

## RETURNING ELGIN MARBLES TO ATHENS ARGUED

The Elgin marbles, which are the pride of the British Museum, the regret of Greece, and the despair of all sculptors who ever saw them, are again in the lime-light. The Greek government is setting up the columns of the Parthenon again, using for the most part the ancient segments which have been lying near the temple ever since the Venetian shell blew it up in 1689. And agitation has been started as to whether the British Museum should not now restore to Athens bas-reliefs that have been in England for over a century.

In the opinion of Dr. R.V.D. Magoffin, president of the Archaeological Institute of America, the Elgin marbles should find their ultimate home in Athens.

In a statement made to Science Service, Dr. Magoffin said:

"It has been the artistic world rather than Great Britain which has insisted that the Elgin marbles remain in London. In the first place they were safe, and in the second place, many more people could and would see them there.

"The propriety of having the marbles in Athens is, of course, unquestioned. The willingness and scientific ability of the Greeks to care properly for them is admitted. The chief question remains: Has the political stability of the Balkans reached the point where there is no possibility of a war in which Athens might be shelled?"

Dr. Magoffin believes that Lord Elgin did both Greece and the artistic world a service when he salvaged the marbles from the ruins of the Parthenon in 1802 and carried them to England.

"Had they remained in Athens, many of them would have been destroyed, and the rest would certainly have suffered from weather or unscientific handling," he said. "Proof of this can be seen in the British Museum today on the walls in the Elgin Room, where two sets of casts are placed one above the other, one made a good many years ago and the other made lately. All of the later casts show the hard usage of man or time, and in a few cases the later cast shows the present marble to be so mutilated that without the earlier cast the entire meaning of the sculpture would be lost."

Sir Charles Waldston, British archeologist who recently spent some time in Greece, has discussed the situation at length on his return to London. His attitude is that the Elgin marbles could not in any case be set up on the Parthenon because they could not stand the exposure to weather, and consequently the marbles cannot play a part in the present restoration of the temple. So long as the sculptures cannot be returned to the building itself, he considers that the Greek desire to have them in the museum at Athens is no argument at all for their return.

As a substitute gesture of good will from England to Greece, he suggests that the Greeks are very anxious to have cement casts of certain parts of the triglyph-frieze of the Parthenon; and as these bas-relief sculptures are in the British Museum, he has asked that England present about 23 cement casts to the Greek government.

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