

## 2 WHAT ROME WAS BUILT WITH

mountains to and fro ; a thing, however, that is even less unpardonable than to go on the search amid the regions of the clouds for vessels' (in allusion to vessels made of crystal which, as Dalechamps remarks, were long supposed to be nothing but ice in a concrete form) 'with which to cool our draughts, and to excavate rocks towering to the very heavens, in order that we may have the satisfaction of drinking from ice! Let each reflect when he hears of the high prices set upon these things, when he sees these ponderous masses carted and carried away, how many there are whose lives are passed far more happily without them. For what utility or for what so-called pleasure do mortals make themselves the agents, or more truly speaking, the victims of such undertakings, except in order that others may take their repose in the midst of variegated stones? Just as though too, the shades of night, which occupy one half of each man's existence, would forbear to curtail these imaginary delights.'<sup>1</sup>

Thus Pliny in his scorn of contemporary luxury writes at the beginning of the Christian era. From the foundation of Rome to the later days of the Republic the use of marble for decorative purposes was unknown. The early Romans took particular pride in their own rough stones of the Campagna, which, quarried near at hand, were durable and satisfied the severe taste of that time.

It was about 214 B. c. when Marcellus brought to Rome statues and pictures, the first works of Grecian art to be admired by the Romans ; but the walls of Carthage had fallen before the conquering race had learned to value other stones than those of Latium.

Of these the earliest used was a volcanic tuff of a reddish, yellowish or brownish colour, of which the

<sup>1</sup> Pliny, *Natural History*, Book xxxvi, chap. 1 (Bohn).