

Copyright information

**Miller, Walter, 1864-1949.**

The theatre of Thoricus / by Walter Miller.

[Boston : Damrell and Upham, 1888]

## ICLASS Tract Volumes T.8.6

For the Stavros Niarchos Digital Library Euclid collection, [click here](#).



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License](#).

This book has been made available as part of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Digital Library collection. It was digitised by UCL Creative Media Services and is copyright UCL. It has been kindly provided by the [Institute of Classical Studies Library and Joint Library of the Hellenic and Roman Societies](#), where it may be consulted.

Higher quality archival images of this book may be available. For permission to reuse this material, for further information about these items and UCL's Special Collections, and for requests to access books, manuscripts and archives held by UCL Special Collections, please contact [UCL Library Services Special Collections](#).

Further information on photographic orders and image reproduction is available [here](#).



With thanks to the Stavros Niarchos Foundation.



UCL Library Services  
Gower Street, London WC1E 6BT  
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7679 2000  
[ucl.ac.uk/niarchoslibrary](http://ucl.ac.uk/niarchoslibrary)



NOT TO BE  
REMOVED  
FROM THE  
LIBRARY



6  
*Reprinted from the Papers of the American School of Classical  
Studies at Athens, Vol. IV., published by DAMRELL  
AND UPHAM, Boston, 1888.*

*To Professor Dr. Overbeck,  
with the compliments of  
Walter Miller*

THE  
THEATRE OF THORICUS.



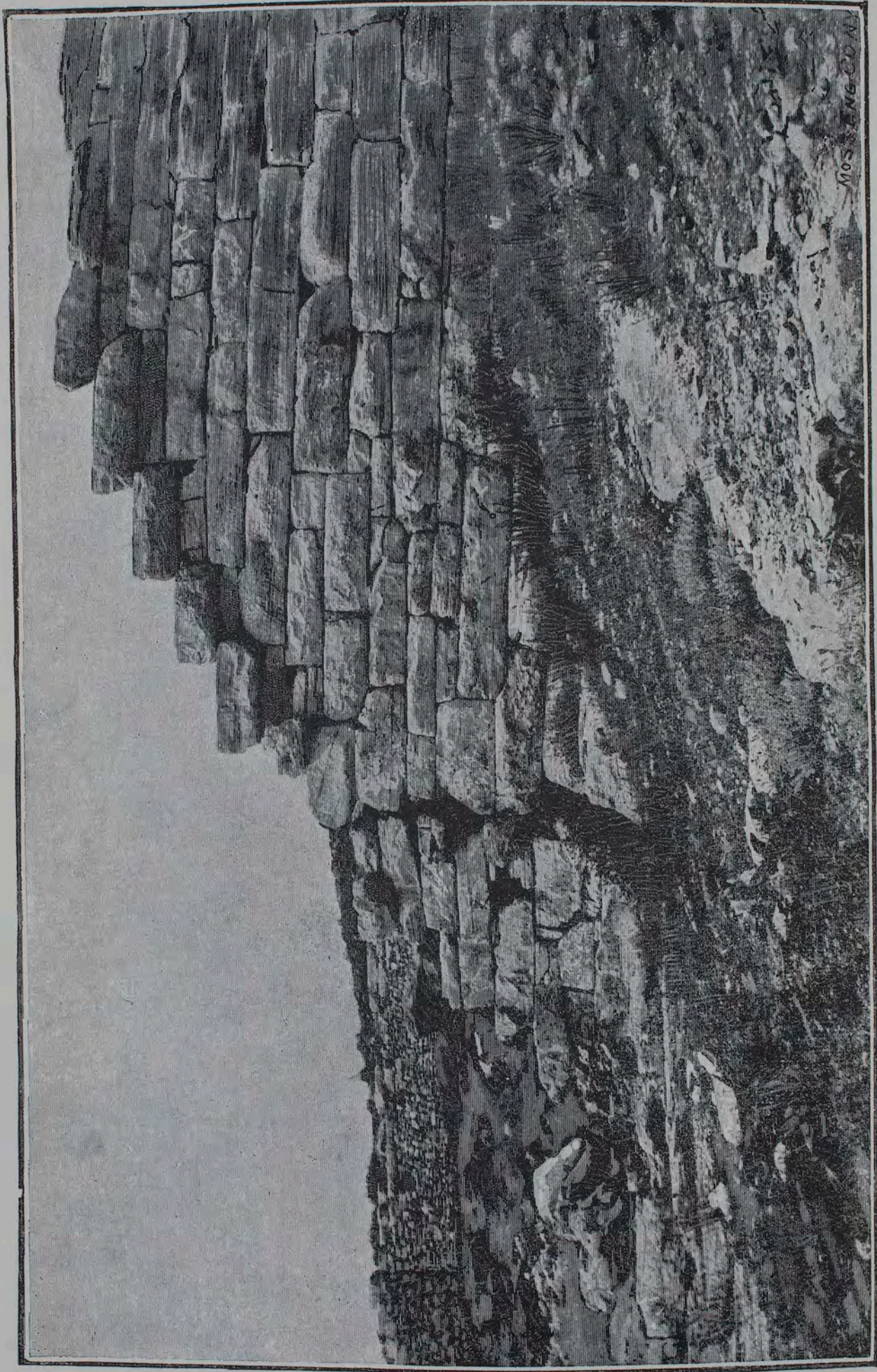








PLATE VII.



THE EASTERN END OF THE OUTER WALL OF THE THEATRE AT THORICUS.



THE  
THEATRE OF THORICUS.

---

BY  
WALTER MILLER.







## THE THEATRE OF THORICUS.

---

### PRELIMINARY REPORT.

IN the spring of 1886 funds were granted by the Managing Committee of the American School for excavating the theatre in the old Attic deme of Thoricus. We were thus enabled to bring to light a Greek theatre of very peculiar construction.

The work was begun in April by Professor Allen, and was continued by students of the school for about a week. It was taken up by myself on the 5th of May, and carried on until the 2d of June, when the advance of summer interrupted the work. The main features of the structure had been opened to view, but most of the earth in the orchestra and some debris upon the seats still remained to be removed; the inner wall also needed to be more thoroughly uncovered. This was reserved for the autumn. The work was resumed about the first of November, in the directorship of Professor D'Ooge, and was placed under the supervision of Mr. W. L. Cushing. It was finished early in December, and the final Report of Mr. Cushing will be published at the same time with this paper.

A provisional plan of the theatre, which was prepared for this paper with the kind aid of Dr. Wilhelm Dörpfeld, of the German Archæological Institute at Athens, and of Mr. Georg Kawerau, who was in charge of the excavations on the Acropolis, has been replaced by a more exact and complete plan, drawn by Mr. S. B. P. Trowbridge from careful surveys made after the excavations of the past year had been completed. This plan is given in Plate I. (page 12). The other plates are reproduced by the Moss Engraving Company from photographs taken by Mr. Cushing.

TOPOGRAPHY. — The theatre is built between two spurs of a steep, cone-shaped hill, about 146 m. high, the modern name of which is



Βελατοῦρι. It presents another example of the remarkable æsthetic taste which the Greeks displayed in choosing for their public buildings sites that commanded magnificent views. The spectators in this theatre looked out immediately upon the straits and the island of Helena, while they could see Ceos, Cythnus, and Seriphos, in the distance. The Laurian mountains bounded the view on the west, while between these and the islands was a broad expanse of open sea.

Thoricus, one of the more populous of the Attic demes, belonged to the tribe of Acamantis. It was celebrated in fable as the home of Cephalus and Procris, and is named as one of the twelve Attic cities in the time of Cecrops, before the *συννοικισμός* of Theseus. The name has been preserved in the modern village of Θερικό, which is on the coast, near the harbor of the old city.

Thoricus is seldom mentioned by Greek authors, and what little they say does not throw much light upon its importance and character. Thucydides mentions it once, VIII. 95, 1: αἱ δὲ τῶν Πελοποννησίων νῆες παραπλεύσασαι καὶ περιβαλοῦσαι Σούνιον ὁρμίζονται μεταξὺ Θορικοῦ τε καὶ Πρασιῶν, ὕστερον δὲ ἀφικνοῦνται ἐς Ὀρωπόν. Herodotus also mentions the place once, IV. 99: τὸν γουνὸν τὸν Σουνιακὸν μᾶλλον ἐς τὸν πόντον τὴν ἄκρην ἀνέχοντα τὸν ἀπὸ Θορικοῦ μέχρι Ἀναφλύστου δήμου. In Demosthenes we find the name more frequently. Cf. Or. XXXIX. § 30: Πόθεν νῦν Ἀκαμαντίδος φυλῆς γέγονας καὶ τῶν δήμων Θορίκιος; also, § 7; XL. § 52; XXI. §§ 82 and 121. Xenophon, *Hell.* I. 2, 1, says that in the twenty-second year of the Peloponnesian war (B.C. 410-409) Ἀθηναῖοι Θορικὸν ἐτείχισαν. He speaks of these fortifications again, *de Vect.* IV. 43: ἔστι μὲν γὰρ δήπου περὶ τὰ μέταλλα ἐν τῇ πρὸς μεσημβρίαν θαλάττῃ τεῖχος ἐν Ἀναφλύστῳ, ἔστι δὲ ἐν τῇ πρὸς Ἀρκτον τεῖχος ἐν Θορικῷ· ἀπέχει δὲ ταῦτα ἀπ' ἀλλήλων ἀμφὶ τὰ ἐξήκοντα στάδια.<sup>1</sup> Of this wall extensive remains are found west and north-west of the theatre, among them a well-preserved, massive, square

<sup>1</sup> For further mention of Thoricus, cf. Scyl. 57; Nonn. XIII. 187; Hom. *Od.* XI. 321; Schol. Soph. *O. C.* 1595; Etym. Mag. s. v. Θόρυκος; Hymn. Cer. 126; for Θορικός in inscriptions, see Ross, *Demen v. Attika*; Pliny mentions Thoricus as if the silver mines of Laurium were there; and, indeed, there are two ancient galleries within a stone's throw of the theatre. Cf. Plin. *Nat. Hist.* XXXVII. 18, 3, and IV. 11.



tower, built in the same manner and of the same material as the wall of the theatre. The whole character of the masonry marks it as a work of the last quarter of the fifth century B.C.

Strabo mentions Thoricus several times,<sup>1</sup> but without giving us any information about it, while Pausanias does not notice the place at all. Dodwell says: "Indeed, it was ruined before the time of Mela, who says,<sup>2</sup> Thoricus et Brauronia, olim urbes, jam tantum nomina."<sup>3</sup>

Modern writers and travellers have given little attention to the ruins of the city. Dodwell<sup>4</sup> visited the place, and made a drawing of the theatre which is utterly untrustworthy. Neither the shape of the structure nor the style of the masonry is accurately represented. His remarks about it are equally far from being correct.

Then came Leake,<sup>5</sup> whose plan is much out of proportion; and the dimensions which he gives could never have been taken from actual measurements. See Plate I., Fig. 1.

What is given by Dr. Lolling in Bäder's *Griechenland*<sup>6</sup> is faithful, and as good as the concealed state of the theatre permitted when he wrote.

**MATERIAL AND FORM.**—The material of the fortifications and of the theatre is a blue-gray marble, easily worked and very brittle, which was quarried on the spot. All the parts of the theatre are built of it, excepting a part of the lowest row of seats (from 1 to 2 on the plan), and three battlements at the back part.

The theatre, when seen from above, seems oblong, rounded at one end and square at the other. That this unsymmetrical form was necessitated or even suggested by the nature of the ground seems far from the truth, for the slope of the hill is as well adapted to the usual horseshoe shape of Greek theatres as to the form which this one has. It is true that, owing to the insufficient inclination of the ground, it was necessary to build the heavy retaining wall *AA'A''*, and fill in earth and rubbish, to support the upper rows of seats. But there seems no real reason why both ends of the wall could not

<sup>1</sup> IX. pp. 397-399, and X. p. 485.

<sup>2</sup> *De situ orbis*, II. 3 (about 50 A.D.).

<sup>3</sup> Dodwell, *Travels in Greece*, p. 534.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 534-556.

<sup>5</sup> *Topography of Athens*, II.

<sup>6</sup> pp. 117, 118.



have been rounded. There might indeed have been a small saving of material and labor in the adoption of the present form. But the difference is not enough to counterbalance the sacrifice of beauty and symmetry.

The irregular shape of this theatre remains therefore unexplained. It has been suggested that it was not originally intended for a theatre at all. The difficulty in this is to see what else it could have been. A theatre it is, and as it seems adapted to no other use, we must conclude that its final purpose was also its original purpose.

DESCRIPTION. — 1. Of the scene-structure little was discovered. At a distance of 16.07 m. from the lowest seat we came upon the foundations of what must have been one of the walls of the σκηνή, *CCC* on the plan. It is 29.60 m. in length, much longer than we should expect it to be; it is not straight, but at the right it bends off toward the outside at an angle of about 35 degrees. What remains must have been entirely underground, as the masonry is exceedingly rough, though strong.

Inside this wall, at a distance of 2.90 m. from it, were found very scanty remains of a second substructure, *D* on the plan, which would seem to be the scene-wall belonging to the front of the stage, but it is so badly broken and destroyed that it cannot be identified as such.

Connected with the scene-appurtenances in some way may have been the chamber on the southeast corner, *VW*. It might seem at first to be a later addition to the theatre, owing to the fact that the wall *AA'A''* is abruptly broken off at *B''*, from top to bottom, and then hastily reconstructed in a manner far inferior to the general character of the wall.<sup>1</sup> But after the discovery of the wall *BB'B''*, it was evident that the little chamber is as old as any other part; for the wall *BB'B''*, one of the oldest parts, is a prolongation of the back wall of this chamber, *EE*. This wall *BB'B''* must originally have been the boundary of the theatre, for on the outer or convex side the facing is smooth, showing that that side was intended to be seen. From this three things are evident: (1) That the chamber did belong to the original design; (2) that the theatre was originally not as large as afterward; and (3) that the building of the chamber was not the cause of the break in the wall.

<sup>1</sup>The Rock-cut Chamber is shown in Plate IV., and this break in Plate VII. (Frontispiece).



The chamber is made by cutting down the natural rock to a depth of 3.14 m. at the highest part. The wall *EE* does not reach the floor in an unbroken line, but at the bottom there are two terraces, extending the entire length of the chamber, 15 m.; the upper one has a width of 0.40 m., and a height of 0.31 m. The lower terrace is larger; it has a width of 0.64 m., and is 0.40 m. high. At the end next to the spectators' seats there is only one such offset; it has otherwise the same dimensions as the lower one, but is only 2.85 m. in length, that being also the width of the chamber.

From the walls in this chamber we learn nothing; for while they may partly rest upon the old foundations, they are undoubtedly of comparatively modern construction; the cross wall, which divides the whole into two small rooms, 2.85 m.  $\times$  7.00 m. and 8.00 m. respectively, certainly does not rest on any ancient substructions. The apartment *V* has what seems to be a doorway, 3.18 m. wide; outside the doorway is built, parallel to the line of the ends of the seats, a short wall, to a distance of only 3.70 m. This prompted me to seek for a parodos here, but no traces of one appeared. I found nothing but the natural rock, forming such an obstacle to a passage as to preclude the possibility of there ever having been a parodos here. What was the object of this chamber is by no means clear. It undoubtedly belonged to the original plan of the theatre, and may have served as the green-room, or even as a sanctuary, the terraces being in this case receptacles for votive offerings.

At the west end of the scene-wall I had the good fortune to come upon what I at first took to be a *παρασκήνιον*, the rectangular building *K*. But it proved too large for that, its dimensions being 8.70 m.  $\times$  6.28 m., and it shows no connection with either of the two walls *CC* or *D*. This is the most carefully joined and fitted piece of work discovered at Thoricus, and what there is left of it is but slightly displaced. The material is the same as that of the theatre, but its style is totally different. Near the bottom of my trench is a slight offset of 0.06 m. on the wall (see Plate II., Fig. 3), but near the corner the offset is 0.17 m. wide. Only the stones of the corner are hewn smooth; on the rest each stroke of the chisel is plainly recognizable. This rectangular structure is not nearly so old as the rest of the theatre, but belongs to the early Macedonian period, as is shown by the nice joints in the masonry and the parallel layers, the careful, square corners, and the manner of hewing the stone.



In the debris surrounding this square building was found a clay acroterion of no mean workmanship. It is small, 0.27 m. in height, and has no trace of painting. Does it mean that this was a temple of Dionysus? It may well have been. The acroterion certainly belongs to Macedonian times, and it is altogether likely that it adorned the square building. (See Plate II., Fig. 8.)

This building is just parallel to  $GG'$ , and between them is a *πάροδος* 3.21 m. wide. The substructure of the seats along the line  $GG'$  is a heavy, roughly finished wall of huge stones. That this was the only *πάροδος* of the theatre seems probable.

2. Though I made four trenches for the sake of finding some trace of a regular boundary of the orchestra, such as is to be seen at Epidaurus<sup>1</sup> and in the recent excavations at Athens, nothing of the sort was found. Whether the orchestra occupied the whole or only a part of the irregular space between seats and scene-wall is still a problem. (See Plate II., Figs. 4 and 7.)

3. We now turn our attention to the *κοῖλον*. This is by far the best preserved part of the whole theatre. It is bounded by the high wall  $AA'A''$ , already mentioned, the object of which was to support the embankment on which the upper tiers of seats rested. Instead of having a horseshoe shape, this wall is almost straight in the middle, for a distance of 17.50 m. It is built of large blocks, which are laid in approximately horizontal layers and generally with perpendicular joints. The workmanship shows the solid, substantial style of the latter half of the fifth century. No care was taken to have the joints of the alternate courses fit one above the other. The entire length of this retaining wall is 118.50 m. The height of the level top of the wall above the present surface of the ground outside varies from 1 m. at  $A'$  to 3.70 m. at  $A''$ . The wall has a thickness of 1.13 m., and at the point  $A'$  is 19.48 m. distant from the lowest seat. (See Plates V. and VI.)

The outside of the wall, though the stones are not hewn smooth, presents an excellent appearance; but inside, where it was covered by the earth and was not seen, it is built up with small, unhewn stones loosely placed together.

It was never any higher than it is at present. The finish of the top layer on the inside shows this. The level is uniform from  $A$  to  $A''$ ,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Πρακτικά τῆς Ἑλλ. ἀρχαιολ. Ἑταιρ., 1883.



with but few displacements; from  $A$  to  $B$ , and from  $A''$  to  $B''$ , it descends in regular steps. See Plate II., Fig. 5, which represents the point  $B''$  and the part adjoining it. See also the Frontispiece, Plate VII.

Of the break at this point and of the inferior continuation which supports the ends of the seats above the rock-chamber, we have already spoken (p. 8). This continuation forms a tangent to the produced curve, not a chord of it. At the other corner of the theatre, however, the case is quite different. The wall does not bend in a curve, but makes a slightly obtuse angle at  $A$ , and then continues in a straight line to the place where it *intersects* the wall  $GBB'$ . Here, at  $B$ , the seats resting upon it meet with those lying upon the natural *terrain*. The west side of the theatre has, as will be seen, a heart-shaped form, because of the reëtrant angle.

It might be a question whether this outer wall,  $AA'A''$ , was not a later addition made for the sake of increasing the seating capacity of the building. The joining of the walls on the west side, at  $B$ , favors that view, but on the other side evidence is lacking, on account of the break and the subsequent repairs, at just the critical point.

At the back of the theatre there are two huge stone abutments ( $Y$  and  $Z$  on the plan), which served as entrances for the spectators. They are built up from the slope of the hill to the top of the wall, so that by taking a few steps uphill one might enter the theatre by a slightly inclined plane. Both are built up against the wall, but are not bonded to it. The western one presents some noticeable peculiarities. It is pierced by an arch (see Plate II., Fig. 1) very similar in style to the pointed arches in the walls of Tiryns.<sup>1</sup> The opening is 0.72 m. from the wall  $AA'$ , and is 0.80 m. wide. The object of this arch is not clear. At first one is tempted to say that it was made to let out the water that should flow from the hill and collect between the two buttresses. But upon digging down to a depth of 4.00 m. from the top of the wall, this theory had to be abandoned, for the natural rock sloped the wrong way for the water to flow off. The explanation given in Bäder's *Griechenland*, that the opening was left in order to save material, is hardly tenable. Probably the arch was built simply to afford an easy passage around the outside of the theatre. It is to be observed that this western abutment has a branch,  $Y'$ , nearly at right angles to  $Y$ , 4.15 m. from  $BB'$ , an

<sup>1</sup> See illustrations in Schliemann, *Tiryns*, pp. 184, 320, and 334.



entrance to the entrance. It is a paved, inclined plane, between the two balustrade-like walls. The southern one is well-preserved to a length of 3.20 m. The part  $Y'$  is 3.00 m. wide, 0.50 wider than the other part. The existence of this structure made it more difficult to go around the abutment, and furnished a reason for the archway.

The eastern buttress is built of the same massive, polygonal masonry as the other, but has no passage through it. It is 5.50 m. long and 2.50 wide. The whole length of the western buttress is 6.40 m., its width 2.50.

I was greatly surprised to find beside this eastern entrance three soft poros-stone battlements of large proportions. A fourth was afterward found at the other entrance. They are 1.28 m. long; the base of the triangular end measures 0.58 m., and the equal sides 0.48 m. They undoubtedly belong to the theatre, and probably served as a sort of balustrade to the entrance bridges. They are the only poros parts of the theatre. Poros is quarried at Laurium, two and a half miles away, and also at a place about four miles north of Therico, and so was a more expensive material than the marble which they had on the spot. Accordingly, it would have been a more costly finish for the upper parts of those entrances.

The seats are as a whole the best preserved part of the theatre. Remains of thirty-one rows are distinctly preserved, and from the state of preservation it is highly probable that there never were any more. The upper twelve rows rested upon the supporting wall  $AA'A''$  and the rubbish between it and  $BB'B''$ . These rows are destroyed except at the ends, where they rest upon the wall at  $AB$  and  $A''B''$ ; here they are still *in situ*, set obliquely to the direction of the wall, and projecting beyond its face to a distance of 0.10 m. (See Plate VII.) It is evident at the first glance that these are seats. The remaining nineteen rows are in general preserved. They are made of similar large slabs, resting upon either the prepared solid rock of the hill or upon rough masonry built to support them, while a few are cut out of the live rock itself. In artistic finish the seats are vastly inferior to those in the theatres at Athens and Epidaurus, while they are much better than the seats of the theatre of Argos. The "magnificence" which Dodwell<sup>1</sup> seems to have seen here has long since vanished. The surface of the seats is not, as at Athens,

---

<sup>1</sup> *Travels*, p. 536.



divided into three parts (seat proper, depression for the feet of the man who sat behind, narrow ledge at the back on the same level as the seat);<sup>1</sup> they are simply smooth slabs without any ornamentation.

The dimensions of the seats vary, for no attention was paid to exactness in their construction. Their average height is 0.35 m., and their average width 0.60 m.

The *cavea* is cut into three unequal *κερκίδες* by two flights of stairs, *H* and *H'*. The number of the *κερκίδες*, though unusually small, is the same as at Argos. Noteworthy also is the lack of any steps at all at the sides. The staircases are furthermore very narrow; their width is but 0.62 m., while those of the Dionysiac theatre at Athens are 0.70 m. and those at Epidaurus are 0.74 wide. Two men cannot pass each other on the staircases at Thoricus. The narrowness is rendered still worse by the fact that they lie so deep; they are let down from 0.58 m. to 0.92 m. below the seats. It is, however, quite possible that these are only the foundations of the steps and that other stones lay on top of them, and they were in reality not so low. But no slight objection to this view is, that in this case the real step is nowhere preserved. (See Plate I., Fig. 2.)

The lowest row of seats is in several ways peculiar. It is farther below the one above than we should expect, and it differs in its dimensions from the other rows. The part between the two *κλίμακες* is not made of the blue marble, but of a white marble, hewn smooth. I am inclined to the belief that this was a terrace for chairs of honor; but perhaps it is simply a passage along the front. On the sides from *G'* to *H* and *H'* to 3 the material is the same as in the rest of the theatre.

Another peculiar feature, more striking in the front row than elsewhere, is the nearly straight direction of the rows of seats in their central portion. In fact, from 1 to 2, a distance of 23.80 m., is a perfectly straight line.<sup>2</sup> At the sides the irregularity of the theatre is again conspicuous. On the east side the distance from 2 to *J*, another straight line, is 8.65 m., while on the west the length of the curved line *G'H* is only 5.15 m. The corner 2 is 5.75 m. from the *κλίμαξ H'*, but 1 is only 2.65 m. from *H*.

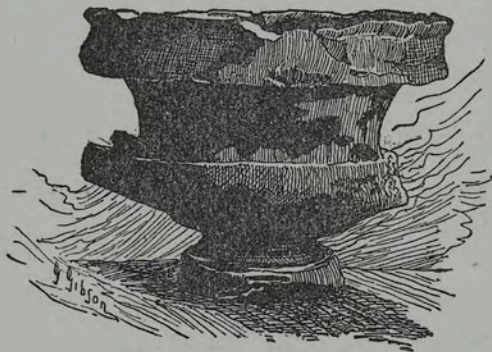
<sup>1</sup> See *Papers of the American School at Athens*, Vol. I. p. 147.

<sup>2</sup> But it is only this row that is exactly straight; the others do curve, if only slightly.



At the eastern extremity the three lowest seats are wanting; in their place is a pedestal (*J* on the plan), and behind it a curved passage-way, which is 1.38 m. wide at the southern end. To make this passage-way, the live rock is cut down to a depth of nearly four feet, leaving on the right a wall 1.14 m. in height and 7.65 m. long. The pedestal is 3.90 m. long and 1.24 m. wide. The facing on the inside is rough-hewn; on the outside it is smoother. The eastern side is well preserved for one layer; but on the western side only the corner-stone is left *in situ*. The object of this construction is obscure. It may have been for a few seats of honor; it may have been for a statue, or a number of statues.

By approximate calculation I find that not more than five thousand spectators could have found room in the theatre, allowing one and a half feet for each. So that in capacity this structure falls far short of the more famous theatres of Athens, Epidaurus, and Piraeus. On the other hand, it is larger than the theatres of Chaeronea and Argos.



NOTE.—The fragment of pottery forming the tail-piece of this paper was found by Mr. Cushing within the theatre. It is a drinking-cup, or cantharus, about four inches high, of a brownish clay, coated uniformly without and within with glazed black, and devoid of decoration.



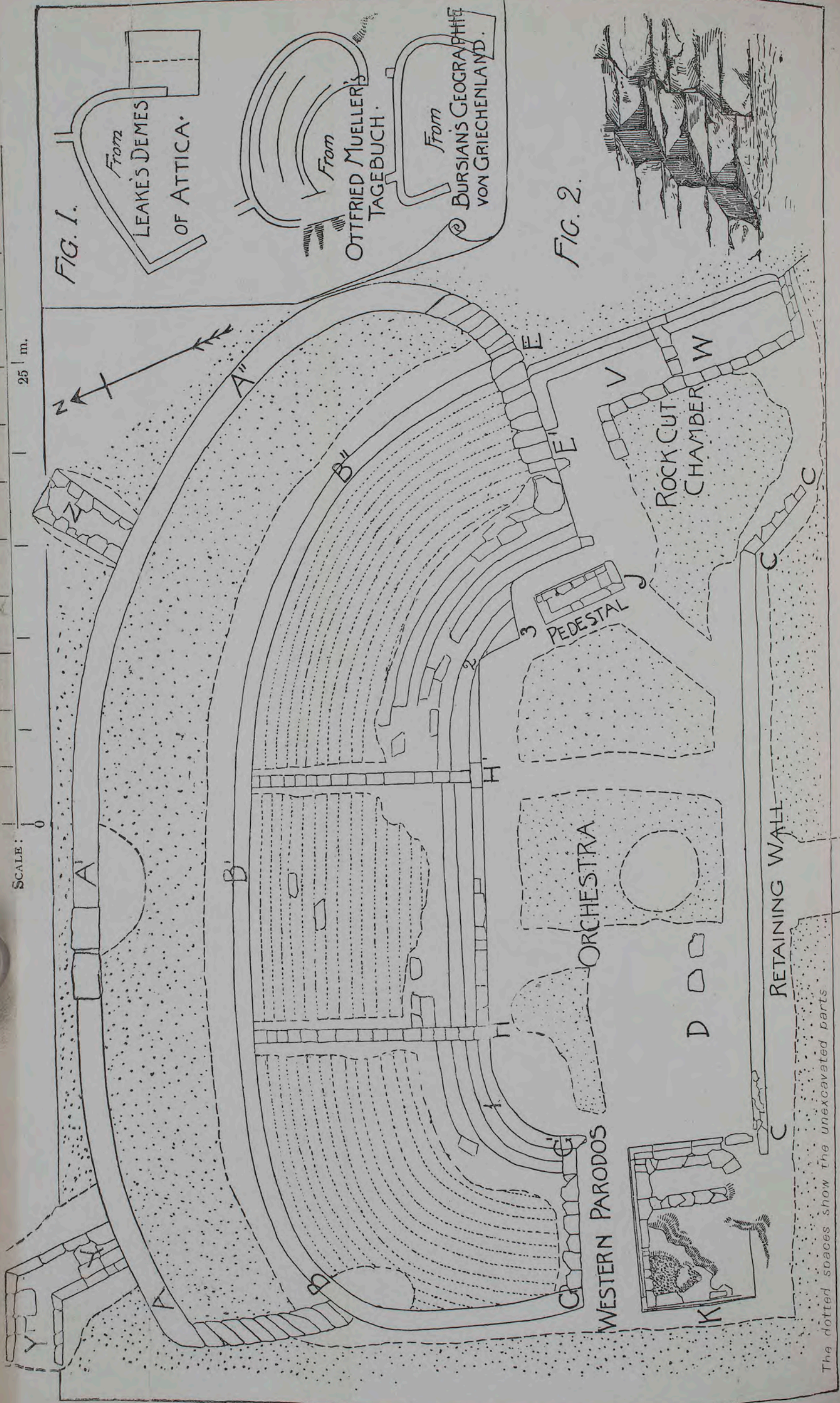
wanting; in  
it a curved  
. To make  
f nearly four  
7.65 m. long.  
acing on the  
The eastern  
side only the  
n is obscure.  
e been for a

n five thou-  
allowing one  
ture falls far  
and Piraeus.  
aeronea and

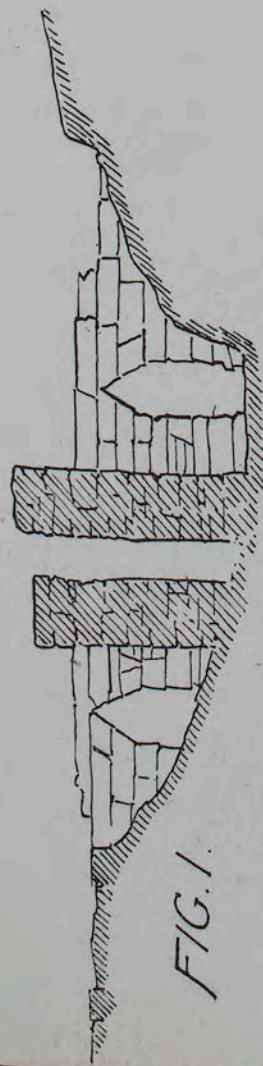
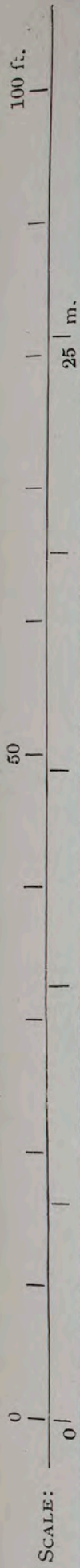
this paper was  
, or cantharis,  
out and within



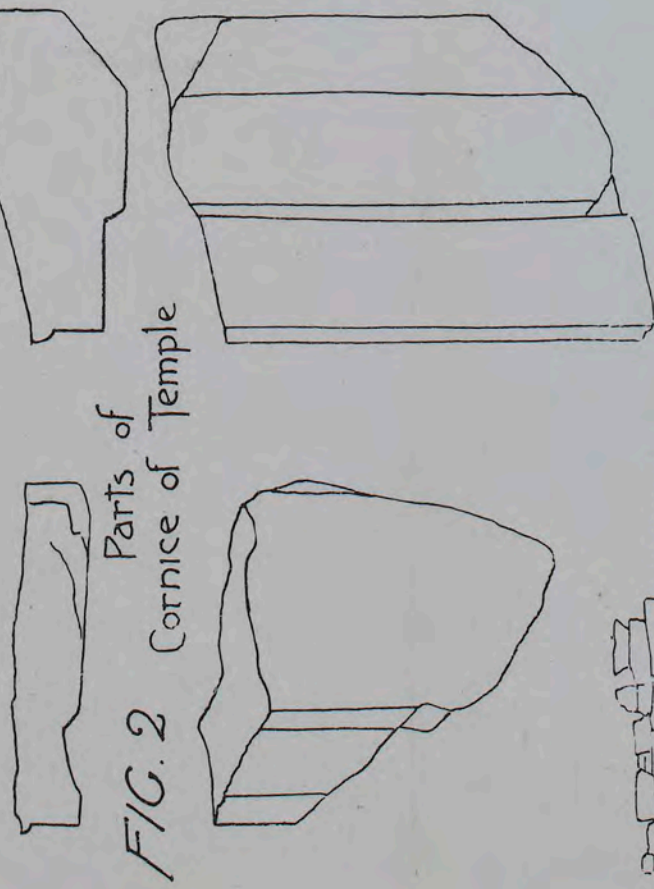
SCALE: 0 50 100 ft. 0 25 m.







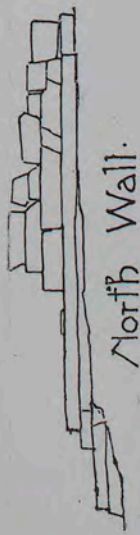
West Elevation  
East Elevation  
West Entrance



Parts of  
Cornice of Temple



Section looking North.



North Wall.

FIG. 3  
TEMPLE WALLS.



West Wall.

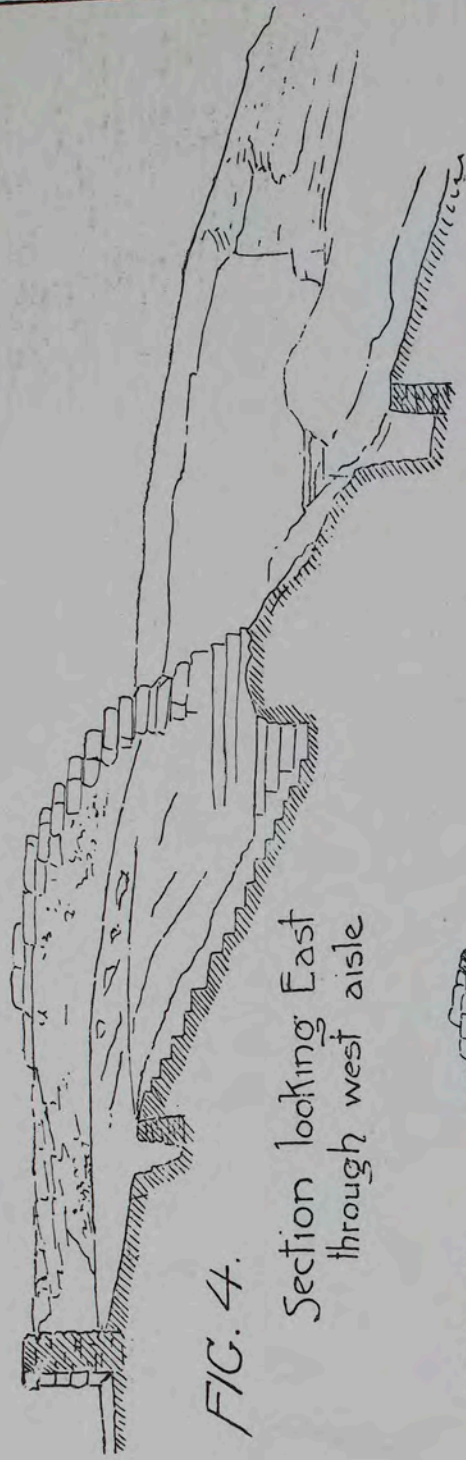
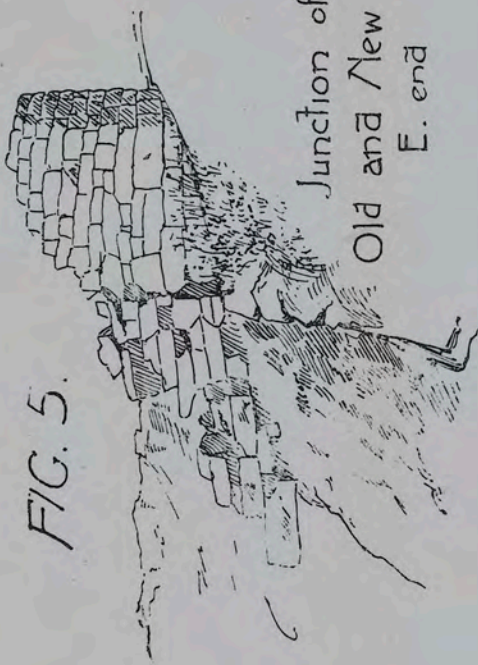


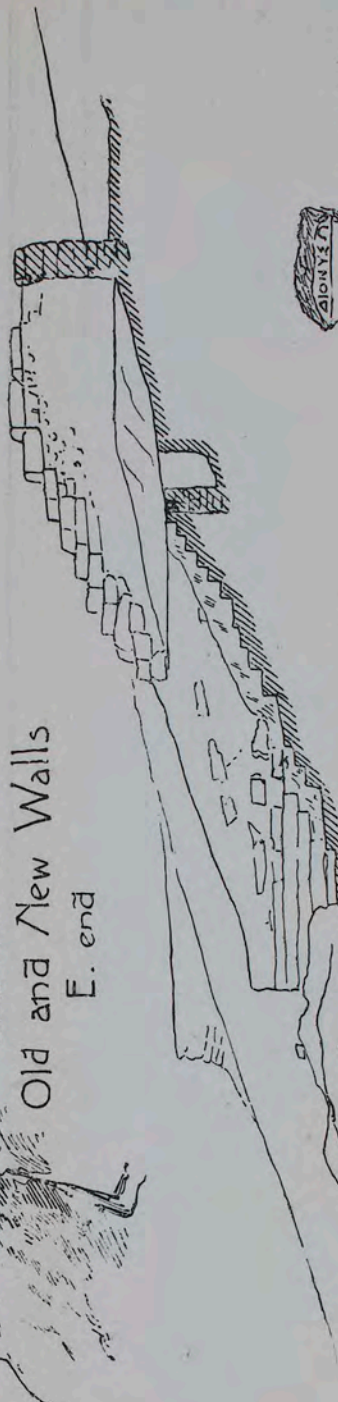
FIG. 4.  
Section looking East  
through west aisle



Junction of  
Old and New Walls  
E. end



FIG. 6  
Fragment



Section looking West  
through east aisle



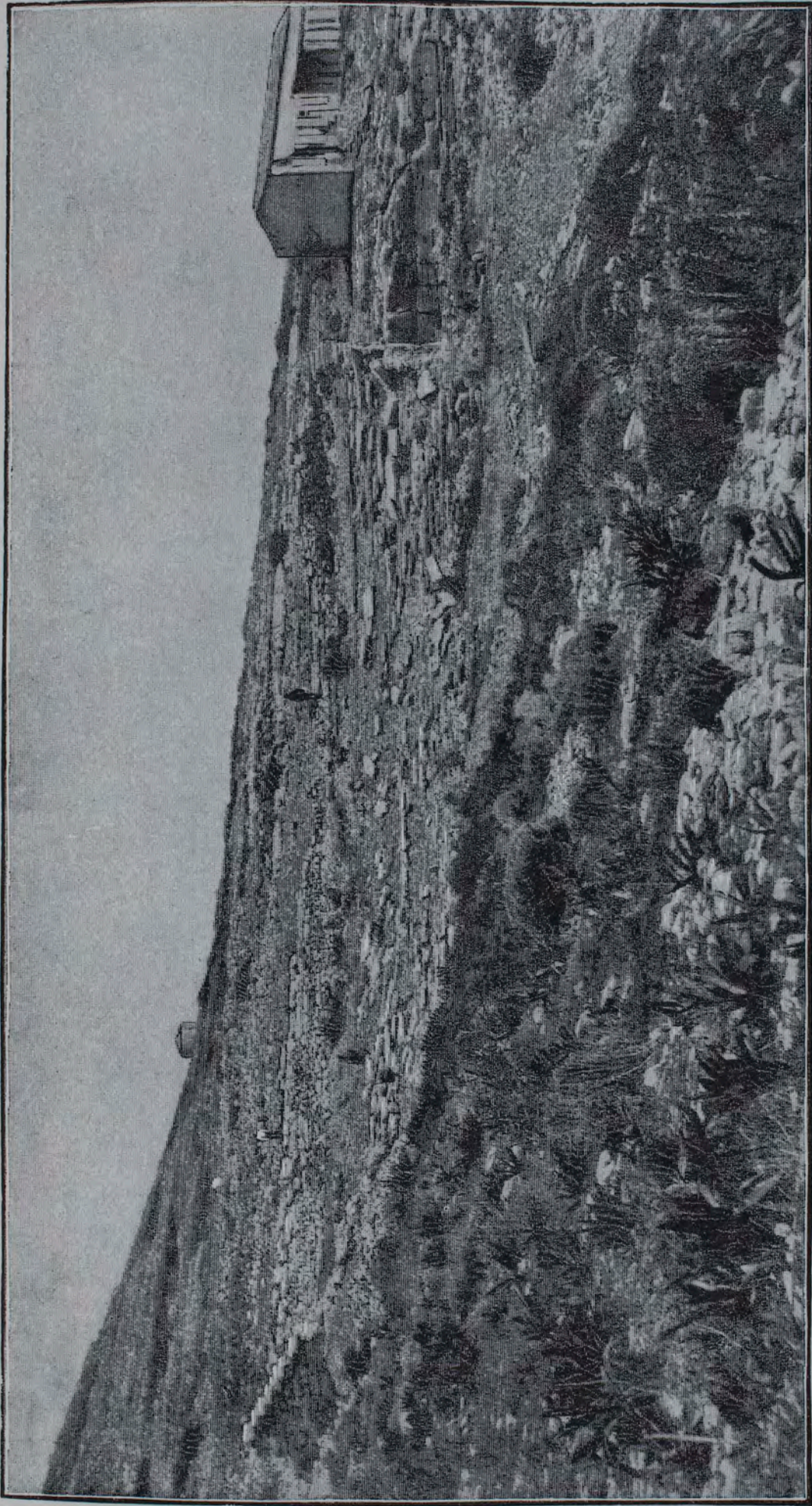
FIG. 8.  
Head of Stele  
found in rock Chamber.







PLATE III.



(The Western Wall.)

(The Eastern Wall.) (The Rock-Cut Chamber.)

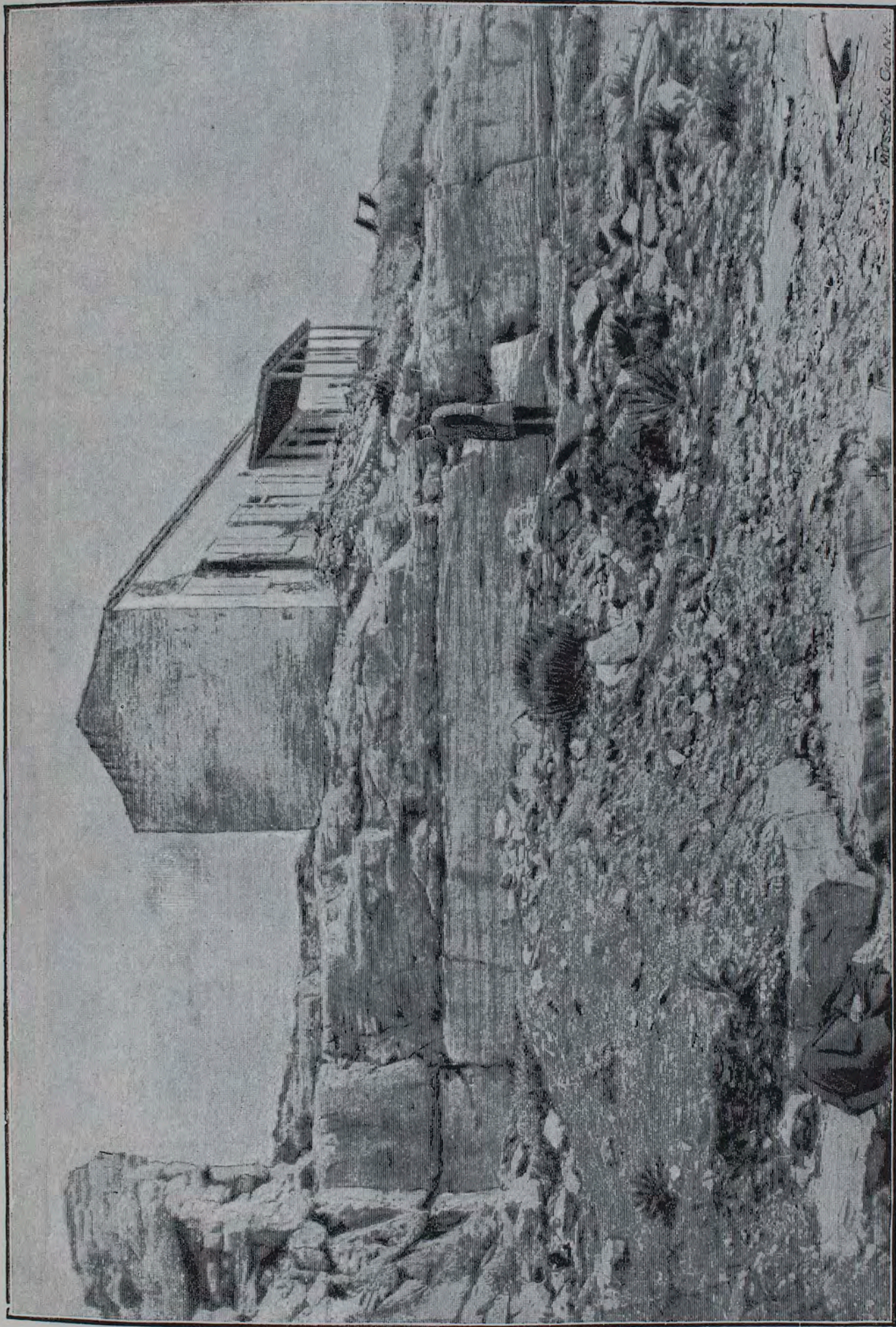
GENERAL VIEW OF THE THEATRE AT THORICUS.







PLATE IV.



(The Eastern Wall.)

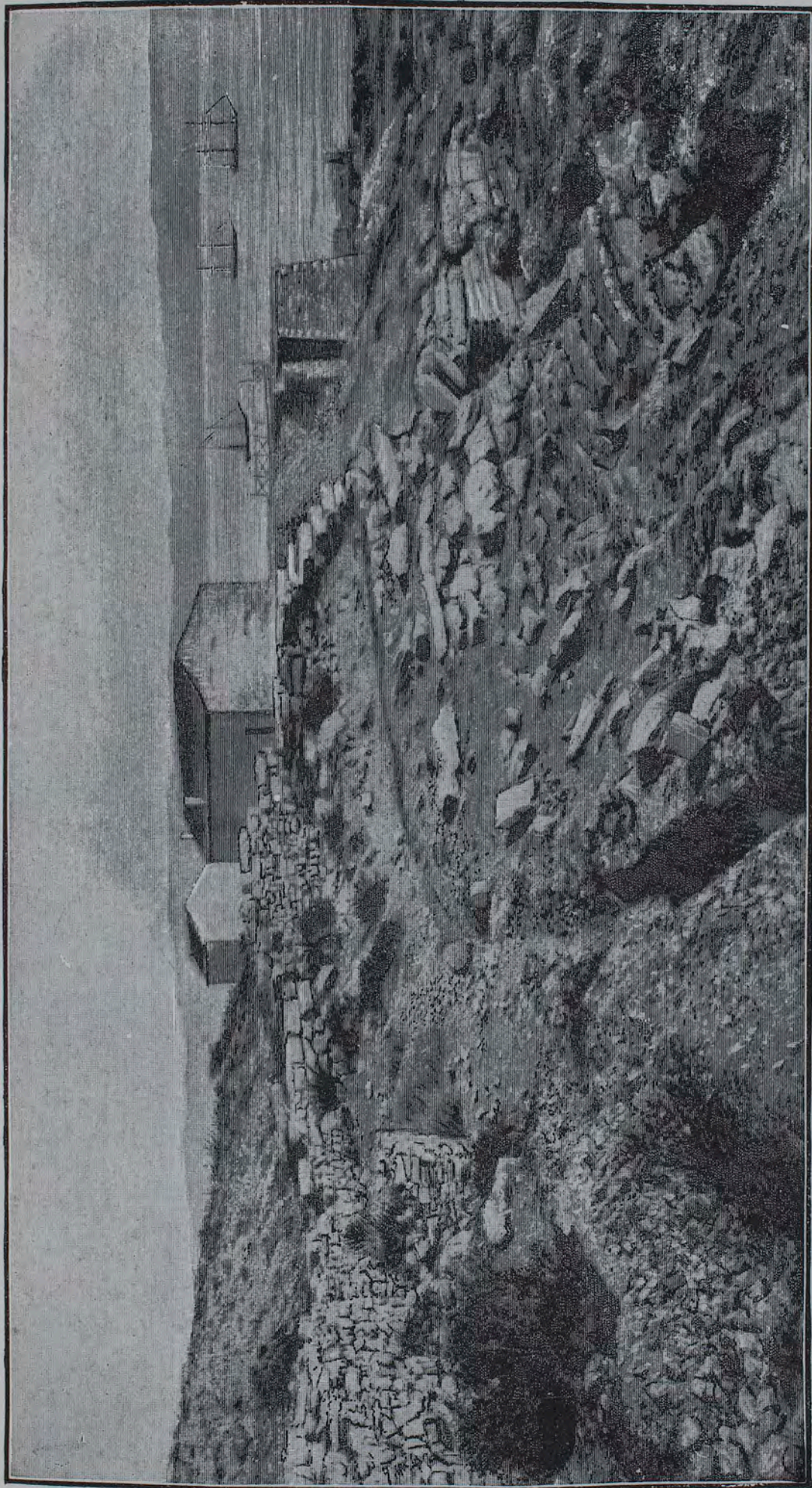
THE ROCK-CUT CHAMBER.







PLATE V.



THE UPPER PART OF THE THEATRE AT THORICUS.

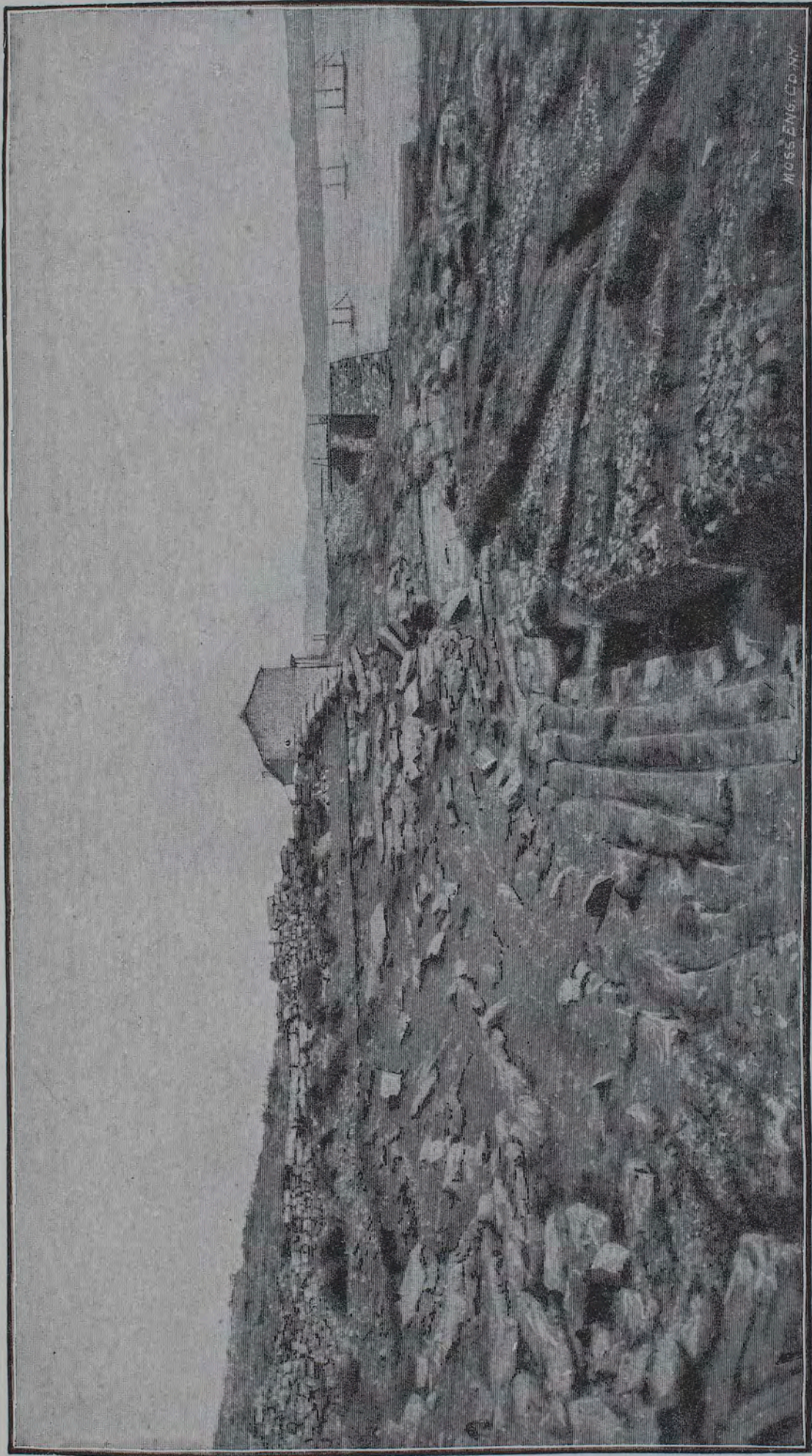
(The trench follows the line of the inner wall.)







PLATE VI.

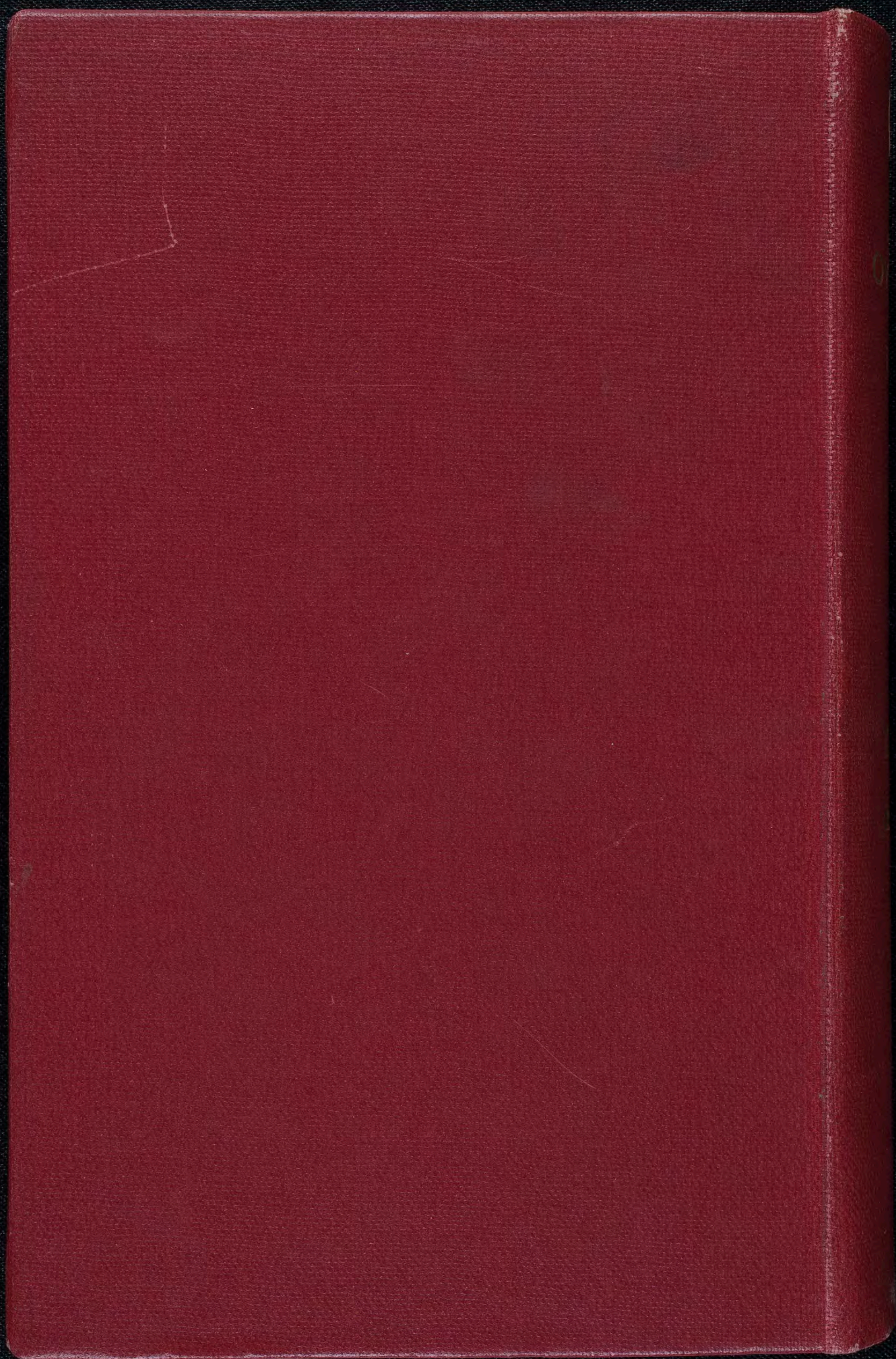


THE LOWER PART OF THE THEATRE AT THORICUS.











XST.30

OVERBECK'S  
TRACTS

8

THEATRE  
& CIRCUS





# Digital ColorChecker® SG



gmb  
GRETAGMACBETH

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 mm