

FURTHER DISCOVERIES IN THE FORUM ROMANUM.

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I. THE TRIBUNAL OF AURELIUS.

The Steps or Tribunal Aurelius were erected by the Consul C. Aurelius Cotta, 75 B.C., when Lucius Quintus was Tribune of the people. Cicero refers to it several times :

Those steps of Aurelius, which were new at that time, appeared as if they had been built on purpose for a theatre, for the display of that edifice. *Pro Cleuntio*, 34. Delivered in 66 B.C.

And this, forsooth, is the reason why this cause is pleaded at the Steps of Aurelius. *Pro Flacco*, 28. 58 B.C.

In the presence and sight of these same consuls (L. Calpurnius Piso and A. Gabinius, 57 B.C.) a levy of slaves was held before the Tribunal of Aurelius, under the pretence of filling up the Guilds. *Pro P. Sertio*, 15.

After I had seen men openly enrolled and registered in the Centuries at the Tribunal of Aurelius. (Second oration after his return, 5 Sept. 6/57 B.C.)

When in the Aurelian tribunal you (Clodius) were openly enrolling not only freemen but slaves also, got together out of all the streets of the city. *Pro Domo*, 21.

In front of the Tribunal of Aurelius . . . a levy of slaves was held. Arms were placed in the Temple of Castor by that robber (Clodius) while you (Piso) were looking on. *Contra L. Pisonem*, 5. Delivered 54 B.C.

When Cicero, writing to his brother (*Letters* 2, 3) says :

On the eleventh of February I made a speech in defence of Bestia, who was accused of corruption before Cnæus Domitius the prætor, in the middle of the Forum, in the presence of a vast crowd of people, he is not referring to the Tribunal of Aurelius, which was not existing in 100 B.C. when C. D. Calvinus was prætor, but to the Prætor's Tribunal at the west end of the Forum under the Temple of Saturn, where its eight supporting arches exist. Cicero's phrase, "in medio foro," which he often uses (*e.g.*, *Letters Ad Att.*, 4, 6, 8), must not be taken literally, it is a figure of speech. The Basilica.

Aemilia was on the north side, and the Prætor's tribunal at the west end of the open space of the Forum; neither are "in foro medio," though both are so spoken of.

Close up to the east side of the second transverse underground corridor, at the rear of the third honorary base on the Sacra Via, counting from the Vicus Tuscus end, a large platform composed of concrete made with lava was discovered in November, 1905, see plan Fig. 1;

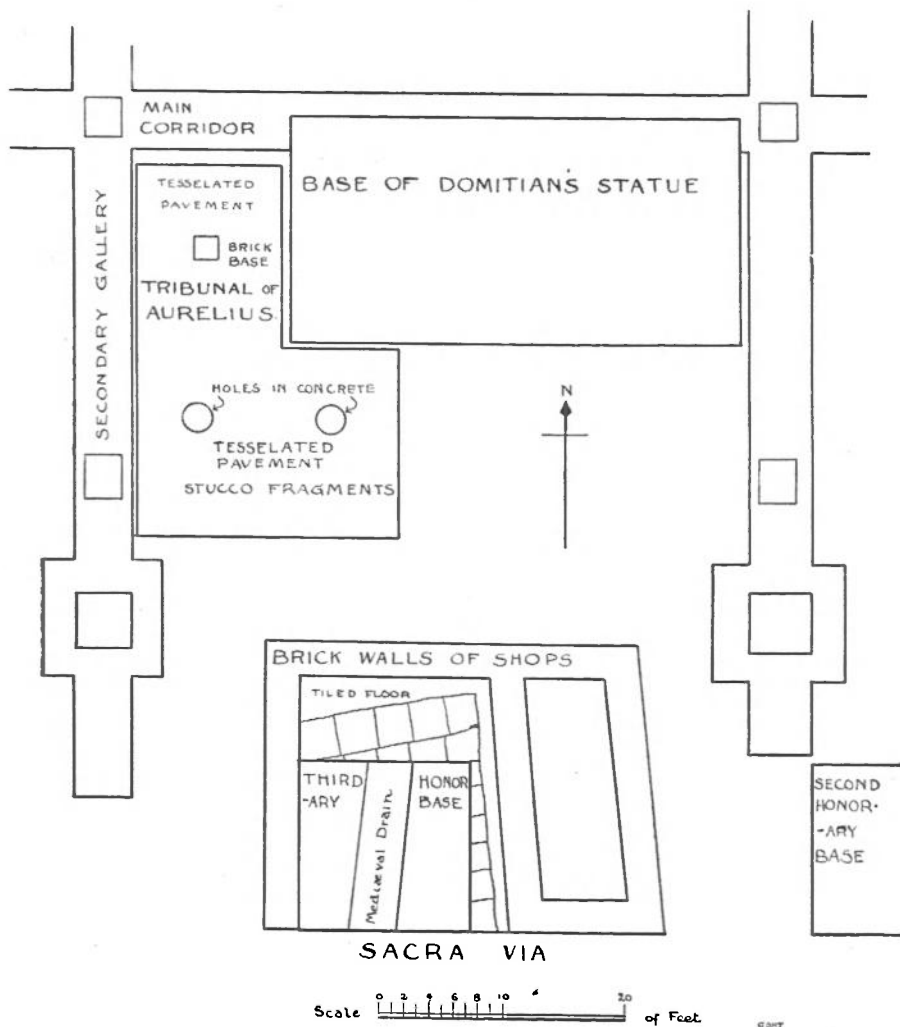


FIG. 1.—FORUM ROMANUM. PLAN OF THE TRIBUNAL OF AURELIUS AND THE OLD SHOPS.

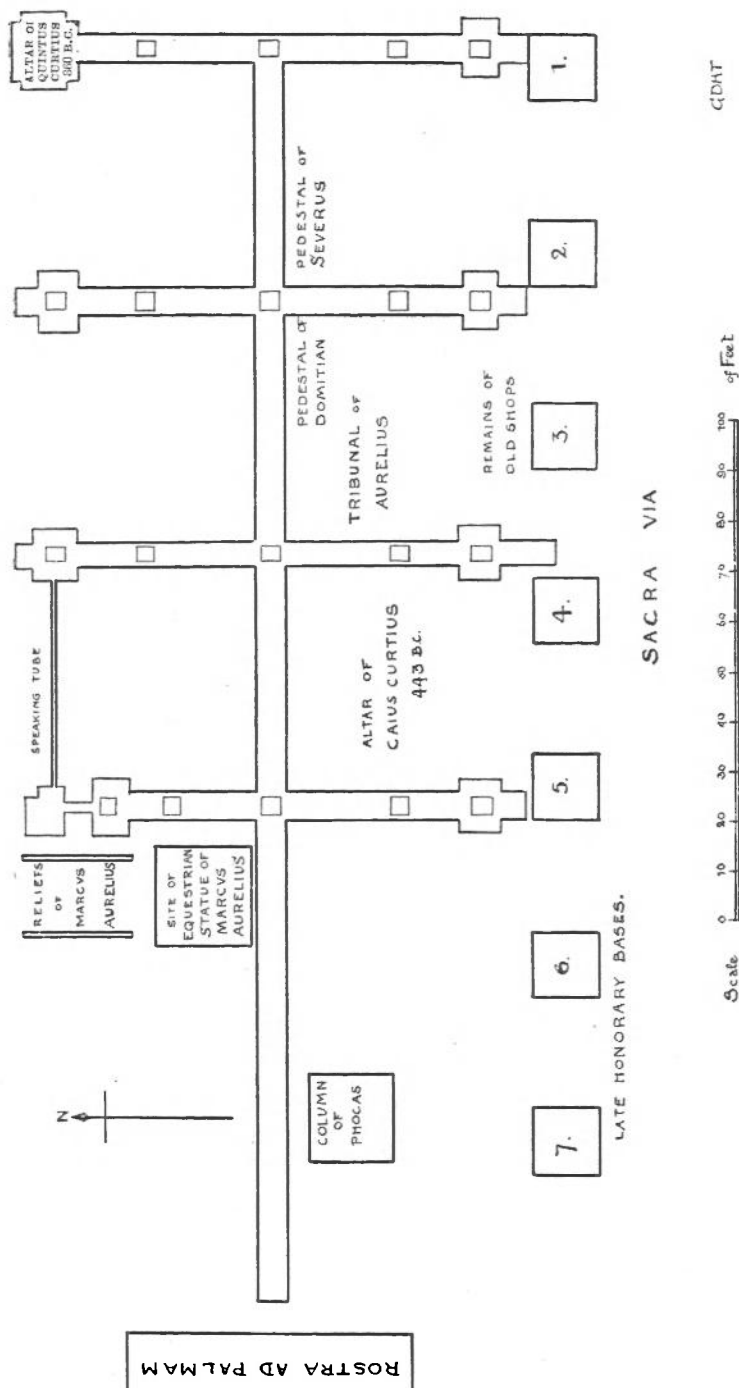


FIG. 2.—FORUM ROMANUM. PLAN OF SUBTERRANEAN CORRIDORS.

it is 31 feet long, north to south, by 21 feet wide. This I believe to be the remains of the Steps or Tribunal of Aurelius erected in 75 B.C. (*Cicero pro Cleuntio* 34). It was probably used as a grand stand for the officials when the games were exhibited in the Forum. It may fairly be described as "in medio foro," and it is in the best position for such a stand. A portion of the north and east sides, 10 feet by 15 feet, was cut away to make room for the base of Domitian's statue, which is one foot lower in level, so that it cannot be later than A.D. 84; and it is evident from Statius that the space to the west behind the statue was open as far back as the Temples of Concord and Vespasian.

Remains of stucco ornamentations, tessellated pavement and square brick tiles show early imperial work. It is only 14 inches above the level of Caesar's time. A small piece of a marble cornice of the third century was also found, but it apparently had nothing to do with the platform.

Under the third honorary base and between it and the second one some brick foundations have been uncovered and supposed to be the support of the steps leading on to the platform, but they are really remains of the row of seven shops (*tabernae veteres*) that once occupied the south side of the Forum. (*Livy*, 26, 27; 27, 11. *Cicero*, *Acad.* 4, 22.)

II. SUBTERRANEAN CORRIDORS.

Before the amphitheatres were built it was the custom to give shows and amusements in the open part of the Forum Romanum.

It is recorded that in this same year (B.C. 208) the Comitium was covered (with an awning) and the Roman games repeated once. *Livy*, 27, 36.

About B.C. 160 :

C. Tarentius Lucanus exhibited thirty pairs of gladiators in the Forum for three consecutive days. *Pliny*, 35, 33.

Vitruvius thus alludes to the preparations necessary :

Nor is this an evil (contractors' extras) which occurs in buildings alone, but also in shows of gladiators in the Forum, and in the scenes of plays exhibited by the magistrates, in which neither delay or

hindrance is admitted, since there is a necessity for their being completed by a certain time. Thus the seats for viewing the shows, the machinery for drawing the awning and the contrivances for shifting the scenes must all be prepared by a given day, that the people may not be disappointed. And in the preparation of all these much readiness and profound thought must be exercised, because they cannot be executed without machinery and the application of varied and extensive studies. (*Introduction to Book X.*)

In 122 B.C. :

There was a show of gladiators to be exhibited to the people in the Forum, and most of the magistrates had caused seats to be erected round the Forum in order to let them out for hire. Caius Gracchus insisted that they should be taken down, that the poor might see the exhibition without paying for it. As none of them regarded his orders, he waited till the night preceding the show, and then went with his own workmen and demolished the seats. *Plutarch, C. Gracchus 12.*

Cicero refers to the games and to the balconies overlooking the Forum :

At the exhibition of the gladiatorial games, the gift of Scipio, worthy both of him and of Quintus Metellus in whose honour they were given. (25 B.C.) And they were a spectacle of that sort which is attended by immense numbers and by every class of men, and with which the multitude is delighted above all things. . . . So great is the vehement applause by all at the spectacle, all the way from the Capitol as much as at the lattices of the Forum. *Pro. P. Sextio, 58.*

Caesar, when Ædile exhibited 320 pairs of gladiators. *Plutarch.*

This was in 65 B.C. :

A fight of gladiators, but with fewer pairs of combatants than he had intended. *Suetonius, Caesar, 10.*

In 51 B.C. :

He promised the people a public entertainment of gladiators. *Suetonius, Caesar, 26.*

In July 46 :

Caesar, when dictator, covered with a linen awning the whole of the Roman Forum, as well as the Sacred Way, from his own house (which was on the Sacra Via) as far as the Clivus Capitolinus, a sight, it is said, more wonderful even than the show of gladiators which he then exhibited. *Pliny, 19, 6.*

Single men to single men, as was the custom of the Romans in the Forum. *Dion Cassius, 43, 23.*

In the conflict of gladiators presented in the Forum, Furius Septimus, a man of prætorian family, entered the lists as a combatant, as did also Quintus Calpenus, formerly a senator, and a pleader of causes. *Suetonius, Caesar, 39.*

In 443 B.C. :

Caius Curtius the consul erected an altar in the open part of the Forum where a thunderbolt had fallen. *Varro L.L.* v, 150.

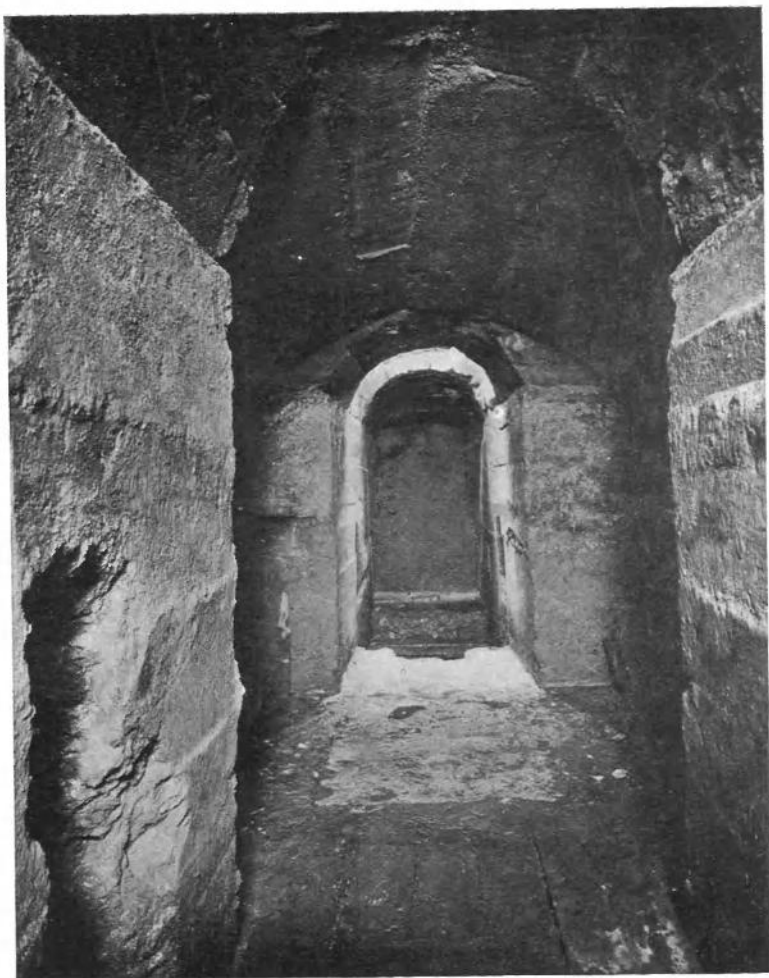
Remains of this altar were discovered on April 15, 1904 :

The altar that once stood there (in the Curtian lake) was afterwards removed by order of the deified Julius Caesar, upon the occasion of the last spectacle of gladiatorial combats which he gave in the Forum. *Pliny*, 15, 20. This, however, may have reference to the altar erected to Marcus Quintus Curtius, 360 B.C.

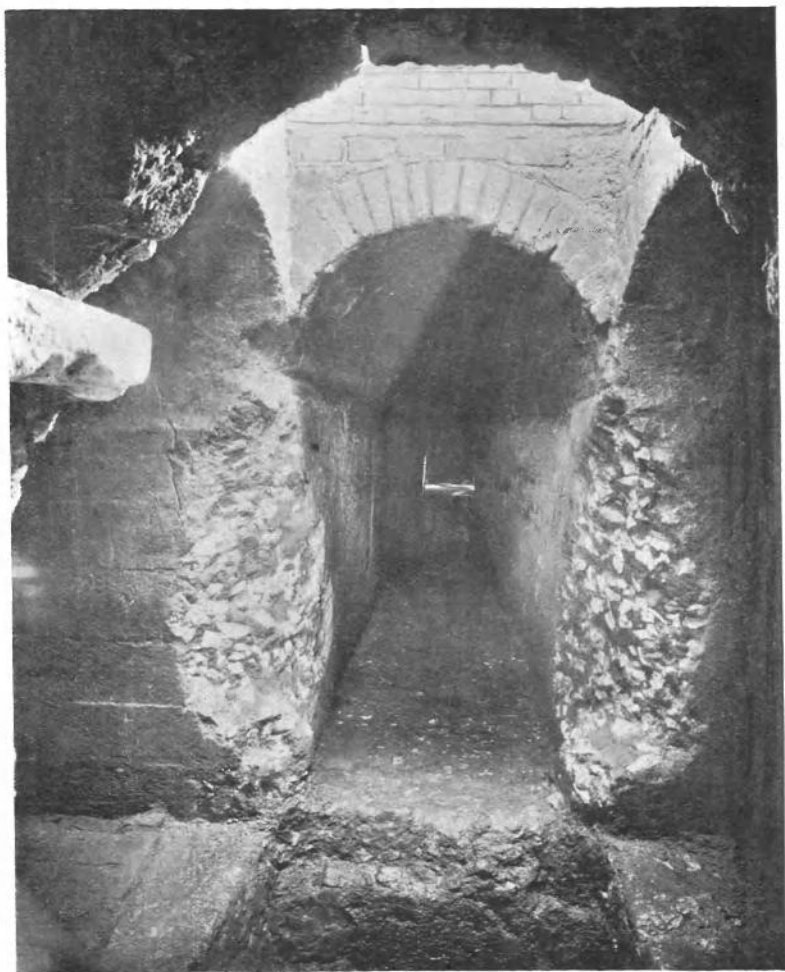
The last of these spectacles given in the Forum in the time of Augustus is described by Strabo :

We saw Selurus, quite recently, during the time we were in Rome, torn to pieces by wild beasts in the Forum, after a contest of gladiators. He had been set upon an elevation made to represent Mount Ætna, which being suddenly unfastened and falling, he was precipitated amongst certain cages of wild beasts which had been slightly constructed under the platform for the occasion. *Strabo*, 6, 2, 6.

In 1902 a series of underground corridors (see plan, figs. 1 and 2, and Plates I and II) were discovered under the travertine pavement of the open area of the Forum Romanum which we may assume were for the gladiators and animals when games were exhibited in the Forum, most probably built by Julius Caesar in his Ædileship 65 B.C.; and that the twelve openings were for the *pegmata* or lifts for sending the men and beasts up on to the surface used as an arena. It seems strange that they are not mentioned by any of the classical authors. The main gallery begins some 26 feet west of the Column of Phocas, and runs down to the remains of the Court of the Tresviri Capitaes, the whole length of the open space 261 feet from west to east. The sides are built with concrete composed of small pieces of lava and travertine, and the vault is formed with small blocks of tufa, like our English bricks in shape ; it is 10 feet high and 5 feet wide. After a course of 94 feet it is crossed by another corridor running north to south, then by three others parallel, having an intervening space of 49 feet between them. At 1 foot 10 inches under the travertine pavement of Septimus Severus' level is the republican pavement with twelve manholes, 4 feet east to west, 3 feet 10 inches north to south, three in the vault of each transverse gallery, which opens into



UNDERGROUND CORRIDOR WITH CHAMBER FOR WINDLASS.



UNDERGROUND CORRIDOR WITH OPENING FOR LIFT.

chambers about 9 feet square. In the centre of the floors are blocks of travertine with holes in the middle, in which worked a windlass, similar to those at the Colosseum. In the north chamber of the first or west cross passage, which is exactly under the east side of reliefs of Marcus Aurelius, is a speaking tube communicating with the corresponding chamber in the next gallery to the east.

The main gallery, and the third cross one, with its central lift-hole, are blocked up with the concrete pedestal of Domitian's statue; thus these corridors must be older than A.D. 84.

III. A CAPSTAN OR WINDLASS.

On the north side of the fourth honorary base on the Sacra Via, 12 feet below the level, on the south side of the Curtian altar, the remains of a capstan or windlass was discovered on June 12, 1904.

A Capstan or windlass is a round kind of machine of stout and thick and also fruitful wood, like a sow surrounded by pigs, and so easily revolving draws the rope. The stars from which the rain falls (Hyades) are called by the same name, which otherwise are named Hydas by the Greeks; *vādas* in our opinion relates to pigs, in the Latin way of talking they will have said she pigs.

Thus Festus likens the windlass to a sow and the bars to her young to account for the Latin name. The Italian seems to confound the Hyades with the Haedi.

The capstan found consists of the cone with eight bars and the circular disk in which it revolved, composed of oak, elm and pine, all fruit-bearing trees, agreeing with Festus. Perhaps this was one of the machines used in the games of Caesar for the lifts below the area of the Forum.

The skeleton of a woman with a child in her arms was found close by the capstan, a victim probably either of the games, or of the fight over the Sabine women.