

Obituary Notices

Giacomo Boni: It is hardly too much to say that the name of our Honorary Fellow, Giacomo Boni, whose death at Rome was announced on July 10th, is one of three which will always be associated with a series of epoch-making excavations in the Mediterranean lands in our own time—Dr. Schliemann with Troy and Mycenae, Sir Arthur Evans with Crete, and Boni with the Forum and Palatine at Rome. The results in the first two cases may have been more far-reaching for the history of our civilization, but the immediate importance of Rome for Western Europe gives a peculiar value to Boni's revelations about the origins of the Eternal City.

Giacomo Boni was born in 1859 at Venice, of old Venetian stock, though in a comparatively humble rank of life. But the promise which he showed as a boy secured him a good education by the help of a more prosperous relation, and he ultimately took his degree as an 'architect-engineer', to use the Italian title. Meanwhile, he had got employment in the office of the works of restoration then going on in the Doge's Palace, and here he gained his first knowledge and experience in the treatment of ancient buildings. His capacities for such work attracted the attention of the authorities, and he was entrusted with the restoration of the exquisite early renaissance church of S. Maria dei Miracoli. After a new campaign of excavation had been opened in the Forum at Rome, he was appointed in 1898, over the heads of the Roman archaeologists, to take charge of this work. The discovery of the Black Stone and the archaic inscribed cippus beside it at once showed the importance of the new field of exploration. In the course of the next few years the area of the Forum, the site of the Basilica Aemilia and the Temple of Vesta with its surroundings were excavated; and near by, on the line of the Via Sacra, the first grave of the prehistoric cemetery of Rome was found early in 1902. Meanwhile, the removal of the church of S. Maria Liberatrice brought to light the Fountain of Juturna, and an imperial building behind it, in which had been installed in the fifth century the church of S. Maria Antiqua, now revealed with a large part of its wall-paintings (fifth to eleventh cent.), sometimes in an astonishing state of preservation, and providing an unequalled series of examples of the pictorial art of the early middle ages. Another side of Boni's work was the care of the ruins which still stand erect in the Forum area; and in this way, for instance, between 1901 and 1904 the columns of the temples of Castor and Saturn, the arch of Severus, and the basilica of Constantine were made secure by the most approved modern methods. Moreover, the convent attached to S. Francesca Romana near the arch of Titus was converted into a museum of the Forum discoveries, and here the contents of typical graves from the archaic cemetery were admirably displayed. In 1906 Boni turned aside from the Forum to investigate the site of Trajan's Column, and his discovery

beneath it of a paved road showed that the idea (based on Trajan's inscription) that the hill had been cut away must be abandoned. The Palatine was next taken in hand and occupied Boni more or less till his death, though the operation slackened somewhat latterly owing to the failure of his health and the interruption caused by the War. The principle of all this work was, if possible, to probe a site to the lowest stratum containing evidence of human agency, and it was in this way that some of his most interesting discoveries were made.

Boni was a born explorer and excavator. A great opportunity was put in his way, and he used it to the full with all the insight, courage, and thoroughness required in such enterprises. When it came to the drudgery of recording his results he was less happy, though his accounts in the *Notizie degli Scavi* of some of the earlier discoveries which specially interested him, such as the *Lacus Iuturnae*, and notably the series of reports on the archaic cemetery of the Forum, which appeared in the same publication between 1902 and 1911, are admirable in their completeness. After that no more information about the progress of the work appeared in print, and it is to be feared that much of his personal knowledge of the excavations has died with him. He also published various articles in the Roman periodical *Nuova Antologia*, most of which had been delivered as lectures. One of these—'Legende'—elaborately illustrated, and dealing with the legend of Trajan and the widow, which his researches in the Forum of Trajan had brought to his notice, is a good example of the care with which he followed up a subject which interested him. A lecture on Trajan's Column, given on a visit to England in 1909, also appears in the third volume of the *Proceedings of the British Academy*.

Simplicity was the note of Boni's character. When he became famous he was much sought after by the wealthy and the great, but his nature was not spoiled, nor was his way of life altered. After the Palatine became the centre of his activities, he lived there in solitude, in the midst of the garden of classical plants and flowers which he planted among the ruins, and which became the chief diversion of his later years. Nature and primitive life, in fact, had an irresistible attraction for him, and he revelled in the problems raised by the contents of the archaic necropolis, and their relation to anthropology and Aryan culture. These wide interests, it must be remembered, had to be subordinated to the practical duties of his office, and the management of a small army of workmen, who were, characteristically, at once his devoted servants and his personal friends.

Boni naturally received many official and academical distinctions, one of the last of which, that of Senator of the Kingdom of Italy (which may almost be described as the Italian equivalent of an English peerage), seemed incongruous with his unworldly nature. His eminence was early recognized by our Society, of which he was elected an Honorary Fellow as far back as 1900. He liked the English, and had some of his closest friends among them. The writer first became intimate with him in a select company which used to gather in the hospitable rooms of Mr. Wickham Steed, then the Rome correspondent of *The Times*. His love of Venice had early made him a devoted admirer of Ruskin. And in later years he was generous in

giving facilities to architectural and other students of the British School to follow and study his excavations on the Palatine.

G. McN. R.

Richard Seager: A communication from Greece appeared in *The Times* this summer which was sad reading, and not only for archaeologists. It was from Sir Arthur Evans, and briefly announced the death of Mr. Richard Seager. Mr. Seager was, it appears, on his way from Egypt to Crete: he was taken ill on the voyage, and landed unconscious at Candia, where he presently died. The Greek authorities gave him a public funeral.

The writer's acquaintance with Seager began in the spring of the year 1903. It was Seager's first season as an excavator in Crete; his health hardly allowed him to go to a university, and, between visits to Nauheim for the cure there, he had come to help Miss Boyd, now Mrs. Hawes, in her excavation of Gournià. He took the opportunity to visit Eastern Crete, and spent a day at the excavation which the British School was then carrying out at Palaikastro. From that time his work in Crete, interrupted only by the War, continued with short intervals until his recent death. He built himself a roomy house in a semi-native style at Pachyammos, where the head-quarters of the Gournià excavators had always been. This he made his centre, and from it he carried out a series of excavations: first, at Vasiliki, as a member of Miss Boyd's expedition, and later independently. In this way he explored Minoan settlements and cemeteries on the islands of Pseira and Mochlos, the cemeteries of Pachyammos and Sphoungaras, and several less important sites in the neighbourhood. He had a happy genius for discovery, and most of his sites proved to be of first-class importance, especially for the Early Minoan period. For this earliest phase of Minoan culture the evidence elsewhere is apt to be scanty; it was given to Seager to throw a flood of light upon the early stages of Cretan civilization. He found not only objects remarkable for their beauty, notably the stone vases and the jewellery of Mochlos, but also stratified deposits, which have been of the utmost value in determining the chronology of the earliest products of Minoan Crete. For example, a series of vases found in tombs at Palaikastro and Zakro, whose relative dates would have otherwise remained quite uncertain, can now on the evidence of Seager's stratified sites be arranged in their true chronological order. All these discoveries he made known in a series of publications, of which the most notable are: *Excavations at Vasiliki*, 1905; *Report of Excavations at Vasiliki*, 1907; *Gournià*, 1908, the report of Mrs. Boyd-Hawes' work at Gournià with papers by Seager and others; *Excavations on the Island of Pseira*, 1910; *Explorations in the Island of Mochlos*, 1912; *The Cemetery of Pachyammos*, 1916. In these publications his friends see a picture of Seager's character. All that he wrote was marked by a careful sobriety and a sound sense of evidence; by a delightful personal modesty and the complete absence of any idea of glorifying himself and his own work; although he had for all that a very sure touch in pointing out and dwelling upon what was either beautiful or of scientific importance. He had a sympathetic