

**Source: The Ten Books on Architecture by Vitruvius
(Translated by Morris Hicky Morgan 1914)**

BOOK V

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INTRODUCTION

1. THOSE who have filled books of unusually large size, Emperor, in setting forth their intellectual ideas and doctrines, have thus made a very great and remarkable addition to the authority of their writings. I could wish that circumstances made this as permissible in the case of our subject, so that the authority of the present treatise might be increased by amplifications; but this is not so easy as it may be thought. Writing on architecture is not like history or poetry. History is captivating to the reader from its very nature; for it holds out the hope of various novelties. Poetry, with its measures and metrical feet, its refinement in the arrangement of words, and the delivery in verse of the sentiments expressed by the several characters to one another, delights the feelings of the reader, and leads him smoothly on to the very end of the work.

2. But this cannot be the case with architectural treatises, because those terms which originate in the peculiar needs of the art, give rise to obscurity of ideas from the unusual nature of the language. Hence, while the things themselves are not well known, and their names not in common use, if besides this the principles are described in a very diffuse fashion without any attempt at conciseness and explanation in a few pellucid sentences, such fullness and amplitude of treatment will be only a hindrance, and will give the reader nothing but indefinite notions. Therefore, when I mention obscure terms, and the symmetrical proportions of members of buildings, I shall give brief explanations, so that they may be committed to memory; for thus expressed, the mind will be enabled to understand them the more easily.

3. Furthermore, since I have observed that our citizens are distracted with public affairs and private business, I have thought

it best to write briefly, so that my readers, whose intervals of leisure are small, may be able to comprehend in a short time.

Then again, Pythagoras and those who came after him in his school thought it proper to employ the principles of the cube in composing books on their doctrines, and, having determined that the cube consisted of 216¹ lines, held that there should be no more than three cubes in any one treatise.

4. A cube is a body with sides all of equal breadth and their surfaces perfectly square. When thrown down, it stands firm and steady so long as it is untouched, no matter on which of its sides it has fallen, like the dice which players throw on the board. The Pythagoreans appear to have drawn their analogy from the cube, because the number of lines mentioned will be fixed firmly and steadily in the memory when they have once settled down, like a cube, upon a man's understanding. The Greek comic poets, also, divided their plays into parts by introducing a choral song, and by this partition on the principle of the cubes, they relieve the actor's speeches by such intermissions.

5. Since these rules, founded on the analogy of nature, were followed by our predecessors, and since I observe that I have to write on unusual subjects which many persons will find obscure, I have thought it best to write in short books, so that they may the more readily strike the understanding of the reader: for they will thus be easy to comprehend. I have also arranged them so that those in search of knowledge on a subject may not have to gather it from different places, but may find it in one complete treatment, with the various classes set forth each in a book by itself. Hence, Caesar, in the third and fourth books I gave the rules for temples; in this book I shall treat of the laying out of public places. I shall speak first of the proper arrangement of the forum, for in it the course of both public and private affairs is directed by the magistrates.

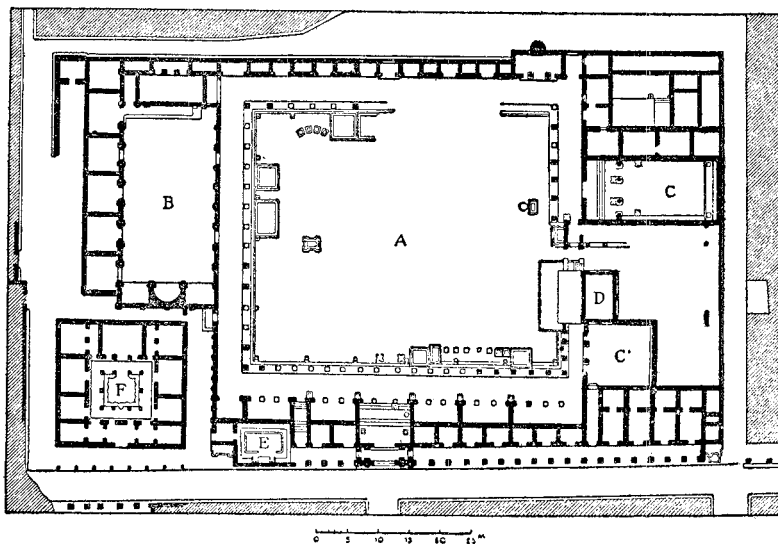
¹ Codd. CC. & L.

CHAPTER I

THE FORUM AND BASILICA

1. THE Greeks lay out their forums in the form of a square surrounded by very spacious double colonnades, adorn them with columns set rather closely together, and with entablatures of stone or marble, and construct walks above in the upper story. But in the cities of Italy the same method cannot be followed, for the reason that it is a custom handed down from our ancestors that gladiatorial shows should be given in the forum.

2. Therefore let the intercolumniations round the show place be pretty wide; round about in the colonnades put the bankers' offices; and have balconies on the upper floor properly arranged so as to be convenient, and to bring in some public revenue.



From Gsell

FORUM AT TIMGAD

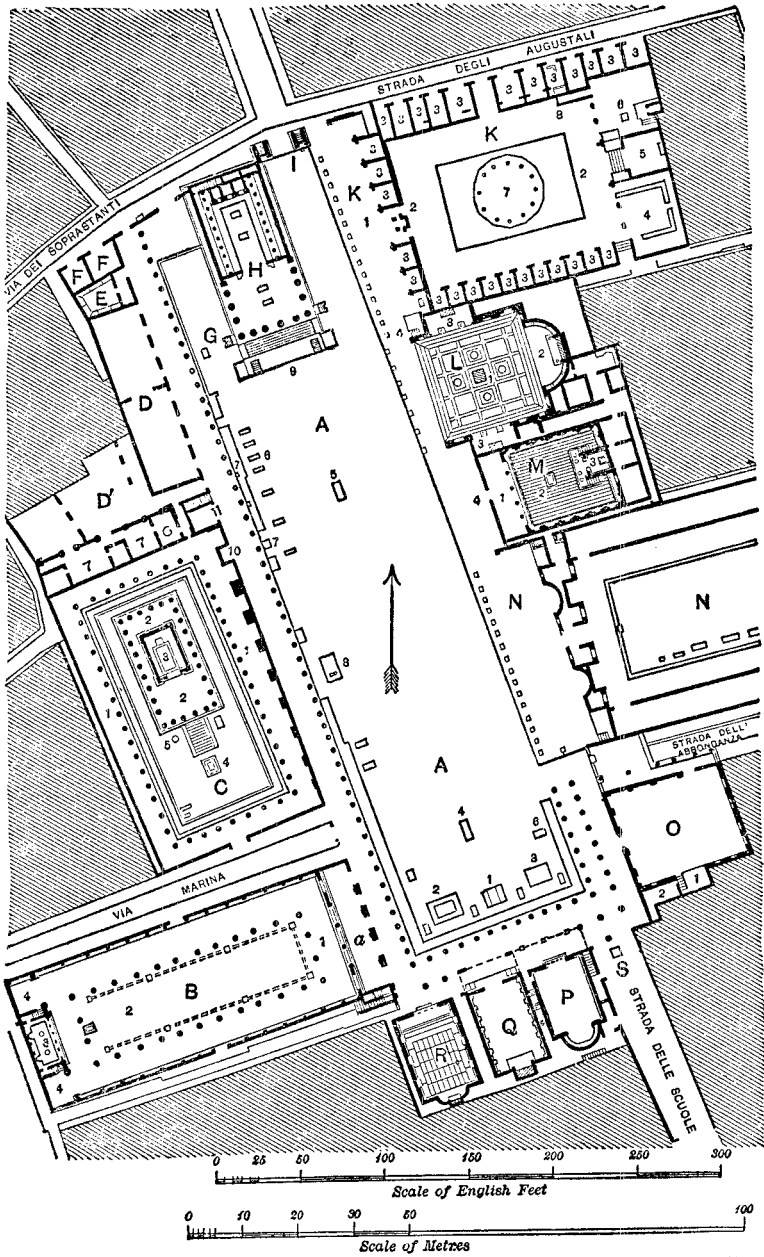
A, Forum. B, Basilica. C, Curia. C', Official Building. D, Small Temple.
E, Latrina. F, Atrium.

The size of a forum should be proportionate to the number of inhabitants, so that it may not be too small a space to be useful, nor look like a desert waste for lack of population. To determine its breadth, divide its length into three parts and assign two of them to the breadth. Its shape will then be oblong, and its ground plan conveniently suited to the conditions of shows.

3. The columns of the upper tier should be one fourth smaller than those of the lower, because, for the purpose of bearing the load, what is below ought to be stronger than what is above, and also, because we ought to imitate nature as seen in the case of things growing; for example, in round smooth-stemmed trees, like the fir, cypress, and pine, every one of which is rather thick just above the roots and then, as it goes on increasing in height, tapers off naturally and symmetrically in growing up to the top. Hence, if nature requires this in things growing, it is the right arrangement that what is above should be less in height and thickness than what is below.

4. Basilicas should be constructed on a site adjoining the forum and in the warmest possible quarter, so that in winter business men may gather in them without being troubled by the weather. In breadth they should be not less than one third nor more than one half of their length, unless the site is naturally such as to prevent this and to oblige an alteration in these proportions. If the length of the site is greater than necessary, Chalcidian porches may be constructed at the ends, as in the Julia Aquiliana.

5. It is thought that the columns of basilicas ought to be as high as the side-aisles are broad; an aisle should be limited to one third of the breadth which the open space in the middle is to have. Let the columns of the upper tier be smaller than those of the lower, as written above. The screen, to be placed between the upper and the lower tiers of columns, ought to be, it is thought, one fourth lower than the columns of the upper tier, so that people walking in the upper story of the basilica may not be seen by the business men. The architraves, friezes, and cornices should



FORUM AT POMPEII

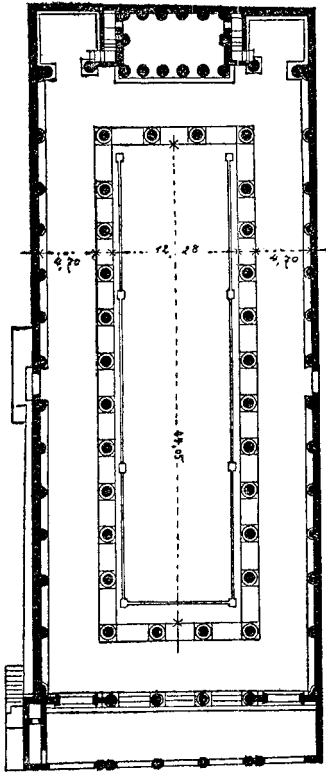
From Mau

A, Forum. B, Basilica. C, Temple of Apollo. D, D', Market Buildings. E, Latrina. F, City Treasury. G, Memorial Arch. H, Temple of Jupiter. I, Arch of Tiberius. K, Macellum (provision market). L, Sanctuary of the City Lares. M, Temple of Vespasian. N, Building of Eumachia. O, Comitium. P, Office of the Duumvirs. Q, The City Council. R, Office of the Aediles.

be adjusted to the proportions of the columns, as we have stated in the third book.

6. But basilicas of the greatest dignity and beauty may also be constructed in the style of that one which I erected, and the building

of which I superintended at Fano. Its proportions and symmetrical relations were established as follows. In the middle, the main roof between the columns is 120 feet long and sixty feet wide. Its aisle round the space beneath the main roof and between the walls and the columns is twenty feet broad. The columns, of unbroken height, measuring with their capitals fifty feet, and being each five feet thick, have behind them pilasters, twenty feet high, two and one half feet broad, and one and one half feet thick, which support the beams on which is carried the upper flooring of the aisles. Above them are other pilasters, eighteen feet high, two feet broad, and a foot thick, which carry the beams supporting the principal raftering and the roof of the aisles, which is brought down lower than the main roof.



PLAN OF THE BASILICA AT
POMPEII

7. The spaces remaining between the beams supported by the pilasters and the columns, are left for windows between the intercolumniations. The columns are: on the breadth of the main roof at each end, four, including the corner columns at right and left; on the long side which is next to the forum, eight, including the same corner columns; on the other side, six, including the corner columns. This is because the

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