



## Greek marble head to Missouri

Just two years ago we introduced to readers of the *Alumnus* "a new laboratory at Missouri," the Study Collections for Art History and Archaeology, which had just been started as a teaching device. The Collections have flourished, in considerable measure thanks to Alumni interest, and as they have grown in size and variety they have increased in effectiveness. The most recent addition, the gift of an alumnus—the late H. W. Prentis of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, Class of 1903—is much the finest single object in the Collections and its presence raises their stature considerably. Just before his death in October, Mr. Prentis arranged to give the University a piece of exquisite Greek sculpture, the marble head of a girl, and the head arrived in the first days of December.

The sculptured head, about seven inches high, is a fragment from a large grave monument, such as is shown in the photograph of one of the few well preserved examples. This type of monument, called a "stele," was current in Greece, especially in Athens, during the fourth century B.C.; family scenes were usually portrayed on them. The stele from which our head came was very likely of the same type as that

shown, and portrayed a servant girl ministering to her mistress, over whose grave the monument was placed. It is the head of the servant girl, identified by the cap she wears, that has come to Missouri. She stood gazing adoringly at her mistress and most probably offered her a jewel box. The exquisite workmanship of the head, in island marble and in very high relief, shows the stele from which it came to have been among the finest in the Attic production and to have dated from about 360 B.C.

The quality is well illustrated by the fact that the left side of the face, which would never have been seen, is as finely modelled as is the visible right side. The relief is so high that even the left ear is shown. In fact, since a moulding over the top protected the side close to the background, but sent water running down over the more exposed right side, that side is somewhat eroded and has a browner color owing to the iron oxides that have been washed to the surface; the left side is almost perfectly preserved.

The rather soft modelling of the face and the deep, soulful eyes, appropriately sad, are typical of Athenian sculpture of the early fourth century B.C., probably



*On the opposite page and directly above are two views of a piece of exquisite Greek sculpture given to the University by the late H. W. Prentis, Jr. The sculptured head is a fragment from a large grave monument similar to the one reproduced at right and is believed to date from about 360 B.C. The head is that of a servant girl, identified by the cap she wears.*

reflecting the influence of the master sculptor Scopas. Grave monuments, to be sure, were usually the work of craftsmen rather than artists, but they followed the lines of development set down by the masters. That even some craftsmen of this period could produce sculpture of such high quality as this head not only indicates the high level of their craft but also serves to point out the height of artistic creativity achieved by the great sculptors.

The rarity of original Greek sculpture of high quality makes this head one of the most prized possessions of the University of Missouri Art Collections; it is one of only a few such pieces to be seen in Missouri. It is exhibited in Jesse Hall against a brilliant blue background, the color of which is a close approximation to that often used by the Greeks to paint the background of such stelae in order to make the figures stand out, rather than having the modelling obliterated by the brilliant Greek sun. It serves now, as well, as a memorial to the interest of the late Mr. Prentis in his alma mater, and to the encouragement which he gave to the building of its Art Collections.

Saul S. Weinberg.



*The donor, Henning W. Prentis, Jr., was for years head of Armstrong Cork Company. After his graduation he was secretary to the University President for two years.*