CHAPTER XIV
THE TEMPLE OF VESPASIAN

South of the sanctuary of the City Lares is another religious edifice of an entirely different character. Passing from the Forum across the open space once occupied by the portico—of which no remains have been found—we enter a wide doorway and find ourselves in a four-sided court somewhat irregular in shape (Fig. 43). The front part is occupied by a colonnade (1).

At the rear a small temple (3) stands upon a high podium which projects in front of the cella and is reached by two flights of steps. The pedestal for the image of the divinity is built against the rear wall.

In the middle of the court is an altar faced with marble and adorned on all four sides with reliefs of moderately good workmanship. The sacrificial scene shown in the accompanying illustration (Fig. 44) is on the front side, facing the entrance to the court. A priest with a toga drawn over his head in the manner prescribed for those offering sacrifice, pours a libation from a shallow bowl, *patera*, upon an altar having the form of a tripod. With him at the left are two lictors with their bundles of rods, a fluteplayer, two boys, *camilli*, carrying the utensils for the sacrifice, and an attendant; at the right a bull intended for sacrifice is being brought to the altar by the slayer, *victimarius*, and an assistant. In the background is a tetrastyle temple, doubtless the temple before us; the scene represents the dedicatory exercises. The middle intercolumniation of the portico, as indicated by the relief and shown in the plan, is wider than the other two.

On the sides of the altar some of the utensils and ceremonial objects used in sacrificing are represented: at the left the napkin (*mantele*), the augural staff (*lituus*), and the box in which the incense was kept (*acerra*); at the right the libation bowl (*patera*), a ladle (*simpulum*), and a pitcher.

The reliefs on the back of the altar, which consist simply of a wreath of oak leaves with a conventional laurel on either side, are of special significance and give a clue to the purpose of the edifice. On the thirteenth of January, 27 B.C., the Senate voted that a civic crown—that is, one made of oak leaves, of the kind awarded to a soldier who had saved the life of a Roman citizen—should be placed above the door of the house in which Augustus lived, and that the doorposts should be wreathed with laurel. From that time the civic crown and the laurel were recognized as attributes denoting imperial rank. This temple, therefore, was built in honor of an emperor. From the inscriptions of the Arval Brethren, we learn that in the case of a living em-
peror a bull was the suitable victim, but that an ox was sacrificed to an emperor who had been deified after death. As the victim on our altar is a bull, the temple must have been dedicated to an emperor during his lifetime. With these facts in mind it will not be difficult to ascertain to whose worship the building was consecrated.

The coins of Augustus have both the civic crown and the laurel, but those of his immediate successors have only the former. In the year 74 the laurel again appears with the crown on the coins of Vespasian and Titus, and we may suppose that the distinction formerly conferred on Augustus was about this time revived in honor of Vespasian. It was indeed quite natural that men should think of Vespasian and Augustus together. Both restored peace and order after disastrous civil wars; both adopted severe repressive measures against luxury and immorality, and both adorned Rome with great public buildings. The temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline, which Augustus had repaired and made more magnificent, Vespasian rebuilt from the foundation after it was burned in 69.

The Senate, which had suffered so seriously at the hands of Nero, had reason to be deeply grateful to Vespasian, who treated it with marked respect, in this also following the example of Augustus. If the annals of the reigns of the Flavian emperors were not so meagre, we should very likely find a decree of the Senate honoring Vespasian with the civic crown and the laurel. Such a decree might well have suggested the founding of a temple, and the placing of these symbols of peace and victory upon its altar.

The temple itself was built, together with the court, after the earthquake of 63, and at the time of the eruption the work was not entirely completed. The walls of the cela and of the entrance from the Forum had received their veneering of marble and were in a finished state; but those of the court, divided off into a series of deep panels above which small pediments alternated with arches (Fig. 45), had received only a rough coat of stucco and were still awaiting completion. The temple must have been built in the time of Vespasian, who reigned from 68 to 79 A.D.; and as this emperor possessed too great simplicity of character to allow men to worship him as a god while he was still alive, it was probably dedicated to his Genius.

The rooms at the rear of the temple (shown on the plan) were entered by a door at the right. They may have served as a habitation for the sacristain, or as a place of storage for the sacrificial utensils. The north room was also connected with rooms belonging to the sanctuary of the Lares, the purpose of which is unknown.