

THE COLOSSUS OF RHODES.

Tradition has it, as is well known, that at the entrance to the port of Rhodes there was standing a gigantic statue of Apollo, with outstretched legs, one foot resting on a lower mole, and the other on a higher; holding a bow in one hand and in the other, raised high above his head, an immense basin, in which a large fire was constantly maintained. The size of the statue, report added, was so colossal that the largest vessels could easily pass between the legs.

The facts unfortunately are, that the Colossus of Rhodes never served as a light-house, and that vessels never passed beneath it into the harbor.

The whole story rests upon the highly romantic account found in a very different compiler of the seventeenth century, who for the first time, mentions the Colossus as serving as a light-house, but carefully abstains from giving his authority for the statement. Another writer of even less judgment, a translator of Philostratus, added subsequently the story of the vessels passing between the outstretched legs of the statue. This author also discloses, by silent as to the source from which he has derived his information.

What, then, is the truth about the Colossus? There is no lack of reliable statements concerning the statue. Strabo quotes a fragment of an epigram in which the name of the statue is given, and the name of the architect, Chares, from Lindos, a town of the island of Rhodes, and the dimensions of his great work, seventy feet in height, are both mentioned. He adds that the Colossus was, in this day, lying on the ground, having been overturned by a fearful earthquake, which destroyed a large portion of the city. "The Rhodians," he says, "dared not raise it again, warned by an oracle," and that is literally all the illustrious geographer seemed to have learned about the Colossus. Ptolemy, however, gives an additional and interesting detail. "The statue," he says, "fell fifty six years after its erection; but although thrown down, it is still a marvel. Few men with their arms are able to span its thumb; its fingers are larger than most of our statues. Its disjoined limbs form vast caverns, and in the inside are yet to be seen enormous masses of stone, by means of which it had been balanced. They say it cost three hundred talents to erect, and that the Rhodians obtained from the sale of instruments of war left by Demetrius before their city when he abandoned the siege in despair." A clever engineer of the third century before Christ, Philo of Byzantium, is the third author who gives, in his interesting works on the Seven Wonders of the World—if it really is his—a still more detailed account of the statue; but, as has been seen, not one of these writers speaks of a light-house or of a marvelous fact that ships could have sailed beneath the Colossus.

For nine hundred years the gigantic limbs remained lying near the entrance of the harbor, the pride of the inhabitants and the wonder of all travelers. In 672, however, the Arabs came, in the capture of their first successes, to Rhodes also; and their General, one of Othman's lieutenants, caused the pieces to be cut up, and sold the metal to a Jew, who is said to have loaded nine hundred camels with the precious burden. Thus every trace was lost of the far famed statue, and even the name of the artist was long lost although "he had made a god like unto a god, and even a second sun to the world."—M. Schele De Vere, in Harper's Magazine.

AN APPLAUDING MACHINE.

Most of our readers are aware of the practice, universal in French theatres, of employing claqueurs for the purpose of applauding the actors and plays. There is a curious story showing how the director of a French provincial theatre managed to have his pieces applauded without incurring the expense of a human claque. Some twenty years ago the director of the theatre of a provincial town, seeing that his actors were never applauded or sustained by any marks of approbation, organized a claque to stimulate the spectators. This innovation did not meet with success; the claqueurs, hissed and beaten, were obliged to resign their functions the first evening. The manager did not insist, but at the same time did not acknowledge himself beaten. He was endowed with great perseverance, and above all with a very ingenious imagination; he proved it in this circumstance, for shortly afterwards, the public, so calm and cold in appearance, became demonstrative and loud in applause. It was brought about thus: In conjunction with a machinist, as discreet as he was intelligent, our director organized a mechanical claque. The reader must imagine several articulated hamms, as four different places under the pit floor, and so that they might strike on a string being pulled. The noise produced by these hamms simulated that of a stick. A few yards from the hamms, in the center of the pit, were placed two instruments which imitated the clapping of the hands. They were two large cast-iron covers with leather, a string pulled by two small wheels together. The noise of these mechanical clappers penetrated into the theatre through holes placed above them, and dissipated under the seats of the spectators. The six cords met in a part of the theatre known to all except the machinist, and were fastened to six strong wooden keys, like those of a piano. One can easily understand the working of the instruments; at certain passages of a piece, indicated beforehand by the director, the machinist placed his finger on one or another of the keys, which little blow right and left, as people impatient of applauding, do with their hands. It was only very rarely that the public did not answer this appeal. In this case, the machinist set his whole machine at work, and all the applauding engines mixed themselves with the real applause of the spectators. This ingenious artifice remained all ways ignored by the victims, and today the town is much sought after by traveling actors on account of the good will and readiness to applaud of the spectators.—American Artisan.

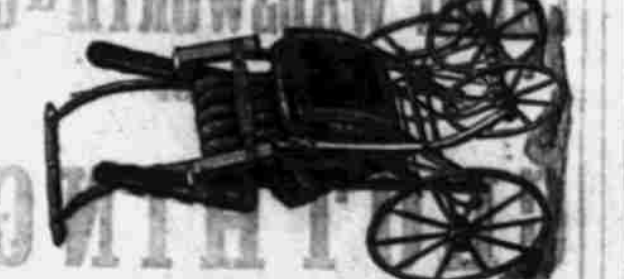
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