AN ATTIC RELIEF FROM LOWTHER CASTLE

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A marble figure of a woman, broken from a large Attic grave monument, has recently been added to the Museum’s collections. The woman, seated in an attitude of mourning, represents the dead as she was in life, and it is to her that the monument was erected. The fragment is part of a rectangular slab in very high relief. Before the seated woman there stood, no doubt, another figure, now missing, perhaps that of the husband or father who dedicated the stele or of an attendant holding a box for valuables. The scene was one of departure and farewell. There may have been a crowning pediment, like that of the Lansdowne fragment (Bulletin, 1930, pp. 218 f). This was a large monument, of unusual sculptural quality, and it was a family of wealth and importance that set it up. It is perhaps relevant that the dead is provided with a carved and cushioned throne, or armchair, with a sphinx to support the armrest (the plain edge of the chair back is a restoration) instead of the more usual armless chair or stool. She wears two garments, chiton and himation, the edge of the latter being drawn over her head and held in her hand. She has bands round her hair, and had earrings, since there are holes for their attachment. The surface has suffered comparatively little and has for the most part retained its freshness; the sensitive face and the massive sweep of the drapery are little impaired.

The discovery of the relief goes back to the early nineteenth century when British and other travelers were exploring in Greece. One of them, Lord Guilford, found it, in 1811 or soon after, at Acharnai, near Athens. It was sketched by Stackelberg and appeared in his Gräber der Hellenen, 1827, plate 1, 3. Lord Guilford took it to London, and it reappeared afterward in the collection of the Earl of Lonsdale, of Lowther Castle in Westmorland. It was listed by Michaelis in his Ancient Marbles in Great Britain, 1882, page 492. Conze published it in 1891 in Die attischen Grabreliefs, 1, plate cxxix f, and F. Poulsen in the Einzelaufnahmen, 1929, numbers 3080 f. Diepolder, in Die attischen Grabreliefs, 1921, page 36, relates it to monuments of the late fifth century B.C.

The fragment remained at Lowther Castle until recently, seen by occasional visitors, and known through publications to the archaeological world; it can now be seen, in all its quiet power, by a wider public.
Attic grave monument, about 400 B.C. or soon after. Pentelic marble. The view opposite shows restorations in white: parts of hand, chair and edges of the drapery. Height 48 ⅜ in. (122.2 cm.), thickness 15 ½ in. (39.4 cm.). Acc. no. 48.11.4. Dick Fund, 1948