

RECENT ROMAN DISCOVERIES AT LINCOLN.

By Rev. PRECENTOR VENABLES.

During the last few months several interesting discoveries of Roman remains have been made at Lincoln, of which I now desire to furnish a brief account.

On Wednesday, March 12th, 1884, the workmen engaged in excavating the ground for the foundations of the new tower and spire of St. Swithin's Church, at the depth of some thirteen feet from the surface came upon an altar dedicated to the Parcae. It was lying prostrate on its face, on a bed of dry river gravel covered with alluvial soil and made ground. It is to this fortunate circumstance that the wonderful sharpness of the letters of the inscription may be attributed; the dryness of the gravel having preserved the stone from decay.

The altar is formed of one block of the local oolite, coarse in texture and admitting of no elaborate decoration. I am informed by builders that it is hewn from the same bed as the huge stones of which the North Roman gateway of the city, the well-known Newport Arch, is constructed.

The altar stands 3 ft. in height, and is 1 ft. 3¼ in. broad, and 1 ft. 0½ in. deep, the corresponding dimensions of the base being 1 ft. 8 in., and 1 ft. 2 in. Both the base and the upper part are boldly but rudely moulded. The upper part is the least perfect. Its ornamentation, if it had any, has perished, and there are no traces of the bowl-shaped "*focus*" for the consumption of the sacrifice.

The flanks are rudely carved in relief. That to the right bears the "*præfericulum*" or pitcher for the wine of the libations. On the left is the "*patera*" for pouring the wine on the burning sacrifice. There is no trace of the "*culter*" or knife, the usual companion of these sacrificial implements on Roman altars.

The inscription which occupies the face is almost as sharp as the day it was first cut. It is as follows :

PARCIS Δ DEA
BVS Δ ET NV
MINIBVS Δ AVG Δ
C Δ ANTISTIVS
FRONTINVS
CVRATOR Δ TER Δ
AR Δ D Δ S Δ D.

That is "to the Goddesses the Parcae, and to the Deities of Augustus, Caius Antistius Frontinus, being Curator . . . dedicates this altar at his own cost." The initials, D. S. D., it is needless to say, are a common abbreviation for "de suo dat" or "dicat."

It will be observed that I have not attempted to give any interpretation of the letters TER, the only portion of the inscription which offers any uncertainty.

My own first idea was that the letters formed a complete word, the Latin numeral adverb "ter," and that it was thus indicated that the erector of the altar was at the time filling the office of "curator" for the third time. This view has the support of Professor Hübner of Berlin, the learned editor of the "Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum." In a letter with which he has favoured me Dr. Hübner writes, "I should think it most probable that Frontinus was in charge for the third time of that same little temple or 'Ædicula' to which he gave the little altar now discovered," adding, "I think TER may be accepted as the complete form of the numeral adverb ('ter' three times), not as an abbreviation of 'ter [tio]' or 'ter [tium]' in spite of Cicero's well-known joke about Pompey's theatre and its inscription."¹

This reading of the inscription, however, has been called in question by some of our leading English authorities, such as Prebendary Scarth, Mr. C. Roach Smith, and Mr. Thompson Watkin. Attention has been directed to the fact that numeral adverbs are seldom, if ever, employed in their full form on Latin inscriptions, to designate the number of times the person named had filled any given office. Numerals, not numeral adverbs, are used. According to the general rule, therefore, we should expect III, not TER, if the meaning intended to be conveyed was that Frontinus for the third time was "curator" of the chapel or filled any similar guardianship. There appears to be much in this objection to Hübner's reading. But his authority is confessedly so great on all matters connected with Roman inscriptions that any expression of his opinion deserves the most careful consideration before his verdict is rejected.

There is nothing in the word "curator" of itself to help us to decide the point. As those familiar with Roman inscriptions well know, few words are of more frequent occurrence in various references. It is generally found in a civil sense, indicating many various offices, municipal or other. "Curator reipublicæ" is very common, and we continually meet with "curator viarum," "curator alvei et riparum," "curator cloacarum," and the like. "Curator ludorum" is also frequent, and "curator coloniæ" appears in Hübner's great work (vol. ix, No. 1121, 1584.) "Curator" is also not unknown as a military term. Hübner records a "curator fisci," as a military officer, the cash-keeper of the cohorts, in a Spanish inscription (vol. ii, No. 2610). There is also an epitaph, discovered at Chesters, to one who had been "curator" of the second "ala" of the Asturian troops, of which regiment it is interesting to notice that the officer whose funeral slab, dug up a few years back at the foot of Motherby Hill in Lincoln, now preserved in the Cathedral cloisters, was a "decurio."

A military reference, however, according to Mr. Watkin, in the present case is "out of the question, as no corps is named, and not half-a-dozen

¹ When Pompey erected his theatre in his third Consulship he enquired of Cicero whether he should inscribe "TERTIUM" or "TERTIO" on the portico. Cicero, with all his grammatical

knowledge, being unable to decide the question, recommended him to compromise the matter and write TERT. Aul Gell. *Noct. Attic.* x, i.

examples of the use of the word in this sense have been found in the whole Roman world."

Professor Wordsworth, whose opinion on all matters of Roman epigraphy deserves the highest consideration, is disposed to regard the term as meaning either "Curator Reipublicæ, *i.e.*," a governor appointed by the Emperor to take the place of the ordinary elected magistrates of the town," or as "Curator templi" or "sacelli." He says, "I rather incline to the latter, as nothing has gone before to suggest the colony." This, as will have been already seen, is also the word to which Professor Hübner inclines, while acknowledging the uncertainty of the exact reference of the word "curator." He writes, "Lincoln was a thoroughly military place: the last line seems scarcely capable of another expansion than this: Ar(am) d(e) s(uo) d(edit.) If Frontinus, as I suppose, was a soldier or a veteran of one of the Roman legions stationed at Lincoln, the "Deæ Parcæ" may have been worshipped by a "sodalitium of soldiers, who had brought them over to England from their native country. And that community of worshippers is very likely to have had a common sanctuary, whose curator Frontinus was elected for the third time."

The more probable conclusion, however, seems to be that TER stands for "terrarium," and that Frontinus is here described as "curator terrarium," *i.e.*, in the opinion of Prebendary Scarth, overseer of the "Ager Vectigalis," or the land belonging to the Colony of Lindum. As the next line begins with the letters AR, it was at first conjectured that the two syllables formed part of the same word. This, however, was negatived by the discovery of the well defined stop at the end of the former line. Still TER may stand by itself as a perfectly legitimate abbreviation for "terrarium." Prebendary Scarth and Mr. Roach-Smith agree in this reading. The latter gentleman writes:—"The TER I do not think can possibly mean three times as applied to the office of "curator." We have "Cur. Agr." for "Curator Agrorum," and in what can that differ from "Curator Terræ" or "Terrarium"? Frontinus was simply curator of the ground on which stood the altar or little temple."

A few remarks may now be made as to the name of this "curator" by whom the altar was erected—Caius Antistius Frontinus. The "nomen" Antistius appears in several inscriptions discovered in Britain. Antistius Adventus is found on an altar discovered at Lanchester dedicated to the Divinity of Augustus and the Genius of the First Cohort of the Vardulli. "Sub Antistio Advento Leg. Aug." (Hübner, vol. vii, No. 440; Surtees' "History of Durham," vol. ii, p. 306.) The same name has been thought by Hübner to have been that inscribed on a mutilated inscription recording a veteran of the fourteenth legion dug up at Lincoln, now in the British Museum (*ibid.*, No. 187.) But the only letters remaining of the nomen and of the cognomen are—STI.--ENTVS, and as Mr. Watkin remarks, "the first name might well have been (De)sticius, or (Ho)stilius, or (Ru)sticus, and the second might be such a name as (In)ventus, or many other names." The same "nomen" also appears on an altar found at Maryport, dedicated to "Jupiter Optimus Maximus," by Lucius Antistius, the commander of the first cohort of Spanish cavalry (*ibid.*, No. 373.) The "cognomen" Frontinus is of less frequent occurrence in British inscriptions. It is, however, found on a

mutilated stone discovered at Bowes, given by Horsley (p. 304) in connection with the first cohort of the Thracian forces, where it has been supposed by some antiquaries to exhibit the name of the celebrated author on military matters (*Strategematica*) and on aqueducts, who succeeded Cerealis as governor of Britain, A.D. 75, and held office here till the appointment of Julius Agricola, A.D. 78 (Hubner, No. 274.) Frontinus also appears as the name of a potter whose workshop stamp is borne by many articles of Roman earthenware found in Britain (*ibid.* 1336 [468, 469, 476]).

I will now pass to the dedication of the altar. This is "Parcis deabus et numinibus Augusti." To take the last part first. Though the singular form "numen" is more usual when the reference is to a single object of worship, the plural "numina" is very far from infrequent. I need not recall its employment in classical authors:—Virgil's

"Numina Phœbi."—*Æn.* iii, 359.

"Numina sancta precamur
Palladis armisonæ."—*Ibid.*, 543.

and Horace's

"Dianæ non movenda numina"—*Epod.* xvii, 3.

are familiar to us all; and it is needless to multiply examples of so common a usage. With regard to its employment and connection with the name of the Emperor, Professor Hübner's "Corpus" supplies many examples of the form "numina Augusti," e.g., on an altar found at Dorchester on Thames No. 83, we read, "I.O.M. et numinibus Aug. . . aram cum cancellis;" No. 506, an altar found at Benwell set up by Liburnius Fronto, a centurion, for the safety of Hadrian, Antoninus Pius. and the "legio Augustæ secunda" bears "I.O.M. Dolicheno et numinibus Augusti;" No. 638, an altar found at Housesteads, erected by the "Cohors Prima Tungrorum," with the "præfericulum" on one side and the "patera" on the other, as in our Lincoln altar, has "I.O.M. et numinibus Aug." The same dedication also appears on two altars set up at the same place by the same cohort, and on others discovered in the vicinity of the Roman Wall, which are given in Dr. Bruce's great work. Dr. Hubner says, in the letter already quoted, "who the 'Augustus' was whose 'numina' were worshipped here, together with the Parcae, remains of course uncertain. One might think of Aurelius or Septimus Severus. But that the reigning Emperor's 'numina' are placed in a most loyal mood besides the other divinities agrees very well with their supposed military character."

But it is the principal dedication, that to the "Parcæ," which is the most interesting. The rarity of such dedications, not in Britain only, but in other parts of the Roman world, adds much to the value of the recent discovery.

Only three altars dedicated to the "Parcæ" have previously been discovered in Britain. All of these belong to the Carlisle district, two having been found in Carlisle itself, and one near Sillloth. In two of these the Parcae are not designated "Goddesses," "Deae," but "Mothers," "Matres."

The inscription on the Carlisle altar, discovered in 1861 (No. 927) runs thus, "Matribus Parcis pro salute Sanctiæ Geminae," while on that

discovered in the same year at the same city (No. 938) the Fates are simply designated "Parcae" without any addition. That discovered at Skinburness near Silloth (No. 418), is a mere fragment, but it distinctly shews "Matribus Par(cis)."

From these inscriptions we gather that the "Parcae" were popularly identified with the "Deae Matres" whose worship was a favourite one among the Teutonic races. An altar dedicated to these deities has been found in York, and such are frequent in the neighbourhood of the Roman Wall.

Monuments commemorating these Goddesses with the usual three-seated female figures have been brought to light at Ancaster, and in Lincoln itself, the latter of which is now in the Trollope collection at the British Museum. I need hardly say that such identification of local deities, the objects of popular worship long before the occupation of the island by the Romans and the introduction of their mythology, receives copious illustration from the inscriptions discovered in Britain. The double names Mars Coccidius, Mars Belatucadrus, Jupiter Dolichenus, Apollo Maponus, may be adduced as examples. With reference to the Lincoln altar Professor Hübner remarks, "the Deae Parcae seem, as other members of the Greek and Roman Olympus, to have been identified in provincial worship with female divinities of foreign or local, or at least, non-Roman origin. Whether they are to be considered as 'matres' or 'matronae,' or perhaps as 'nymphae,' is a matter not easily to be settled in a general way. These compound divinities are so extremely frequent that each single occurrence has to be considered by itself."

The interest of the present discovery is enhanced by the well-known rarity of altars dedicated to the Parcae, not only in Britain but throughout the Roman world. The indexes to Dr. Hubner's "Corpus Inscriptionum," do not supply a single example in Spain (vol. ii), Africa (vol. viii), Campania, Lucania, and Sardinia (vol. x), nor in Calabria, Apulia, or Samnium (vol. ix.). Gallia Cisalpina (vol. v.) supplies four, two at Verona (No. 3280, 3281), one at Aquileia, "Parcabus et Bonae Deae" (No. 8242), and one at San Giorgio Vallis Pulicellae (No. 3282.) The unindexed volumes may contain other examples.

It only remains to mention that the letter A, wherever it occurs on this altar is destitute of the horizontal bar, resembling a V turned upside down, and that the stops are formed by triangular indentations, peculiarities which Dr. Hübner states correspond exactly with the palaeographical character of the end of the second or the former part of the third century.

I will now proceed to a description of what we can hardly be mistaken in regarding as a family burial place discovered within the area of the Roman city of *Lindum Colonia*.

This discovery was first made on the morning of June 6th, in digging out the foundations of a new house at the corner of the streets known as Eastgate and Bailgate, to the north-west of the Minster, closely adjacent to the site of one of the fourteenth century gateways of the Close.

The situation of this place of interment calls for remark, being so near the centre as to be almost certainly within the area of the original Roman city, not, as is sometimes the case with apparently intramural burials, in

an extension of the city beyond its first limits.¹ I need hardly say that instances of burial within the walls of a city are exceedingly rare, though one is stated to have been met with in Green Street in the heart of the City of London.² The place where these funeral vessels were found is in the south-eastern division of Lindum, about half way between the centre, where the *vias* intersect, and the south gate, immediately to the east of the main *via* running from south to north.

Two depositories of vessels containing ashes were discovered (marked A and B on the accompanying plan), divided by a massive wall running north and south, pierced by a rude narrow archway, three feet six inches high by two feet across.³ Below the set-off, to the left of the archway which marked the level of the floor, the wall, which extended considerably deeper, had been broken through, increasing the apparent height of the door. Whether this arch is of Roman or Norman date it is difficult to decide, and well-qualified judges are not agreed on the point. The very intelligent foreman of the works, who has taken a lively interest in the discovery, and to whom I am indebted for the plans and sections which accompany this paper, which though somewhat rough, convey a very correct idea of the general arrangement and dimensions, has observed facts which go to prove that the wall in question was Norman in the upper part and had been built upon Roman foundations. The lower portion of the wall, he tells me, was solid throughout, while the superstructure was formed, like Norman walls generally, of two shells of ashlar filled in with incoherent rubble. The mortar of this upper part was also of Norman character, exactly corresponding to that in the Norman towers of the Minster, and quite different in composition from Roman mortar. The wall in question formed the western side of a strong tower, which was certainly, in its upper part, of Norman date. The northern wall, when disencumbered of the floors and partitions of the modern house built up against it, exhibited two round-headed openings, one above the other, of Late Norman character. The structure thus unexpectedly revealed was evidently one of some importance, and it may perhaps be identified with "the tower above the gate of Eastgate"—at the corner of which street it stood—which was assigned by Henry I. to Alexander, the second Norman Bishop of Lincoln, for his lodging when visiting his Cathedral city. Though we have no record of one at so early a period,

¹ Mr. Roach Smith writes:—"I have noticed that most of the large Roman towns and cities, as, in Britain, those of London, Canterbury, York, &c., in the course of time, were enlarged; and that this enlargement often included what were originally extra mural sepulchral interments. As regards *Londinium*, I proved this years ago (see "Illustrations of Roman London"); and confirmatory evidence has since accumulated. The skeleton in Bow Lane had in its mouth a coin of Domitian, proving that the interment could not have been before the time of that Emperor; but not proving that this burial took place during the reign of that Emperor, though

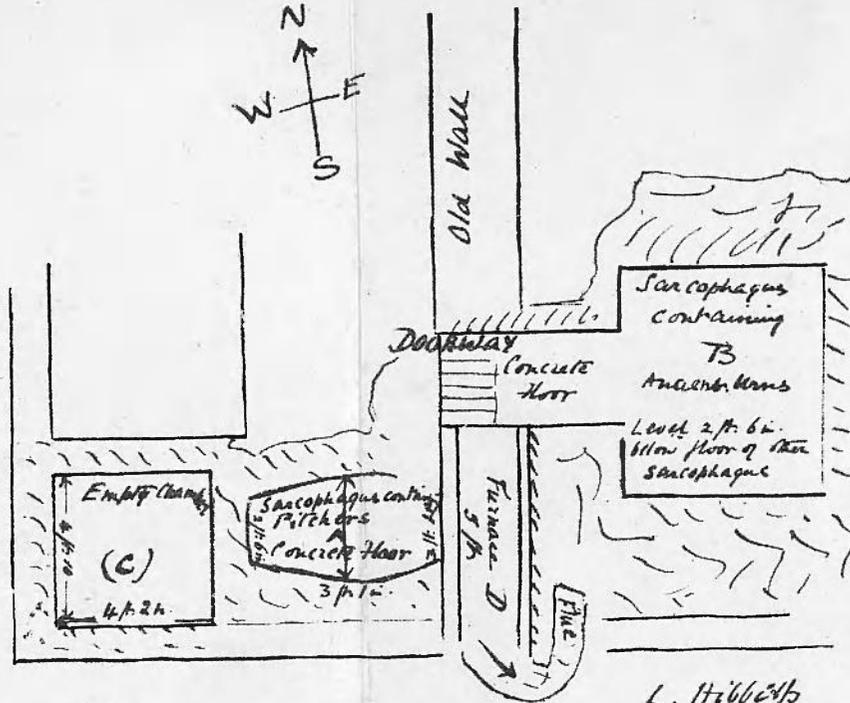
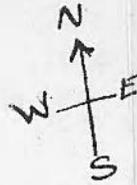
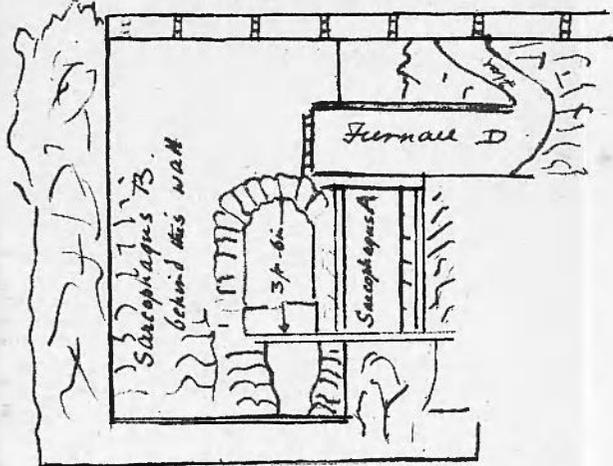
probably it may have been. I believe that in such cases where coins are found, they are almost always of the Higher Empire. This and other interments became within the walls when *Londinium* was enlarged, after the time of Severus. Moreover, sepulchral stone monuments were not much respected, for we have found them used as building materials for the later wall. See those of Tower Hill in my 'Rom. Lon., &c.'"

² Wright, "Celt, Roman, and Saxon," p. 357.

³ A moulded fragment of a Roman base was found in the progress of the excavation.

Section from N. to S.

Present Room Floor.

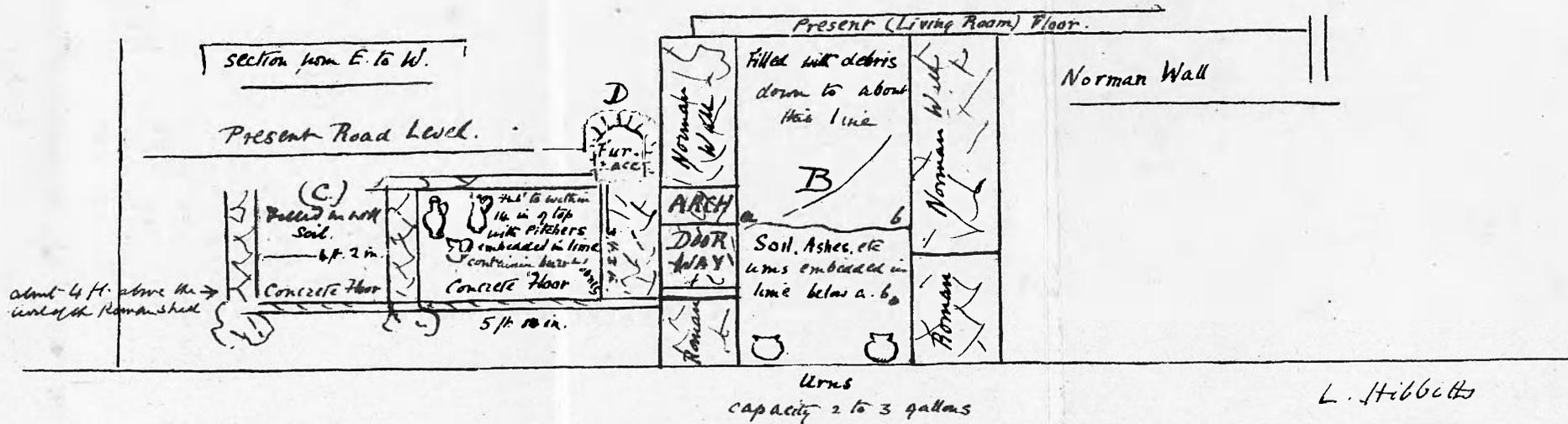


Ground Plan

L. Hibbert

Section from E. to W.

Present Road Level.



L. Hibbert

GROUND PLAN AND SECTIONS OF ROMAN REMAINS DISCOVERED IN THE BAIL, LINCOLN. JUNE 1884.

there may very well have been a gatehouse at this spot, protecting the north-western entrance into the close in Norman times, as there certainly was at a later date.¹

But to return to the undeniably Roman part of this discovery, the two depositories of funeral vessels. The first discovered (marked A) was a small stone chamber, built of rough rubble walling, the ends and sides being slightly curved. It was 5ft. 10in. in length from E. to W. by from 2ft. 3in. to 3ft. 1in. in breadth, and 3ft. 9in. deep. It was covered with thick slabs projecting beyond the sides. The floor was of concrete. To the west of this sepulchral chamber was a small quadrangular room (C) measuring 4ft. 2in. by 4ft. 10in., communicating with it by a short passage way. The sepulchral chamber contained about ten vessels, standing upright, imbedded in lime, above which was a layer of vegetable ashes, and above that again a bed of fine sand about 14in. deep. These vessels were not funeral urns of the usual globular make, but ordinary domestic pitchers, from 2ft. to 3ft. high, with a single handle. At the junction of the handle with the vessel, in some cases, there were indentations for the fingers and thumbs to fit into. Several of them were covered with small cups or saucers, inverted and used as lids. Unfortunately only one of these was brought out whole. The whole of these vessels were of the coarsest fabric, clumsy in shape and devoid of ornament, some of them covered with a coarse greenish glaze. It may be remarked that there is nothing unusual in the employment of ordinary domestic utensils for the purposes of interment. This was evidently sometimes resorted to from motives of economy, the ashes having been placed in a vessel that from accident had become unfit for other use. Instances of this custom may be referred to in the remarkable deposit at Mount Bures near Colchester.² At Housesteads, on the Roman Wall, a large wine jar (now at Chesters) was discovered containing human ashes. In the words of Dr. Bruce, "the owner had probably emptied the jar, and had himself buried in the depository of the liquor that he loved." The contents of the vessels had been emptied out before attention was drawn to them, but the result of my enquiries is that they were certainly filled with ashes and burnt bones, mixed with earth and other matters which, in the course of so many centuries had found their way into them. No coins or articles of metal or of bone were discovered. I should state that the floor of this "loculus" was about 4ft. above the level of the Roman street.

The other depository of funeral vessels (B) at the east side of the wall, was at a lower level, fully 2ft. 6in. below the floor of that first discovered (A.) Its dimensions were also larger, 7ft. from N. to S. by 6ft. from E. to W. As far as I can learn, only three urns seem to have been discovered here. They were distinctly funeral urns, of the customary globular form. As in the other loculus they had been embedded in lime. Their contents were so completely decomposed by damp that it was difficult at first to form any opinion of their nature. A subsequent examination, however, has proved beyond all doubt that

¹ "Henricus rex Anglie Willielmo de Albini, &c., salutem Sciatis me dedisse et concessisse Alexandro Episcopo Lincolnæ portam de Estigata cum turri quæ supra ipsam est ad se hospitandum; et præcipio

quod illam honorifice teneat."—Dugdale, "Mon. Angl.," vi, p. 1274, No. xliii.

² Mr. Roach Smith, "Collectanea Antiqua," vol. ii.

the contents were particles of charred bone. They had been emptied before I saw them. Attached to the western side of the main wall, resting on the east end of the sepulchral chamber (A), was what some persons have somewhat rashly regarded as a furnace for burning the dead bodies whose ashes were to be deposited in the urns, and have designated it "a furnace of cremation," or adopting what I believe to be a word of modern creation, a "crematorium." There is however no evidence that the Romans ever burnt their dead in close furnaces. Mr. Roach Smith, Dr. Bruce, and Prebendary Scarth agree that none such have been found in Britain in connection with places of interment. With the exception of one side, the furnace was destroyed before I saw it, but I am inclined to believe that it was no more than a Norman oven, perhaps that in which the bread was baked for the table of Bishop Alexander

A few yards to the south of these sepulchral depositories, about 10ft. below the present ground level the workmen came upon the orifice of a Roman well, placed exactly in the centre of an opening in a thick wall running from N.E. to S.W. The jambs of this opening were 10ft. apart, the diameter of the well being 4ft. 6in. The well was covered with a stone slab, having a circular opening in the middle 2ft. across. On the slab were traces of a framework of iron and wood, connected with the drawing apparatus. The floor around was puddled to keep out the impure surface-water. Further to the east, at a depth of 12ft. 6in. below the street level, a Roman sewer was discovered, 3ft. wide by about 4ft. deep, running N. and S. with a bend to the east in the upper part. The chief part was parallel to the main sewer, running north and south along the street known as Bailgate, following the line of the Ermine Street, and it must have communicated with the branch drain running east and west, which diverges from the main sewer a short distance to the south of the site of the recent discovery. This is in such a perfect state of preservation that when a few years since it was opened during the progress of the underground drainage works, I was able to walk along it without any difficulty for full a hundred yards. There is a good description and drawing of this sewer in the late Mr. T. Wright's "Celt, Roman, and Saxon," p. 214. The value of these sewers as indications of the lines of the Roman streets affording data for mapping out the town is self-evident.

The absence of coins and objects of metal, and the few remains of pottery discovered in this locality is remarkable. A large amphora with a pointed base, in a pale drab material, has been pieced together out of the fragments, and a few bits of Samian ware, without ornamentation have been found. But generally speaking the diggings have been singularly barren. Two pieces of moulded stone were found in the excavations. One, a portion of a Roman base. The other appears to have been part of an oblong-fluted pillar, with three flutings on the broader side, and two flutings on the narrower. It was found lying near to a square base with a socket, on which it had probably originally stood. In later times this stone had been used as a step, the flutings having been worn away by the tread, at the upper end.

P.S. While this paper is passing through the press the remains of a Roman suburban villa have been discovered in the Greetwell Fields, about a mile and a half to the east of the old Roman East Gate. The position is on the sloping brow of the steep hill which forms the north side of the valley of the Witham, looking south and commanding a fine view. The discovery was made by workmen engaged in the ironstone diggings, while sinking a new mining shaft. Unfortunately, as too often happens, the most important portions had been destroyed before attention was called to the remains. Being absent from Lincoln I am unable to speak of this discovery from personal inspection. The accompanying account is from the pen of Dr. O'Niell, of Lincoln:—

“From the nature of the diggings, so much unavoidable damage has been done to the remains that all that is at present to be seen are some walls, and a well seven feet in diameter, and portions of tessellated pavements, broken tiles, and pottery. This much, however, is clear, that between two walls running at least thirty-five yards south and north, and thirty yards apart, several apartments existed, as indicated by walls, tessellated pavements, and large flat red-tile pavements. From these apartments steps led down to a room measuring fifteen feet by ten inches which, probably was a bath-room, and a few feet north of the bath room, in a different apartment is a very deep well, seven feet in diameter, still in a comparatively good state of preservation. The bath itself was between three and four feet in depth, and its sides rose about two feet from the floor. The tesserae of the upper apartments are chiefly of a red and blue brick and white stone, but the tesserae of the bath-room are white, and are apparently made of hard concrete. All the tesserae are about an inch and a half square, and were laid on a deep layer of the ordinary Roman concrete. The large flooring tiles are red, and bear an impressed checkered pattern. They measure fifteen inches by ten and half inch. On clearing out some of the rubbish from the well, fragments of wall plaster, probably of the bath-room, were found; these fragments show that the apartment or apartments must have been beautifully painted and decorated. A dado of tesserae went round the bath room. The colours used in the painting were red, yellow, blue, green, and white, and the decorations were evidently executed with the greatest neatness and precision. On one piece of plaster I noticed the picture of a swallow, well drawn and painted. The house must have been the property of a Roman gentleman of taste and opulence. The site was well chosen, but in consequence of the villa being built on the brow of a hill, the lower rooms were on different planes. Among the *debris* thrown up by the miners in their excavations I saw the horn of a goat, a part of the antler of a deer, and the bone of an ox, nearly as sound as the day it stood with its succulent surroundings on the table of the villa. Doubtless, if careful diggings were extended on either side of the mining trench, other Roman discoveries of a valuable character might be made.”