

## XX.—NEWLY DISCOVERED ROMAN INSCRIPTIONS.

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 BY DR. BRUCE.
 

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## 1.—ON A SMALL ROMAN ALTAR FROM MAGNA.

[Read on the 27th January, 1886.]

IF my wishes could be realized I should present to this Society, at each of its monthly meetings, a newly discovered Roman altar or inscription. Of late we have been pretty fortunate. At our last meeting, however, we had none; and on this our anniversary gathering I have only a little one to report. However, the weather has been very bad during the last few weeks, and that may have interfered with the work of discovery.



A little while ago, I received from our senior vice-president, Mr. Clayton, a paper impression of a small altar, which had been found by his drainers in the immediate vicinity of the station of MAGNA, the modern Carvoran, which has recently come into his possession. The altar is a rude one, and the letters of the inscription have the appearance of having been partially worn down by friction. Still, I think, they are legible. I have since seen the altar, and I now present a copy of the inscription as I read it, both on stone and paper.

The word DEO on the first line is plain, but what god was intended the remainder of the inscription failed to show me. The second line may be either FALIT or ALIT, for what seems to be an E or F at the beginning of the line may be only a chance stroke. I ransacked the lists of the gods of Greece and Rome and Roman Britain, to see if

there was any deity or genius whose name began with these letters, but I could find none. In my despair, I sent off the paper impression to our excellent friend and most skilful epigraphist, Professor Hübner, of Berlin. In the course of a few days I received from him a post card, in which, after kindly greetings on the occasion of the new-born year, and friendly messages to Mr. Clayton, he says, "The new little altar from MAGNA (may the soil of that new-bought place of antiquity give us some Mars Thingsus or the like again!) is curious. Is the E or F at the beginning of the second line a real letter? It seems to me different, not so deeply cut, much like a stroke which I see at the end of the first line after DEO. If so, I venture to read DEO||ALIT||I GAV||ROV||VOTV; that is *Deo Aliti Gauro votu*[m solvit]. Compare Ovid, *Metam.* II., p. 714—'Inde revertentes deus adspicit ales;' and Statius, *Thebados* IV., p. 605—'... quem jam deus ales averno reddiderat.' The 'deus ales,' the winged god, is Mercury. Gauro is, I think, the (probably Celtic) name of the dedicator."

So far Dr. Hübner. His reading is manifestly an ingenious one; and it is, so far as I can see, the true one. It would, however, be more satisfactory to me if Gauro, supposing him to be a native Briton and consequently not very familiar with the Roman mythology, had addressed the god in the usual manner MERCVRIO, rather than by the epithet ALITI.

I may also mention that the drainers at MAGNA have turned up the larger part of a male statue. The sculptors seem to have left it in a crude and unfinished state. The lower part of it has been broken off. It has been brought to Chesters. So far as I have been able to observe, there are no marks on it by means of which we can identify it with any deity.

## 2.—ON AN ALTAR FROM SOUTH SHIELDS.

AN altar to Æsculapius which is carved on all four sides. On the back is a garland, on the right hand side the *præfericulum* or pitcher used

in the sacrifice, and on the left the *patera* or dish on which the offering was laid. The inscription on the front is



D[EO] ESCVLAP[IO]  
P[VBLIVS] VIBOLEIVS  
SECVNDVS  
ARAM  
D[ONO] D[EDIT]

“To the god Æsculapius, Publius Viboleius Secundus presents as a gift this altar.” Dr. Hübner, to whom a paper impression of this altar was sent, observes that the spelling *Esculapio* for *Æsculapio* is rustic in its character but not uncommon, and that *Viboleius* is a rather scarce *nomen gentile*. Judging from the form of the letters, the scarcity of the name, and the simplicity of the whole dedication, he considers that this is one of the oldest epigraphical monuments found in South Shields,

and that it belongs to the second century, not later. The altar is now in the Free Library Museum at South Shields.

Altars to Æsculapius are not common in Britain. Of the few that have been found, two have inscriptions in Greek. One of these was found at Lanchester,\* the other at Maryport.† The worship of Æsculapius was introduced from Greece into Rome in the year B.C. 293. Livy (x., 47) tells us that “The many prosperous events of this year were scarcely sufficient to afford consolation for one calamity—a pestilence which afflicted both town and country, and caused a prodigious mortality. To discover what end or what remedy was appointed by the gods for that calamity, the books were consulted, and there it was found that Æsculapius must be brought to Rome from Epidaurus.” The principal seat of the worship of Æsculapius in Greece was Epidaurus. Greek priests may have been brought thence to conduct the worship of the deity in other places, hence the Greek inscriptions.

\* *Lapid. Sept.*, p. 361, No. 687.    † *Lapid. Sept.*, p. 445, No. 878.

In the Homeric poems Æsculapius does not appear to be considered as a divinity, but merely as a human being. Zeus killed Æsculapius with a flash of lightning, as he feared lest men might gradually contrive to escape death altogether; or, according to others, because Pluto had complained of Æsculapius diminishing the number of the dead too much. It is curious to find trade jealousies existing among the gods of Greece and Rome. But, on the request of Apollo, Zeus placed Æsculapius among the stars.\*

THE fragment of a slab found at Whitley Castle, a camp situated on the Maiden Way, about two miles north of Alston. The letters which remain may perhaps be thus expanded

. . . R]ESTITVT[VM] (?)

. . . [FVS]CO (?) LEG(ATO)

[AVGVSTI PR. PR. INSTANTE . . CON-  
SVLARI]S PR(OVINCIAE) BR(ITANNIAE)

The meaning of which seems to be:—

“A building restored under the superintendence of . . . Fuscus, imperial legate and proprætor . . . an officer of consular rank, of the Province of Britain.” The absence of names and of the larger part of the inscription prohibits further conjecture. In writing thus far, I have had the assistance of Dr. Hübner.



A votive ring of base silver from CILURNUM, inscribed on the bezel DN | EP which Mr. C. Roach Smith reads D[EO] NEP[TVNO].†



\* Smith's *Dictionary of Antiquities*.

† *Numismatic Chronicle*. Vol. V. (3rd Ser.), p. 253.