples.

The circular temple stands outside the enclosure, and is much smaller than the other two. "The *cella* is of a circular form, 38 ft. in diameter, and is surrounded by a peristyle of six columns, 9 ft. distant from the wall of the *cella*. The entablature, which there supports it, is not carried round in a circle, but retreats between each pair of columns near to the wall of the *cella* (as will be seen by the engraving), forming a kind of semicircular apse, and appearing like radiations from a central nucleus. The exterior wall is ornamented with pilasters and niches; the interior is encompassed by two tiers of small columns. The lower Ionic supports a plain cornice, and the upper tier are Corinthian with tabernacles over them. The building was covered by a domed roof, but this has fallen, and the walls are greatly shattered." I have borrowed this very accurate description of a difficult subject from Porter's handbook. It is generally called the Circular Temple, and sometimes the Temple of Venus, without, however, any authority for the name except the presumption that a Syrian city could not be without a temple devoted to the goddess of love. Eusebius expressly mentions that there was a temple devoted to Venus under the title of *Ἡδονή*. No doubt there were many other temples whose ruins have disappeared. However, it appears to me that a discovery, made a few years since, settles the question. An Englishman, as I am informed, undertook some excavations at Baalbeck, and in the course of them discovered in the vicinity of the circular temple, a marble statue in a fine state of preservation, which he was about to remove, when the populace of Baalbeck, whether influenced by fanaticism, avarice or caprice does not appear, wantonly mutilated the statue, broke off its head, and broke its body in several places. It still remains in the market-place, and has been rudely restored. It represents a female draped and seated on a throne, with a lion standing on its left side. This animal has also lost its head, but its figure and legs leave no doubt as to the nature of the beast. There probably was another lion on the right side of the figure also. The statue is of white marble, and is a fair specimen of sculpture.

I have found a photograph of this figure, from which the



Statue of the Goddess Cybele.

engraving has been made. It gives a fair representation of it, and I have no doubt that it was intended to represent Cybele. If the head had been preserved, it would probably have shown a turretted crown. It is also possible that there was another lion on her right. However, although Cybele is generally represented between two lions, there are examples with only one. Another peculiarity is that there is some indication of wings, as if the lion was a winged one.

With respect to this goddess, who was an important Asiatic deity, and generally worshipped in Asia Minor and Syria, she had a variety of names. She was called Mater Deorum, Magna Mater, Cybele, Cybebe, Cydastis, Bereynthia, Brimo, Dondymene, Magna Idæa Mater Deorum. She was particularly worshipped in Bithynia near Mount Ida.

Greek mythology is a very confused medley of legends, and the number of Herculeases and Jupiters enumerated by Cicero in his treatise "*De Naturâ Deorum*" is enough to bewilder any inquirer. The mythology of Asia is still more obscure and embarrassing. Independently of their local deities and heroes, there is a mixture of Greek traditions, which doubtless increased after the extension of the Roman influence over the Eastern World. One of the most famous eastern deities was *Astarte* or *Astaroth*, the Oriental Venus. She was chiefly adored by the Phœnicians and Sidonians, and her influence did not extend much beyond the territories of this maritime people.

It is impossible that this deity can be here represented, and the idea that the Dea Syria, with her lions and *Galli* can represent Venus is very improbable. Lucian's curious tract, "*De Deâ Syriâ*," is very instructive, and it may not be out of place to give some account of the great temple of Hierapolis (near Bambyce, two days' journey N.E. of Aleppo), and of the religious ceremonies performed there. It was the principal shrine of Syria, and although Lucian considers the deity to be *Juno*, she has many attributes which could identify her with Cybele. His account of the origin of the temple, of its construction, and the ceremonies celebrated in it are very interesting. He goes on to say, "Most people say that Deucalion the Scythian founded the temple. In the time of Deucalion there was a great deluge. The present race of men is not the first; as the former one perished. The present generation is the second, which sprang from Deu-

calion. This is the legend concerning the first generation. These men committed all kinds of nefarious acts. They violated their oaths; they did not entertain strangers; they did not spare suppliants. On account of these misdeeds, a great calamity overtook them. Then the earth gave out much water. There were dreadful rains; the rivers rose to an immense height; and the sea rose until everything was submerged, and all the men perished with the exception of Deucalion, who was rescued for another generation, on account of his prudence and piety. He was saved in this wise: He had a large ark, and into it he entered—he, and his children, and his wives. There came, moreover, and entered it pigs, horses, lions, serpents, and every manner of beasts that feed upon the earth, all in pairs. They did not hurt each other, and became great friends. And they all remained together until the waters subsided.”

Others asserted that the temple was erected to Rhea by *Atys*. *Atys* was a Syrian of whom Rhea was enamoured, and according to Lucian “first established the mysteries of Rhea which are celebrated by the Phrygians, Lydians, and Samothracians. For after he incurred the disgrace of Cybele, he gave up the appearance of a man, and dressing like a woman, travelled through the country, celebrating orgies and proclaiming his sufferings, until he reached Syria, and built a temple near the river Euphrates. The attributes of the deity whom he worshipped in most respects resembled Cybele. For she was drawn by lions, she held a drum, and bore a tower on her head, such as she is represented by the Lydians. Her priests, the *Galli*, also, are not like the priests of Juno, but more of Cybele, for they imitate *Atys*, and take vows of perpetual chastity.

Others ascribe the temple to Juno, and say that it was founded by Bacchus on his return from Ethiopia. Lucian seems to lean to the idea that the deity was Juno, and connects it with the legend of Combabus, which gives a different origin for the peculiar institution of the *Galli*. He describes the temple as a kind of Pantheon. But the most prominent figure is that of *Juno*, which is a very remarkable one. As he says “She certainly is Juno, but she has some resemblance to Minerva, Venus, the Moon, Rhea, Diana, Nemesis, and the *Parcæ*. In one hand she holds a sceptre, in the other a spindle. She bears on her head, rays of light, and a tower,

and the *cestus* round her girdle, which is peculiar to Venus Urania. She is covered with gold and precious stones, onyxes, hyacinths, emeralds, &c."

There are many other statues of gods and heroes, of Bacchus, Apollo, Atlas, Mercury, Lucina, and strangely enough of Helen, Hecuba, Andromache, Paris, Hector, Achilles, Nereus, Philomele, Rome, Semiramis, Stratonice, Combabus, Alexander, and Sardanapalus. In the hall there are at large oxen, horses, eagles, bears, and lions, who are all tame and do not injure men. There are a great many *Galli* and priests attached to the temple, who have their several duties assigned to them. They are more than three hundred in number. They are all dressed in white with caps on their heads. The high priest alone wears purple and a golden tiara. He gives many more details about their ceremonies, festivals, &c., and seems to lean towards the idea that *Juno* is the name to be applied to the deity. Certainly many of her attributes are the same as those of Cybele, and although it is a difficult question, I think that this deity was the one principally worshipped on the Euphrates.