

ARCHÆOLOGIA ÆLIANA.

INSCRIPTIONS IN CHILLINGHAM CASTLE.

THE two curious Inscriptions which I bring before the notice of this Society are to be seen in Chillingham Castle, engraved on tablets on either side of an old-fashioned and lofty chimney-breast which formerly stood in the spacious entrance-hall. This hall is now used as the dining-room, and the old chimneypiece has been replaced by two handsome marble chimneypieces, which once adorned the mansion of Wanstead House.

The date of the Inscriptions is not accurately known; and certain conjectures which I had formed of the author have been proved so improbable by the researches of the Rev. Dr. Raine, in a Paper read to the Antiquarian Society at its anniversary meeting on the 1st of February, 1858, that I dismiss them altogether from the present treatise.

This subject may perhaps not be strictly antiquarian in its nature. But at least the matter belongs to the history of the county of Northumberland; and an attempt to explain the meaning of a tablet so enigmatical that the sense of it has been altogether lost, can hardly fail to possess some degree of interest to this Society.

In the following pages will be found—

First, the Inscriptions.

Secondly, the literal Translations.

Lastly, the Comments by which I endeavour to explain the difficulties and obscurities of the text.

It is to be borne in mind, that in cutting the stone which forms one of the corner-stones or spandrils to the arch of the chimney, a live toad is reported to have been found in a small cavity still to be seen in the solid rock, and this remarkable circumstance forms the thesis of Inscription No. 1.

It must be observed, that I take the Inscriptions as I find them, not venturing to make the smallest emendation, though amendments may be suggested in more than one passage. These, however, would make no difference in the general interpretation of the tablets.

INSCRIPTION No. 1.

Heus, Stagyrita!
 Tuo si velis quid mirabilius Euripo,
 Huc venito!
 Fluant refluxantque maria, et sit lunaticus,
 Qui suo Triviam spoliât honore.
 En, tibi novi quid, quod non portat Africa,
 Nec sabulosus¹ Nilus arenis,
 Ignem flammamque puram,
 Aurâ tamen vitali cassam.
 Cæco é recessu scissi quot² vides saxi,
 Obstetricis lucem lithotomi dedere manus
 Vivo bufoni.

TRANSLATION OF THE SAME.

Ho, Stagyrite!
 If you wish something more wonderful than your own Euripus,
 Come hither!
 Let the tides flow and ebb, and be he lunatic
 Who robs Trivia of her (due) honour.
 Lo, for you something novel, which Africa bears not,
 Nor Nile on his sandy shores.
 (To wit), fire and pure flame,
 Yet without vital air.
 Out of the dark recess of the split rock,
 As much as you see, the hands
 Of the midwife stonecutter gave light
 To a living toad.

NOTES TO INSCRIPTION No. 1.

Stagyrite, Aristotle, the famous philosopher and naturalist—so called from his birthplace Stagyræ, more properly Stagira, a city of Macedonia.
Euripus, a narrow strait dividing Eubœa from the mainland of Greece, now called the Strait of Egripo or Negropont, whose currents are so strong, that the tides were said to ebb and flow seven times a day.

Some ancient writers assert that Aristotle drowned himself from

¹ *Qu. fabulosus?*

² *Quod* were better Latin. I am not aware that *quot* is ever used in relation to the singular number.

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chagrin at not being able to discover the cause of so unusual a motion, but the story seems to want confirmation.

Trivia, a name for Diana, or "The Moon," whose statue used to be set up in "*Triviis*," or the highways where three roads met.

Thus Lucretius, Lib. 1, line 85.

Aulide quo pacto *Trivia* virginis aram
Iphianassai turpârunt sanguine fœdê
Ductores Danaum, delecti, prima virorum.

It is scarcely necessary to enquire further into the origin of this word *Trivia*. It may be because the moon was supposed to hold three courses in heaven, lengthways, breadthways, and upwards, or because this "*Diva Triformis*" was worshipped under three separate attributes, as shewn in the following couplet.

Terret, lustrat, agit, Proserpina, Luna, Diana,
Ima, superna, feras, sceptro, fulgore, sagittâ.

The phrase of robbing *Trivia* of her honour alludes to the theory of the moon's influence upon the tides, and the writer seems to insinuate, that the philosopher, in his ignorance of this principle, went mad, and thus committed the rash act of suicide.

Africa and the Nile are here alluded to because the former was believed by the ancients to abound in all sorts of marvellous productions.

'Αέι τι καὶνὸν φέρει ἡ Λιβύη.

Semper *aliquid novi* affert Africa—

and the Nile is said by Herodotus and Pliny to produce frogs and toads from the slime or sand deposited by its inundations.

The "fire and pure flame" mean here the caloric of vitality. Those who wish to make a further study of the connection which exists between the elements of fire and air may consult the ingenious speculations of *Aristotle in divers sections of his Second Book, **De Generatione et Corruptione*, wherein he treats of the four elements, and subsequently, in the First Book, **Meteorologicorum*, with which writings the author of the Inscription was doubtless familiar.

The meaning of the remainder is plain enough, and the cavity is still to be seen in that portion of the hewn stone which formerly formed part of the fireplace in the present dining-room of the Castle, then a spacious entrance-hall. This is quite within the recollection of the writer.

* *Note*, that these references are made in Latin, and not in Greek, to avoid a confusion of learned languages in a treatise of this nature.

INSCRIPTION No. 2.

Herois nobili nascitur in aulâ
 Plebeia dedecus philosophiæ.
 Suos hic non ridens atomos Democritus ;
 Hicque secunda jactet pro primis
 Triceps Agyrta.
 Centies oportet naviges Anticyram,
 Somnia si velis trutinare sanum
 Quotquot occurrunt.
 Citius occisos Themison ægrotos,
 Citius enumeret Hippiæ mœchos.
 Œdipum tibi præstare possum.
 Albæ nempe filium gallinæ,
 Testam hic videas, pullus unde siet,
 Dicet Harveius.

TRANSLATION.

In the noble hall of a hero is born
 (That which is) a disgrace to plebeian philosophy.
 Here let Democritus not laughing boast his atoms,
 And here let the "triceps agyrta"
 Boast his secondary deductions for first causes.
 A hundred times it behoves you to sail to Anticyra,
 If you wish in your sound mind to weigh
 Such dreams as many as occur.
 Sooner may Themison enumerate his slain patients,
 Sooner may Hippiæ count her unchaste lovers.
 I am able to supply to you an Œdipus:
 Here, forsooth, you may see a shell;
 The produce of a white hen—
 How a chicken shall be formed from it,
 Harvey will tell you.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

The solution of this Inscription is far more difficult and perplexing than the former. It is to be read in a double sense, literal and metaphorical. I propose to consider each in its turn.

In the first, or literal sense, we may infer one of two probabilities:— Either that a white hen had laid an egg in the entrance-hall, which accident gave birth to the train of thought expressed herein; or that the

learned author had been engaged in discourse with his noble host—"Herois nobili in aulâ"—upon the wonderful discoveries of the celebrated Dr. Harvey, which satisfactorily accounted for the phenomena of generation from the egg—phenomena which had been left totally unexplained by the atoms of Democritus or the logic of Aristotle.

After this exordium, I proceed to the further examination of this classical enigma.

"Plebeian philosophy" may be understood in the sense of mere vulgar philosophy, or as antithetical to the patrician hall of the hero.

"Plebei sunt omnes philosophi" is, I believe, a phrase of Cicero's, though I am unable to refer to it.

"Democritus" taught the atomic theory that all things were created from atoms, which Lucretius calls "*primordia rerum*." He was called the Laughing Philosopher, from laughing at the follies of mankind.

"Jactet" I have translated "boast," but the meanings of the word are various. In this sense Horace uses it—

Quamvis Pontica pinus
Sylvæ filia nobilis
Jactes et genus et nomen inutile.

Here it may also be used in the sense of promulgate, as "*jactare semina*," to sow:

"Triceps Agyrta."—This most puzzling expression alludes to Aristotle, who was the inventor of that form of reasoning, so much practised in the schools, called the syllogism, which consists of *three heads*, and may be defined as a formal conclusion from two premises. "Agyrta" is a noun of recent coinage, there being no such word in classical Latinity. It is derived from the Greek *Ἀγύρτης*, from the verb *Ἀγείρω*, to gather or collect. But Agyrta has a secondary meaning, to wit, a conjuror or juggler, from the crowds which such exhibitors collect about them. The form of a syllogism being thus comprised under three heads, the inventor of it is named "Triceps Agyrta," this three-headed conjuror or juggler. And the syllogistic form is indicated in the text by the words "*Secunda pro primis*." Whoever will take the trouble to refer to the pages of Aristotle's *Analytica*, Liber 1, "*De Ratione Conficiendorum Syllogismorum*," will see how much learned labour has been expended by the philosopher in framing all the various forms of logical demonstration, according to his favourite mode of argument. It is therefore scarcely possible to doubt that the phrase, "Triceps Agyrta" refers to Aristotle.

"Agyrta" may be found in an Addition to *Ainsworth's Latin Dictionary* (4to Ed.) among words which are thus described in the proœmium :—"Index vocum ab iis qui Latine scribere velint vitandarum—utpote quæ obsoletæ, vel dubiæ, vel corruptæ sunt, et prolapsæ Latinitatis."

"Anticyra" is the name of two towns and an island in the Grecian archipelago, famous for the growth of hellebore, which was supposed to be a cure for insanity. Anticyra is constantly alluded to by classical authors, three times by Horace in his Satires and his poem "*De Arte Poeticâ*," and once by Juvenal in Sat. XIII.

The phrase, "Naviget Anticyram" became a proverb, like our "Send him to Bedlam."

The meaning of the whole passage seems to be, that it is enough to drive a man mad if he set about studying all the dreams of false philosophy. "Somnia" is used in this sense by Lucretius (Book 1) in the following lines :—

"Quippe etenim quam multa tibi jam fingere possum
Somnia, quæ vitæ rationes vertere possunt
Fortunasque tuas omnes turbare timore."

The author may probably have had these three lines in his mind.

The two lines about "Themison" and "Hippia" refer to a passage in the Tenth Satire of Juvenal. The poet is speaking of the various disorders which afflict old age—

"Quorum si nomina quæras,
Promtius expediam, quot amaverit Hippia mœchos,
Quot Themison ægros autumnò occiderit uno,
Quot Basilus socios, quot circumscripserit Hirrus
Pupillos," &c., &c.

Themison was a famous physician, who is thus sarcastically treated. What Hippia was may be inferred from the text.

After all this *galimatias*, he now comes to his point. Having brought to scorn the atoms of Democritus, and the logic of Aristotle, behold, he says, an egg! Can you account for the mystery of the generation of a chicken by any such process of reasoning? No! but I can shew you the Œdipus who has solved the problem. Harvey shall tell you how the chicken will be formed and produced.

Harvey was the eminent philosopher and physiologist who first discovered the motion of the heart and the circulation of the blood. The

following extract from his Life, as given in the *National Cyclopædia*, more distinctly connects him with this Inscription. —

“WILLIAM HARVEY.—.....“He subsequently published a volume called *Exercitationes de Generatione*,” which contains a description of the organization of the common fowl, of the formation of the egg and its extrusion from the body, and the use and nature of its component parts, as well as the changes which it undergoes during the process of incubation.”

To this solution, given under a literal interpretation of the words, it may be objected, that it is hardly probable, that the two Inscriptions on the same tablet should be disconnected. They must rather be supposed to have reference to the same “Thesis,” to wit, the discovery of a live toad in a solid mass of rock.

Now the expression, “*Albæ filium gallinæ*,” which I have before interpreted literally, has likewise a metaphorical meaning applicable by a forced construction to the *receptacle* in the stone where the reptile was found.

“*Testa*” is a word of very various meanings—a pot of earthenware, a cask, and thence a casket or receptacle, and following out this meaning, a shell of an egg or a shell-fish.

The phrase “*Albæ filius gallinæ*,” means metaphorically “a lucky fellow,” a man born, as we say, “with a silver spoon in his mouth.” In this sense it is used by Juvenal, Sat. XIII., l. 141.

“Tu gallinæ filius albæ,
Nos viles pulli nati infelicibus ovīs?”

What was the origin of the metaphor I am unable to discover.

This “*testa*,” or stone, being hewn out of the quarry, and then dressed and set up as the corner-stone of a chimneypiece in a noble hall, may, by a forced construction, be termed a “lucky stone,” a “*gallinæ filius albæ*,” and thus a double meaning may be intended to run through the whole Inscription, by giving to the text either a literal or a metaphorical meaning.

It is even possible that a pun may have been intended upon the word “*pullus*,” which used substantively means a chicken or a young thing, used adjectively means “black”—“as black as a toad.” But this coincidence is probably accidental, the sense of the passage under either interpretation, literal or metaphorical, being quite perfect with the substantive meaning.

I conceive that I have thus succeeded, not only in interpreting the

true meaning of this curious Inscription, but have also given precise and accurate references to those passages in the works of the classical authors which were clearly familiar with the writer, whoever he may have been. And it has been a very interesting task to trace the somewhat intricate current through which his thoughts must have *meandered* while he was composing so enigmatical a tablet.

It is indeed wonderful to observe how great a range of thought and learning is brought within the compass of so short a composition. This fact can only be appreciated by those who have given themselves the trouble of pursuing the clue (when they have once found it) which is to guide them to the end of the labyrinth. The Latin may be faulty in some respects, partaking more of the phrases used in scholastic disputations than in pure classical Latinity; but we cannot deny to the author the possession of great ingenuity and no slight acquaintance with the works of many of the best classical writers.

RAVENSWORTH.