A MARBLE LEKYTHOS AND
THE ELGIN ATHENA

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The form of the gravestone shown here is that of the terracotta jug in which it was customary in Attica to bring oil to the grave. Such marble lekythoi, which supplemented the sculptured stelai in the Kerameikos, were often made with a view to economy, and the newly acquired monument, so grandly conceived in shape and decoration, with seven figures in high relief, has few if any parallels.

The group of figures are a family, whose names are inscribed, together with their servants. The seated Leonike, with Aiolos by her side, gives her hand in farewell to Aristomache. It seems to be the latter who is departing, and these seem to be her parents who relinquish her. Left and right stand Stratokleia and Axiomache, perhaps the sisters of the dead; two small servant girls are in attendance, each with a box for the traveler’s belongings. The seven figures are knit together by the singular poetry of their attitudes and draperies, and by their common mood. The handclasp, the touch of the father on the girl’s arm, and the quick gesture of the young slave accent the quiet emotional power of the scene.

The names are inscribed over the heads of the figures, except that of the seated Δεονίση, which is beneath, on the ledge that supports the group. Left to right they are Στρατοκλεία, Αῖολος, Αἰσίωμαξ, Αἰσίωμαξ. Miss Marjorie Milne has pointed out that Aiolos and Leonike appear on a marble lekythos now in the Louvre as the parents of the dead warrior Kalliphanes, who is attended by a small squire. Since the name Aiolos, except in mythology, is rare, the two lekythoi were in all probability erected by the same family.

In style this monument stands near the lekythos in Munich (Diepolder, Die attischen Grabreliefs, p. 39, pl. 34), which has been dated by stylistic comparisons to about 375 B.C., our piece being perhaps slightly more developed. It is said to have been found about a generation ago near the Kerameikos at Athens, and was until recent years in the collection of the Vicomte du Dresnay in Paris. It is broken into many pieces, which were never put together until they reached the Museum. Parts of the relief, including the head of Leonike, have broken off along lines...
of cleavage, and there are signs of weathering on the fractured surfaces. The foot was originally a cylindrical member let into a plinth to form a supporting dowel for the vase; this is missing and the visible portion is restored. The neck and handle are also restored in plaster, except for a fragment near the top. This fragment, and the bits preserved at the shoulder, determine the planes of the neck and handle.

A statuette of Athena flying her owl, illustrated here and on the cover, is a small bronze masterpiece that has long been known and has recently been acquired by the Museum. The young goddess wears a Corinthian helmet and a peplos, or heavy woolen tunic with an overfold girt at the waist, and carried a spear, now missing. She is slight, like a very young woman, and her stance and gesture are imposing. Great care has been taken with the chasing of the face and hair, and the feathers of the owl are also cut after casting. The subject, Athena launching her owl in the air as if for a message
of victory, is a surprise and a delight, for this bronze is the only surviving Greek work that shows this subject in the round.

The spear, if it passed through the groove in the left hand, ran diagonally across the com-

position. It has been suggested that the vertical mark on the drapery near the left shoulder is a correction, made in antiquity, to bring the spear into the usual position, with the butt on the ground and the shaft resting against the shoulder. The spear point and the missing crest of the helmet would have overtopped the owl.

The statuette belongs to the original Elgin collection but did not pass with the marbles to the British Museum in 1816, remaining in the possession of the family at Broomhall, near Dumferline. It was seen there in 1889 by a traveling archaeologist, who published a drawing of it (A. Conze, Festschrift für Benndorf, 1898, Museum Quarterly, 8, 1933-34, pp. 110 f., pl. 36); it was thereafter published in extenso by K. A. Neugebauer (Die Antike, 2, 1935, pp. 39 ff., pls. 1-11). Since the Elgin collection was largely assembled in Attica, and since the goddess herself was at home there, it is reasonable to believe that the statuette is Attic, perhaps a votive offering after a victory. The style is that of about 460 B.C.