

SOME ACCOUNT OF THE REMAINS OF THE GALLIC-  
ROMAN TEMPLE DISCOVERED ON THE SUMMIT OF  
THE PUY DE DÔME (AUVERGNE,) IN 1873.<sup>1</sup>

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Many have been led by geological researches to visit the very interesting country of Auvergne, so well-known for its volcanic craters, and for the remains of irruptions from them, that have now wholly ceased. These have long attracted geological investigation—also the isolation of the Puy de Dôme, and the height of its summit 4842 feet above the sea level—have led to barometrical observations, and these have now caused the placing an observatory on the very summit.<sup>2</sup> The building of this observatory led to the examination of a vast pile of ruins just below the summit, which had long invited investigation. This had been suggested and written about as early as the commencement of the present century, but no effort had been made to examine what was under the coating of coarse turf and brush wood which covered the ruins. Attention had been drawn to them by M. Vimont, librarian of the town of Cleremont, distant about eight miles from the mountain, and by M. Mathieu, a member of the Academy of Cleremont, in 1867, who had indicated that this was probably the site of the Temple of the Gallic Mercury mentioned by Pliny; and further attention was afterwards called to the remains in 1869. It was not, however, until later that the work of excavation was taken up seriously.

<sup>1</sup> Read in the Architectural Section at the Annual Meeting of the Institute, at Norwich, August 8th, 1889.

<sup>2</sup> On the Puy de Dôme the experiments on the weight of the atmosphere by Torricelli were successfully tried by Pascal, whose sister Madame Perier resided at Cleremont. Her husband made the experiments by carrying a tube of mercury, hermetically sealed, to the top of the mountain. The experiment was repeated five or six times under different changes of the atmosphere, and on

different parts of the summit in September, 1648.

The observatory on the Puy de Dôme was opened in August 1876.

Lower down on the South side are the ruins of the chapel dedicated to St. Barnabas, to which pilgrimages were made once a year, in mediæval times. Here also in the 16th century "Witches' Sabbaths," were held, and a woman named Jeanne Bordeau was burned for sorcery in 1514, after confessing the crime.

This had been stimulated by an address from M. Alluard before the Commission appointed for the construction of the observatory, who spoke of the "débris of a Roman Temple of large size very near to the observatory, which, if the site could be explored, would offer to antiquaries some curious documents."

The construction of the observatory had brought some facts to light, and the matter was at length taken in hand by the Academy of Cleremont-Ferrand appointing a Commission in 1873, when researches were begun in the month of July.

It was not long before the work of uncovering revealed the upper portion of a large edifice which had been overthrown with much violence, and large blocks of black basalt, cut into cubical forms, and some having ornamental work upon them, were found heaped in confusion on the floors of the first platform over which the Temple stood. The great stair leading to this was uncovered, and the façade laid open. The size of the blocks of basalt, and the careful way in which these are cut and moulded, and the junction of the worked blocks by means of iron clamps, shew the time and labour that must have been bestowed upon the work.

Excavations were resumed in 1874, and continued until the autumn, These laid open still further details. The great staircase of the façade made it evident that it led to a further building; a lateral stair was also found, and a series of stairs mounting upwards. Upright pillars and doorways were also uncovered, and the back and side walls of a large hall or chamber. The walls are built in the Roman masonry, called "*opus quadratum*," and remain as perfect as when first erected.

Fragments of varieties of marble which had once covered the walls were found, and specimens of these (amounting to fifty-two) of different varieties, are now placed in the cases of the Museum of Antiquities at Cleremont.

The lower portion of the Temple contains a crypt or undercroft, adapted to the slope of the hill.

The hall is six French mètres and twenty centimètres (twenty English feet) in length, by five mètres eighty

centimètres in breadth (seventeen English feet); the walls are the *opus quadratum*, in good preservation. Fragments of capitals and portions of bas reliefs were found in this hall, also different Roman coins, and medals of bronze, and a votive inscription, hereafter to be described.

Encouraged by these discoveries the work of uncovering was continued with energy. A stair had apparently been carried along the wall of the hall, and led to the level of the entrance of the upper portion of the Temple, which had been totally demolished, and the debris of which had filled the lower portions.

The entrance to the upper building was through a doorway by which a hall of similar construction to the lower one was entered.

The condition of the ruins, as seen at present, make it very difficult to realize the exact arrangements of the whole, and more architectural knowledge than I can claim, to re-arrange the principal parts. The space of ground covered is very considerable. It seemed to me nearly an acre or more, and that the Temple was in stages suited to the form of the hill. Passages and water-courses have been found, and what may have been a cistern to supply water to the Temple,—which must have been stored for use, as there is no spring,—(see Report of Excavations).

On the summit of the mountain, or it may be on the apex of the building itself, stood the famous Statue of the Gallic Mercury, recorded by Pliny,<sup>1</sup> and stated by him to have been the work of Zenodorus, who afterwards made the colossal Statue of the Emperor Nero, for his Golden House at Rome.

How and when this Temple was destroyed remains a mystery—it can only have been by great force, and with mechanical appliances. It is not the work of time and gradual decay, but of violence of no ordinary kind.

<sup>1</sup> Pliny Lib ; xxxiv. cap. vii.

Verum omnem amplitudinem Statuarum ejus generis vicit ætate nostra Zenodorus, *Mercurio* facto in Civitate Gallicæ Arvernæ per annos decem H.S. CCCC Manipretio.

Postquam satis ibi artem approbaverat, Romam accitus est Nerone ubi destinatum illius principis Simulacrum Colossum fecit CX pedum longitudine, quidicatus *Solis* venerationi est, damna-

tis Sceleribus illius Principis.

Statuam Arvernorum cum faceret, Provinciæ Vibio Avito presidente, duo pocula Calamidis manu cælata, quæ Cassio Syllano avunculo ejus preceptori suo Germanicus Cæsar adamata donaverat æmulatus est ut vix ulla differentia esset artis quantoque major in Zenodoro præstantia fuit tanto magis deprehendi æris obliteratio potest.

Only remnants of inscribed stones have been found among the ruins, which have been most carefully searched. Only one perfect inscription exists and this is the small bronze tablet already mentioned, not above 3 inches long, by an inch and a half in breadth. It is a votive dedication to the Divinity of the Emperor, and the Gallic Mercury.

NVM. AVG.  
ET DEO MERCVRI  
DVMIATI  
MATVTINIVS  
VICTORINVS  
D D

"To the Divinity of the Augustus (or of the Emperors) (as the word is contracted), and to the god Mercury Dumiatius, Matutinius Victorinus dedicates this," or has dedicated this.

We learn from this Tablet happily preserved, the title of Mercury, viz., "Dumiatius," that is, the local divinity or "Mercury of the Dome," as it is now called.

The title of Mercury "Dumiatius" seems to be taken from the *thicket* or forest which must have belted the mountain in former ages, and which still remains to a considerable extent, and through which you pass in ascending the lower portion of the mountain.

The finding of this "plaque" or tablet, helps us to interpret the only other inscription which has been found, a few letters or endings of words only remaining. It is as follows:—

NO.  
CIVES.  
TIATOR or NEGOTIATORES

which has been thus conjecturally supplied

[MERCVRIO AVER]NO  
CIVES  
[NEGOTIA]TOR[ES]

To the Auvernian Mercury, Citizens, Merchants.

Cæsar in the 6th Book of the Commentaries speaking of the Gauls, says:—

Deum Maxime Mercurium colunt, hujus sunt plurima simulacra, hunc omnium inventorem artium ferunt, hunc Viarum atque Itinerum ducem, hunc ad quæstus pucuniæ mercaturasque habere vim maximam arbitranter."

It is very probable therefore that this was a dedication to Mercury, and that the two letters of the first line are the ending of his Title *Avernus*.

The letters of the last line form no doubt part of the word NEGOTIATOIRES, and seem to shew that the merchants on their way to Cleremont, the ancient Augustonemetum, stopped to make their offerings to the god under whose supervision their calling was especially placed. Ovid in the 5th Book of the Fasti says :—

“Te quicumque suas profituntur vendere merces  
Thure dato, tribuas ut sibi lucra rogant,

Huc tenit incinctus tunicam mercator, et urna  
Purus suffita, quam ferat, haurit aquam,  
Uda fit hinc laurus, lauro spargentur ab uda  
Omnia, quæ dominos sunt habitura novos.”

The same custom which prevailed in Rome, no doubt prevailed in a province which had become completely Romanized, and adopted Roman manners and customs. Many articles of manufacture in bronze and iron have been found, which are carefully preserved at Cleremont, as the heads of lances or javelins, the iron head of a pic-axe, portions of an iron chain, fragments of wall-plaster, and of mosaic patterns in red and green porphyry of Numidia. Six medals, more or less injured, have been found, one a large bronze of Marcus Aurelius, another large bronze, enclosed in a vessel of green malachite, a Consular denarius of the Porcian family, and some others. That of Marcus Aurelius seems to be the latest date.

Fragments of pottery for daily use have been found, and also of vases of the red lustrous ware, and fragments of a votive metallic vase, the cover of which has upon it graffiti, in which can be traced the letters R and N.

Fragments of *leaden sheets*, with which the Temple seems to have been covered, have also been found, which serve to verify the statement of Gregory of Tours.

It would be tedious to attempt to describe the articles which are now to be seen in the cases of the Museum of Cleremont, but a small fragment of white Carara marble, having on it part of the word M...CVRIO, must not be passed over. The complete destruction of nearly every lettered fragment leads to the idea that this was *intentional*, and the name of the Temple and its presiding Divinity intended to be blotted out. When did this come to pass, and by whom was it effected?



The history of the Franks by Gregory of Tours, is, as far as I know, our only available source for information, but before entering upon this subject, something ought to be said about the statue of the Gallic Mercury made by Zenodorus for "City of the Arvernian Gauls." This was in the reign of the Emperor Nero, who having heard of the fame of this celebrated statue, sent for Zenodorus to Rome, who there executed the colossal statue of that prince, which was placed in his Golden House. This statue was after the death of Nero dedicated to the Sun, and in Pliny's time was an object of worship. The height was 110 feet.

The one executed by the sculptor Zenodorus for the Auvernian Temple of Mercury, is stated to have cost 400,000 sesterces, or 85,000 French francs, or about £3,400 English, and is said to have occupied him ten years in completion. (See Pliny's N.H.) Zenodorus must have been in Rome sometime between A.D. 54 and 68, and therefore the Gallic Mercury was executed previous to A.D. 54. As an artist Zenodorus is declared by Pliny not to have been inferior to the best Greek sculptors.

From Gregory of Tours<sup>1</sup> we learn that *Wasso* or *Vasso*, was the name of the Gaulish Mercury, and worshipped by the Gauls under that name, and, he tells us that the destruction of his temple was the work of Chrocus, King of the Vandals, about the reign of Valerian and Gallienus.

"At that time (he says) or about that epoch the King of the Allemanni over-ran Gaul at the head of an army. He was a man of extreme daring, and influenced by the

<sup>1</sup> Extract from S. Gregor : Epis : Turo-  
nensis Historia Francorum, Lib : 1 ; xxx.  
[Printed at Lutetiæ Parisiorum  
MDCXCIX

by Franciscus Maguet.]

"Vigesimo Sept<sup>o</sup> loco, Valerianus et Gallienus Rom. Imperium sunt adepti, qui gravem contra Christianos persecutionem suo tempore commoverunt. Tunc Roman Cornelius, Cyprianus Carthaginem felici Sanguine illustrarunt. Horum tempore \* et Chrocus ille Alamannorum rex commoto exercitu Gallias pervagavit. Hic autem Chrocus multas adrogantias ferret fuisse, qui cum nonnulla inique gessisset, per consilium, ut aiunt, matris

iniquæ, collectam, (ut diximus) Alamannorum gentem universas Gallias pervagatur Cunctasque Ædes quæ antiquitus fabricatæ fuerunt a fundamentis subvertit.

Veniens vero Avernos, delubrum illud, quod Gallica lingua 'Vasso,' Galatæ vocant, incendit, diruit, atque subvertit. Miro cum opere factum fuit atque firmatum, cujus paries duplex erat, ab intus enim de minuto lapide, a foris vero quadris sculptis fabricatum fuit. Habuit enim paries ille crassitudinem pedes triginta. Intrinsicus vero marmore ac musivo variatum erat. Pavimentum quoque Ædis marmore stratum, desuper vero plumbo tectum."

\* Chroci irruptionem alii Sæculi quinti initio consignant.

counsels of his mother, who was of a fierce and cruel nature. He over-ran Gaul and destroyed every-where, even to their foundations, the noble buildings which had been the work of preceding ages. Cleremont did not escape, being burned by him and the Temple of the Gauls dedicated to Wasso, a monument of wonderful solidity was overthrown." Gregory says the walls were of two kinds of masonry, the interior being constructed of small stones, and the exterior of blocks of large size, squared and well cut. This is what is now found in the ruins that remain. Also marbles and mosaics—Gregory tells us—covered the interior walls. Plenty of fragments of these are found. The pavement was of marble, and the roof was covered with lead.<sup>1</sup> (See Gregory of Tours Sec. 1, chap iii).

<sup>1</sup> Report of Commission to the Council General of the Puy de Dome.

"In July, 1873, at the first excavations they found that all the upper part of the edifice had been thrown over, the ruins of which covered the ground. The grand staircase of the principle façade, appeared under the rubbish.

"They immediately applied themselves to reconnoitre and to determine the extent of the edifice, they cleared the façade composed of beautiful cut stone carefully worked, with masonry intervening.

This extended over 40 metres, (131·24 Engl. ft.) in length, but at that distance it inclined slightly towards the north-west; and they found in the middle of the irregular substructions, which they followed over a length of nearly 20 metres (65·618 English feet)—forming probably part of the dependencies of the building—and three sarcophagi, one of which was in place. Some beautiful hollowed or scooped out freestone, indicated they were on the conduit of the great cistern, a necessary adjunct of an edifice like this constructed on a mountain completely deprived of spring water; but time failed to discover the site, and the arrival of the bad season caused the researches to be broken off.

In 1874, the committee decided to concentrate their researches on the point where they could penetrate, following the best conditions, into the interior of the edifice.

The indication of a staircase found at the foot of the lateral façade, showed moreover, that an access was to be found on that side. These marks were followed

and they found under the clearings, a series of stairs, of ornamental construction, with intermediate landings, and slabs of large stones, ranged in order along the lateral façade.

These steps they found led to a window, the right hand staples of which were in place, and very well preserved.

They began at once to penetrate into the room to which this window must have belonged. The rubbish rose to a height of 5 or 6 metres (16 to 19 Engl. ft.) and when cleared away shewed that this hall had been a sort of crypt, or "hypogæe," like many edifices built upon a sloping ground. The hall was 6 m. 20 c. in length, (about 20 Engl. ft.) by 5 m. 80 c. in width, (about 16 ft.) the partition walls being covered with an "opus quadratum" beautifully preserved in many parts; and they found in the clearings numerous pieces of fine marbles, fragments of capitals, and bas reliefs.

"They found besides some medals, and fragments of bronze, amongst which a singular votive inscription, a beautiful epigraph of which we will presently speak.

"These discoveries were a great encouragement for the continuation of the work, which was pursued so actively that the clearings were carried off, and precautions were taken to avoid accidents, and insure the preservation of precious objects.

"A staircase had been carried to all appearance along the partition wall of the hall which should lead to the level of the porch of the upper temple, demolished by the barbarians, the ruins of which covered the lower side. The same par-

I have looked in vain to English writers for any account of this interesting Temple, on its discovery in 1873. Murray's handbook for travellers in France, part II. (1876) makes only this slight mention of it, viz., that in preparing the foundations of the observatory, "the massive remains of a large Gallo-Roman Temple dedicated to Mercury, were discovered" Mr. Freeman in his paper, (*Archæological Journal*, vol. xlv, p. 311.) on "Valentia Segellaunorum," making mention of the *taurobolium* observes that, "it has not the same kind of interest as the Celtic deity whose name, or the name of whose temple Gregory of Tours has preserved on the top of the Puy de Dôme." These are the only notices I have found, but the subject has had ample attention paid to it by the French savans of Cleremont, and a most interesting account, to which I have been much indebted, has been published by M. Tillion, who has brought together matter of much interest in a popular form. It would not be well to quit this subject without some mention of the observatory, very near the ruin, the building of which gave rise to the discovery. It is well suited for barometrical observations, and it was here that Mons. Paschal, the philosopher and experimentalist, a native of Cleremont, made his experiments, which have produced very important results.

The walk round the parapet of the circular building, gives a wonderful prospect of all the volcanic region of the Auvergne, and by the aid of a telescope placed on the battlement, you can bring distant objects close to the eye. From hence you not only overlook Cleremont and its surroundings, but you can see the hill on which stood the Gaulish City of Gergovia which was besieged by Julius Cæsar, and so nobly defended by Vercingetorix, and you can almost trace the position of Cæsar's forces, while besieging the town.

The geographer Strabo tells us of the Averni, that their capital was Nemossus, which has been supposed to

have or porch of this hall had another door by which access was given into another room adjoining the preceding one, and where they found a particular arrangement consisting of many semi-circular apses constructed in worked stone called in the French Domite.

A gallery projected over the lower wall similarly covered with the "opus quad-

ratum," the circulation there was easy and commanded the seats. A fourth hemicycle was found 10th October, and they discovered three days after a seat belonging to a fifth exedra. This hall of such curious arrangement extended without doubt to the foundation or bottom of the building.



be represented by the town of Cleremont, about eight miles from the summit of the Puy de Dôme, and mentions the great power of this people, and their frequent wars with the Romans, when they could bring as many as 200,000 men, and even larger numbers into the field. They had brought an army of 200,000 men against Maximus Æmilianus, and the same number against Domitius Ænobarbus. Their battles with Cæsar took place, one at Gergovia, about six miles from Cleremont, situated on a lofty hill, and the birth place of their Chief Vercingetorix, the other, near to Alesia, a city of the Mandubii, who border on the Arverni. The Arverni extended their dominion as far as Narbonne, and the borders of Marseilles. When Gaul became a Roman province, and the inhabitants adopted Roman manners and customs, and the resources of the country were increased under Roman management, the population could hardly have been less than in its semi-barbarous state. It was evidently under Roman tuition that the Temple of the Gallic Mercury was built, and the ruins of this temple and the remains found there, seem to show that the "Galli" were no inapt pupils under Roman tuition. The Romans had remained masters of Gaul for 538 years, and the language of the Galli had been entirely modified, and changed by the introduction of Latin, which remains to this day a very large ingredient in the modern French. The introduction of Christianity toward the end of the third century, eventually led to the destruction of Paganism. St. Austremoine is said to have been the apostle of Auvergne, and converted a senator named Cassius, of the town of the Arverni, and afterwards also the Chief Priest of the Temple of Wasso, called Victorinus, which must have been before the destruction of the Temple itself. These are the legendary stories contained in the history of the Saints of Auvergne. It is not easy at this remote date to test their accuracy, but a grand and lasting monument of their work remains not only in the noble Lombardic Church of Notre Dame du Port, at Cleremont, where Peter the hermit preached the first crusade, but in the Grand Cathedral which crowns so majestically the City of Cleremont.