

## 90 WHAT ROME WAS BUILT WITH

breccias, brecciated and veined. The colours are clear and beautiful, and the marble is fine-grained and most attractive. Unfortunately it is very brittle; thus the expense in extraction is great, and it is difficult to obtain it in large blocks. The Romans were certainly justly appreciative of this marble, of which quantities may be seen in Rome to-day.<sup>1</sup>

*Lapis Lacedaemonius, Lapis Spartanus, Lapis Taygetus, Lapis Croceus, Serpentino Verde Antico*<sup>2</sup>

‘. . . Certain persons, assisted by the wealth of the Romans, lately opened a large quarry in Taygetum.’<sup>3</sup>

This stone, known to the Roman stone-cutter as Serpentino Verde Antico, is an igneous rock, a diabase consisting of large greenish crystals of labradorite embedded in a fine compact ground-mass of the same felspar, together with augite and titaniferous iron.<sup>4</sup> The ground is of a deep beautiful green, and the crystals, averaging about three-eighths of an inch long, are oblongs, and star-shaped, or crosses. These are of a much lighter green and sometimes yellow or brown.

Pliny, in speaking of various stones, says: ‘They are not all of them produced from quarries, but in many instances lie scattered just beneath the surface of the earth; some of them, the most precious even, the green Lacedaemonium marble for example, more brilliant in colour than any other.’<sup>5</sup>

Pausanias says: ‘Going down to the sea in the direction of Gythium, we come to the Lacedaemonian village of Croceae. The stone quarry is not one continuous mass of rock, but the stones are dug

<sup>1</sup> The Capitoline Museum possesses good examples.

<sup>2</sup> Antique green serpentine.

<sup>3</sup> Strabo, *op. cit.*, Book viii, chap. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Delesse, *op. cit.*

<sup>5</sup> Pliny, *op. cit.*, Book xxxvi, chap. 11.