

N O T I C E
OF
SOME RUINS IN THE ISLAND OF MILO,
IN GREECE.

Communicated by Captain Boswall, R. N.

Edinburgh, November 10. 1821.

MY DEAR SIR,

During the command of one of his Majesty's ships in the Mediterranean, I was frequently stationed in the Grecian Archipelago, and had many opportunities of visiting these interesting islands; amongst the rest, we anchored at Milo (anciently Melos) and, making some excavations in the vineyards and corn fields, now covering the site of the ancient and splendid capital of this island, I found a small opening in the side of a little flat hill, and, projecting from it, three rows of fine free-stone seats, in most perfect condition, shewing the building connected with them (but under the surface) to be the ruins of the Theatre. Upon inquiring at our pilot, (a very intelligent Greek, and who fulfilled the duties of British vice-consul upon occasions of the arrival of our merchant ships,) I was informed that Baron Haller, a German traveller, had discovered this Theatre about eighteen months prior to my arrival; and, from his information, aid-

ed by ancient drawings and plans in his possession, appears to have been one of the most splendid designs of Grecian architecture in the early part of the age of Pericles, and to have been destroyed with the city, under the following circumstances:—

Milo, though small, was of very great importance in the time that Greece flourished. It enjoyed perfect liberty for nearly 700 years before the Peloponnesian war; and the natives being determined to preserve their neutrality (in consequence of their being descended from the Lacedemonians) refused to join with the Greeks, the neighbouring islands, and principal towns on the Asiatic coast, in the subjugation of their mother country. This determination induced the Athenians to send a fleet of 60 sail, and 2000 soldiers, who landed and laid the whole country waste. The Milians most bravely resisted, and obliged the Athenian general to retire; but, in the interval of ten years, they were again twice attacked, and finally overpowered; the city was laid in ruins and ashes, and the principal inhabitants carried into captivity. Such is the traditional account handed down to the present inhabitants of Milo, who still claim their descent from the Spartans.

From Baron Haller's statement, it was supposed to contain some statues of the highest antiquity, and, in particular, those of the Muses; and it was his intention to have cleared away the whole of the Theatre in search of them, having purchased the ground for that purpose, when he was unfortunately attacked by the malaria, or fever of the country, and died shortly afterwards in a neighbouring island, leaving his labours in the same state I found the excavation on my arrival. With this information, I began to clear away three or four more seats, and discovered a very large square pedestal of Parian marble, beautifully orna-

mented with flowers and fruits, vine leaves, &c. the whole length of the angles. It was six feet in height, and two feet six inches square. On the pedestal evidently stood a figure, as the impression of a foot was faintly marked on the top. Proceeding a little deeper, I came to the piece of cornice which I have presented to the Edinburgh Museum, the dimensions of which are five feet two inches in length, breadth two feet two inches, thickness at head one foot one inch, at lower moulding eight inches, and weighs nearly half a ton. The marble is Parian, and of the finest kind, taken from a particular quarry which I have seen at Paros, where a great proportion of this stone is little inferior to alabaster. The appearance of the strong, yet simple and beautiful style of the ornaments, is a proof of its being used in the early times of Grecian architecture, and prior to the construction of some of the monuments in the citadel of Athens, as those that I have seen there, and elsewhere, are more mixed and confused, and in general more attached to the Corinthian than Ionic order, whose columns appear to have supported the entablature of the principal entrance to the Theatre.

From the situation of the seats for the audience, the grand entrance was due east, and its front consisted of twelve Ionic columns, from their bases being visible; the whole has been crowned by a pediment, from a socket still remaining in the top of the cornice, and which must have been the piece fixed on the north end, from the ornamental work being brought round until it has joined the next part on the north and west side of the portico.

I have only to regret that particular circumstances prevented me remaining a few days longer at Milo, as I have no doubt that

I would have brought to light some piece of antiquity of greater value : And, in giving this general outline of what I have seen in this island, and which has as yet been very little visited by travellers in Greece, I trust it will become more generally known to them, for they may depend it will amply repay their researches both in antiquities and natural curiosities.

I remain, &c.

J. D. BOSWALL.

To Robert Scott Moncrieff, Esq.

&c. &c. &c.

Edinburgh.