NOTES TO PLAN I

The Regions are given as they were laid out by Fiorelli (p. 34), the boundaries being marked by broken lines. The Insulae are designated by Arabic numerals.

Stabian Street, between Stabian and Vesuvius gates, separating Regions VIII, VII, and VI, from I, IX, and V, is often called Cardo, from analogy with the cardo maximus (the north and south line) of a Roman camp. Nola Street, leading from the Nola Gate, with its continuations (Strada della Fortuna, south of Insulae 10, 12, 13, and 14 of Region VI, and Strada della Terme, south of VI, 4, 6, 8), was for similar reasons designated as the Greater Decumanus, Decumanus Maior; while the street running from the Water Gate to the Sarno Gate (Via Marina, Abbondanza Street, Strada del Diadumeni) is called the Lesser Decumanus, Decumanus Minor.

The only Regions wholly excavated are VII and VIII; but only a small portion of Region VI remains covered.

The towers of the city wall are designated by numbers, as they are supposed to have been at the time of the siege of Sulla, in 89 B.C. (p. 240).
CHAPTER V

A BIRD’S-EYE VIEW

The outline of Pompeii, with its network of streets, may be traced on the accompanying plan.

The city took its shape from the end of the old lava stream on which it lay, which ran southeast from Vesuvius. It formed an irregular oval a little less than four fifths of a mile (1200 metres) long and a little more than two fifths of a mile (720 metres) wide in its greatest dimensions. On three sides, west, south, and east, the wall of the city ran along the edge of the hill; on the northwest side, between the Herculaneum and Capua gates, it passed directly across the ridge formed by the lava.

The eight gates are known by the modern names given on our plan. Two of them, the Herculaneum and Capua gates, lie at the points where the wall comes to the edge of the lava bed on either side; the streets that led from them descended to the plain. At the Herculaneum Gate the much travelled highway from Naples, passing through Herculaneum, entered the city; the Capua Gate does not seem to have been built to accommodate a large traffic. Between these two lay the Vesuvius Gate, through which the Pompeians passed out upon the ridge toward Vesuvius.

From the Herculaneum Gate nearly to the Stabian Gate, on the south side, ran a bluff, with a sharp descent. Nevertheless, as a gate was needed on the side nearest the sea, the Water Gate, Porta Marina, was placed here; through it a steep road led to the Forum, so steep that it could not have been much used by vehicles; but that may have mattered little to the fishermen bringing their catches to the market.

The Stabian Gate lay in a depression at the end of the lava bed and afforded a more convenient means of access to the city; thence a road ran to the harbor on the Sarno, and to Stabiae.
At the left another road apparently branched off from this in the direction of Nuceria, which could be reached also from the conveniently located Nocera Gate further east; here also the slope of the hill was less pronounced. Two gates, finally, gave access to the city on the somewhat steeper east and northeast sides, the Sarno Gate, which takes its name, not from the river, but from the modern town of Sarno, and the Nola Gate; it is at least probable that the road passing through the latter led to Nola.

A glance at the plan will make it plain that the streets of Pompeii must have been laid out according to a definite system; an arrangement on the whole so regular and symmetrical would scarcely be found in a city that had developed gradually from a small beginning, in which the location of streets had been the result of accident.

Two wide streets that cross the city very nearly at right angles give the direction for the other streets running approximately north and south and east and west, Mercury Street with its continuations, and Nola Street. The former probably served as a base line in laying out the city; this we infer from the fact that while it is exceptionally broad, and the Forum lies on it, there is no gate at either end, and it could have been little used for traffic. Nola Street has a gate only at the east end; the west end opens into the Strada Consolare, which follows the line of the city wall and leads to the Herculaneum Gate at the northwest corner. That the other streets must have taken their direction from these two is clearly seen in the case of those in the northwest part of the city; on close examination it will be found that the arrangement of the rest also is in accordance with the same system, a fact which would perhaps be still more obvious if the unexcavated eastern portion of the city were laid bare.

In two instances, however, there is a deviation from this system. One is in the quarter near the Forum. For reasons which have not been satisfactorily explained, the Porta Marina was not placed on the prolongation of the street coming from the Sarno Gate, but further north. In order to reach this gate the street, as shown on the plan, makes a bend to the north which is reproduced in the other east and west streets lying south of Nola Street; west of the Forum, again, the streets converge in order to give access to this gate.

The other deviation, which affects Stabian Street, can be explained on grounds of convenience. This street, which runs from the Stabian to the Vesuvius Gate, abandoned the line of the north and south streets west of it in order to take advantage of a natural depression in the hill, by following which an easy grade could be established to the higher parts of the city; that the blocks along this important thoroughfare might not be too irregular in shape, the nearest parallel streets on the east were laid out in such a way as to follow the direction of Stabian Street. The street running south from the Capua Gate resumes, with slight variation, the north and south line of Mercury Street.

The public buildings of the city form two extensive groups. One group lies about the Forum (Plan II); with this we may reckon the Baths in the first block north, and the temples of Fortuna Augusta and Venus Pompeiana. The nucleus of the other is formed by the two theatres and the large quadrangular colonnade which, designed originally to afford protection for theatre-goers against the rain, was later turned into barracks for the gladiators (Plan III). There are in addition only four public buildings that need to be mentioned. Two are bathing establishments, the Stabian Baths, and those at the corner of Stabian and Nola streets. The third is a small building near the Herculaneum Gate, consisting of a hall opening on the street, with a base for a statue near the rear wall; this on insufficient grounds has been called a custom-house. The fourth, the Amphitheatre, lies in the southern corner of the city.

As the public buildings were thus located in clearly defined groups, it is not probable that many yet remain in the portion of the city which has not been excavated. We may expect to find only bathing establishments, and perhaps one or two temples. There were priestesses of Ceres and of Venus, but the sanctuary of Ceres has not been discovered. Mention is made also of a priest of Mars; but the temple of Mars, according to the precept of Vitruvius (I. vii. 1) would be outside the city.

A word should be added regarding the modern division of Pompeii into Regions, or wards, and Insulae. By an Insula is
meant—in accordance with ancient usage—a block of houses surrounded on all sides by streets. The division into Regions was introduced by Fiorelli, and rests upon a misconception which has been corrected by more recent excavations. Fiorelli thought that the Capua Gate and the Nocera Gate were connected by a street, and that the city was thus divided by four streets (the assumed street, Stabian Street, Nola Street, and Abbondanza Street with its continuations) into nine Regions, marked on our plan with the numerals I–IX.

In each Region every block, or Insula, has its number, and in the Insula a separate number is given to every door opening on a street. This arrangement is convenient because each house can be accurately designated by means of three numbers.

On the plans the Insulae are designated by Arabic numerals, but in the text small Roman numerals are used for the sake of clearness; thus, Ins. IX. i. 26, means the first Insula of Region IX, No. 26.

The names of several of the more important streets, as of the better known houses, are given in the text in the English form.