

Roman Temples Unearthed in Germany

Anthropology

By FRANK THONE

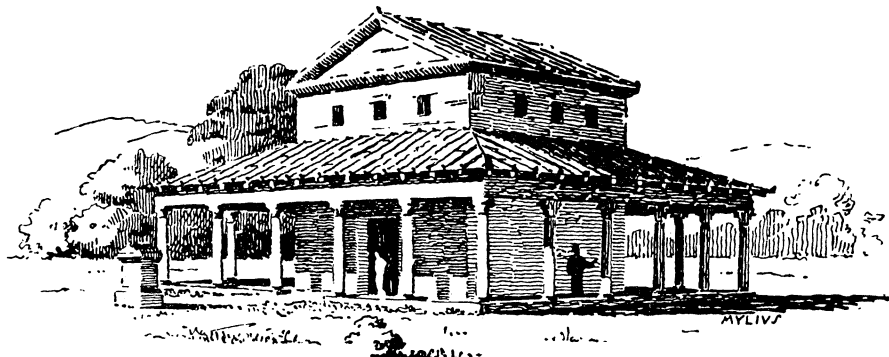
Sixty Roman temples to ancient German gods.

Such is the astonishing spoil turned up out of the earth by the spades of archaeologists in the old German city of Trier on the Moselle. It is the most striking find of its kind ever made north of the Alps, the largest group of Roman religious edifices known outside of Italy. Much still remains to be uncovered, buried under the debris of centuries, but enough has already been laid open to the light to add a long and important chapter to our knowledge of the life of the Romans, Germans and Gauls who thronged the streets of this "second Rome" over a millennium and a half ago.

Day by day the spades of the diggers go forward, but not fast enough to satisfy the scientific yearnings of Dr. Siegfried Loeschke, of the Provincial Museum of Trier. He has taken all the money he can get together—the heaviest contributor has been the Emergency Society for German Science—and hired men from the city's battalions of unemployed. But if one only could go ahead more rapidly. Perhaps some rich American. . . . The "reicher Amerikaner" of scholarly tastes figured largely in the endowment of archaeological and other scientific work abroad since the war; why not, then, in Trier? A restored temple could be dedicated as his monument—a distinction no man has had since the last of the pagan emperors of Rome!

But Doctor Loeschke is no man to waste time in dreaming. If *der reiche Amerikaner* turns up, why, fine; in the meantime, one goes on and digs up temples. And what a lot of temples there are, to what a variety of gods and goddesses! Over sixty structures, large and small, all massed together in the valley of a creek on the outskirts of the present city, with modernity running across one side in the shape of a railway cut, and crowding in on another under the guise of a leather goods factory; the place was a veritable town of temples.

Some of the gods are familiar enough: Jupiter, Mars, Mercury, and Apollo. Often the Roman deity will have another and unfamiliar name carved on the base of his altar or statue, identifying him with a Germanic deity who had the same at-



ONE OF THE SIXTY TEMPLES OF TRIER as it stood 1700 years ago, according to Dr. Loeschke. The architecture is German, not Roman.

tributes. Thus Apollo bears also the name of Grannus, worshipped by both Germans and Gauls as the god of healing. But many of the dedication-carvings are addressed to gods and goddesses not known in the Greco-Roman pantheon, and some of their names are disclosed here for the first time. Quite evidently the Romans of imperial days were very tolerant, and did not mind what gods the Treverans worshipped, or how, so long as the worshippers kept good order in public.

A find of this kind in Trier was not wholly unexpected, although its wealth of archaeological treasure is really overwhelming. Trier was an important city in Roman times. It was, indeed, literally made by the Romans, for it was built and fortified by the Emperor Augustus before the beginning of the Christian era. Whether there was any native settlement there at all before the coming of the Roman is still doubtful; if there was, it must have been a mere village clustered about some primitive shrines in the valley where the temple city subsequently rose. But under the Caesars Trier increased in both size and importance, until for the space of a whole century it was the capital and administrative center for the provinces of Gaul, Spain and Britain. Roman writers referred to it as "the Rome beyond the Alps", and emperors built for it bridges, walls, gates, amphitheaters, vast baths, and at last, after Constantine, Christian basilicas. Some of these structures are in use to this day, and the ruins of the rest, even before the amazing temple-town dug up by Doctor Loeschke, have been the boast of all loyal burghers of Trier and the admiration of thousands of visitors. The new discoveries become the crown

and climax of Trier's treasure of Roman ruins.

Trier's older glories have been known because many of them have been in continuous use ever since the Romans built them. Treveran traffic still crosses a bridge whose piers were built by order of Augustus; on Sundays hymns go up to God from within church walls that have stood for more than 1500 years. Trier's newly-discovered archaeological wonder was buried, lost and forgotten for centuries because at a critical period in the city's history the citizens and their leaders literally had no use for pagan temples. Doctor Loeschke has discovered convincing evidence that this town of temples came to a sudden end in the year 337 A. D. through the iconoclastic zeal of the powerful Christian bishop Maximinius, who would tolerate no "strange gods" before the god he served.

The ruin of the temples was, paradoxically, also their preservation. Their overthrown images and altars were buried in the fragments of their walls, piled deeper with the later dust of centuries. The spot, avoided as accursed by the Christians and shunned in fear by those who still had heathen hearts, remained vacant land for generation after generation. After the collapse of the Roman empire and the final triumph of the fierce Germanic tribe of Franks who conquered Gaul and gave it a new name, France, the importance of Trier declined and the center of its population shifted as well, so that the site of the once thickly-built temple town in the valley was still empty and unused ground until Dr. Loeschke began his excavations. The neglect of the past was its best gift to the present. (Turn to next page)

Roman Temples in Germany—Continued

Many and remarkable are the gods and goddesses whose overthrown images and altars Doctor Loeschke has picked up, where the followers of the crusading bishop cast them down many centuries ago. Some of them had been so far forgotten that the inscription on a single broken



ONE OF TRIER'S MOTHER-GODDESSES, a cornucopia in her arms, and two children leaning on her lap

statue now tells us for the first time that men ever conceived of such divinities or adored them. Such, for example, is the goddess who bears the remarkable name of Icovellauna. Two other hitherto unknown goddesses, Aveta and Ritona, were also honored here. These and other female deities were always pictured in the same general way: as fine young mothers with their children in their arms or leaning on their knees, while they held out to their worshippers baskets or cornucopias full of the fruits of the earth. These were evidently kindly goddesses, who were invoked for good harvests or prosperous trading ventures; and in them men saw also the symbols of their own mothers, of the mothers of their own children, and of the whole general dignity of motherhood.

It might be thought that these goddesses, so like each other in their attributes, were merely the same divinity disguised under different names.

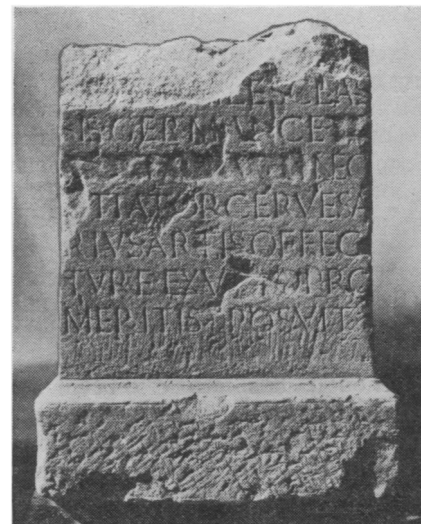
But an altar discovered some years ago, at Xanten on the lower Rhine, many miles from Trier, proves that they were separate personalities in the minds of their devotees. The man who erected this monument of piety was a citizen of Trier, secretary to the commander of the Thirtieth Roman Legion, so the inscription states. He dedicated his altar *MATRIBUS TREVERIS*—"To Mothers of Trier", that is, to all the mother-goddesses of whom his own mother had told him many years before in the fair city on the Moselle.

The gentle goddesses of Trier sometimes had serious businesses, attending to matters that one might think at first would be left to the male members of the pantheon. One of them, named Epona, is always shown riding on a horse; the region around Trier was the Kentucky of the Galo-German holdings of Rome. But the maternal cares of Epona were evidently extended to her four-footed charges, for her steed is often a mare, shown with a colt at its side.

Besides the domestic, horse-tending Epona, there was another goddess who had a favorite animal. This was Artio, the bear-goddess. Then there was the forest goddess Arduinna, deity of the forest of Ardennes, immortalized by Shakespeare as Arden Wood. Arduinna's animal was the hare. These animal-keeping goddesses and their male counterparts, Doctor Loeschke thinks, are surviving relics of an earlier animal worship.

For there were also gods associated with animals in this ancient South German pantheon. One of the most striking statues found in the temple is of a bull, with a broad-shouldered man half-recumbent between its forelegs. The bull is a figure of the water-god; for the power of water to make the land fruitful was figured under the symbol of this animal in many lands and probably dates back to times before history. The man is probably also the deity of water. In the minds of the ancient worshippers at this shrine, *both* figures are images of the *same* god. It is a bit puzzling to modern minds, but that is how they thought of it.

Other sculptured groups show a god in human form hacking his way with an ax through thick forest growth, over which the head of a bull shows, together with three water-birds, probably cranes. This Doctor Loeschke interprets to mean that the



THE LATIN INSCRIPTION on this altar states that the donor was a sailor in the Roman fleet on the Rhine, and a dealer in beer on the side

sun-god—Apollo of the Romans, Grannus of the Gauls and Germans—is clearing away the oppressive primeval forest, and releasing the streams and springs for the use and benefit of mankind.

Another association of human and animal in a sculptured deity was found in what was probably the principal shrine, at least during one period of the temple-group's development. This was a heroic-sized statue of Jupiter mounted on a horse. The animal was represented not merely as galloping on the ground but flying through the air, and this, together with inscriptions addressing Jupiter as "hammer-wielder", shows that the ancient Treverans thought of the chief of the Roman gods as identical with their own Donar, the "thunderer", better known to us, perhaps, by his Norse name of Thor. Our Thursday, or Thor's day, is still known to the Germans as *Donnerstag*, or Donar's day.

Here again the man and the horse represented the same god. The horse was a holy animal to the ancient Germans, and its flesh was eaten at their great religious feasts. Therefore, after Christianity achieved the ascendancy, the eating of horse-meat was forbidden; so that the repugnance which all Nordics have for a dish which the Latins and Gauls are said not to despise, is simply a surviving tabu against the worship of Donar. Nordic Christians refuse to eat horse as the Jews (*Turn to next page*)

Roman Temples—Continued

refuse to eat pork, but unlike the Jews they have forgotten the reason why.

A relatively late comer among the gods worshipped in the temple town of Trier, and a complete outsider so far as the group of native gods is concerned, was the Persian deity Mithra, favorite of the Roman legions throughout the empire. Mithraism became widespread wherever there were Roman soldiers about two centuries before the birth of Christ, and for a long time during the decay of the old Roman cults this Oriental religion, which really had much to recommend it, was a serious rival of Christianity.

Mithra, according to the popular belief of two thousand years ago, though of mortal form, was not of mortal birth. He sprang from the living rock in a cave, and his exploits formed a long and involved gospel related only to the initiate. Only fragments of his story have survived, but it is known that his earthly pilgrimage centered around the pursuit and eventual sacrifice of a great bull. Heroic fortitude and self-denial were expected of his imitators, and since women were excluded from his worship he naturally became the favorite god of the Roman legionaries.

One large shrine, or Mithraeum, dedicated to him, has been found in the temple group at Trier. It is unique among the structures excavated by Doctor Loeschke in that it was a part of a dwelling-house. No other domestic structure of any sort has thus far been found in the holy enclosure. And buried in the debris of this house was one of the best-preserved Mithraic sculptures that has ever been uncovered. Its central panel shows the birth of Mithra, and surrounding the young god's likeness are various carved symbols of his later career.

But not even Mithra the powerful could hold his shrine against the rising tide of Christianity. Survivors of bitter persecutions, the Christians could see no good in the gods once favored by the pagan emperors. So as soon as they were strong enough they turned on them and destroyed their shrines and altars and statues in one zealous carnival of wreckage.

In a corner of one of the ruined buildings Doctor Loeschke has found the one Christian sign that has been yielded by all the excavations so far conducted at this place. It is a cross-shaped safety pin or brooch,

such as men used for securing their cloaks. Possibly some laborer, working for the image-smashing bishop, tore this off his garment as he was swinging his pickax or straining at his wrecking crowbar. Lying here among the broken and forgotten relics of paganism, this little metal cross is like a seal of the final triumph of Christendom. The Nazarene had conquered.

Science News-Letter, June 15, 1929

Extinct Hornless Rhino

Paleontology

The first rhinoceros had no horn and was the largest land mammal that ever inhabited the earth. Prof. A. A. Borisyak of the Soviet Academy of Science is responsible for these startling statements.

Several years ago Prof. Borisyak found in Turkestan some huge bones of an unknown extinct animal. At present a complete skeleton, said to be the only one in existence, is set up in the Geological Institute at Leningrad. It is now known under the long name of *Indricotherium Asiaticum*. A detailed study of the skeleton, which proved to be remains of a forefather of the modern rhino, yielded much new and valuable information.

The elephant, formerly regarded as the largest land mammal, must give his place of honor to *Indricotherium*. Even now when his mighty frame is reduced to mere bones skillfully strung together, the *Indricotherium* towers nearly 15 feet. The biggest present day elephant would hardly reach his shoulders. No other known land mammal, living or extinct, can range in size with this prehistoric monster.

Perhaps the most peculiar feature of this first rhinoceros is that it lacks the familiar horn. It seems that horns are rather a recent acquisition of the rhino tribe.

Big and strong as *Indricotherium* must have been, he probably had a very mild disposition, according to Prof. Borisyak. Teeth and general construction of the skeleton show that the *Indricotherium Asiaticum* could eat plant food only, preferably tree leaves. His body was slightly like that of the modern giraffe, because of a long neck. Notwithstanding his enormous bulk, the animal must have been very fleet of foot.

Science News-Letter, June 15, 1929

42 Ice Cream Cans

Metrology

When you buy ice cream now, in quantities of a gallon or so, it may come in one of forty-two different kinds of cans. Before long this unnecessary variety may be reduced to five kinds, if the recommendation of the Simplified Practice Committee of the International Association of Ice Cream Manufacturers is adopted.

At the meeting recently of the National Conference on Weights and Measures, Ridgway Kennedy, chairman of the committee, told what was being done in an effort to introduce savings from simplified practice in the ice cream industry.

During the past year, he said, his committee made a survey of the bulk ice cream containers in use throughout the country, and found the forty-two different styles. There were eleven 5-gallon cans of different shape, thirteen 3-gallon cans, ten 2-gallon cans and eight 1-gallon cans.

"As the general use of mechanical refrigerated cabinets throughout the industry has, to a large extent, standardized the use of the 5-gallon cans, we felt it unnecessary to consider the 2 and 3-gallons cans, as most of us are no longer placing orders for these sizes and are merely using those we have until they are worn out and can be discarded," said Mr. Kennedy.

To provide a size between one and five gallons, it was also decided to adopt a 2½-gallon can, two of which would fit into the 5-gallon hole in the refrigerated cabinet.

As the 5-gallon holes in the cabinet are of two different shapes, one tall and the other squat, the committee has adopted two alternative shapes for the five and two-and-a-half gallon cans. These, with the new one-gallon can will adequately serve the purpose of the great variety of older cans.

Mr. Kennedy stated that the smaller quart and pint cartons for home use show almost as much diversity as the larger cans, and that his committee is now working on them with a view to simplification.

Science News-Letter, June 15, 1929

With the establishment of the Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming, and the Bryce Canyon National Park, Utah, during the past year, there are now 21 members of the national park system.