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THE TOWER OF THE WINDS

In the heart of Athens stands a well-preserved ancient monument, an octagonal building of marble, known in modern times as the Tower of the Winds, though it was originally called the Horologion of Andronicus Cyrrhestes. Authorities differ about its age. According to one account it was erected in the year 159 B.C. Its builder, Andronicus, was an astronomer, and the structure served the double purpose of a time-keeper and a wind-indicator.

On the outer walls were a number of sun-dials. When the sun was not shining the time was obtained from a water-clock in the interior. The roof was originally surmounted by a weather-vane in the shape of a bronze Triton, who pointed with a wand to the direction from which the wind was blowing. This vane has long since disappeared. Running around the top of the walls may still be seen a series of eight panels, each of which bears, in relief, a symbolic figure representing one of the eight winds as recognized by the Athenians.

Many modern pictures have been published of these figures -- Old Boreas, in his cloak, Zephyr, scattering spring flowers, etc. -- but the pictures are not always faithful to the originals. On the tower all the figures face to the right. Many years ago copies of the reliefs were made for decorating the library of Blue Hill Observatory, near Boston. For architectural reasons half of the figures were reversed so that they face to the left, and copies of these reversed figures have sometimes appeared in recent years in books and magazines.

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