

LXXXV. *Extract of a Letter from Camillo Paderni, Keeper of the Museum Herculanum, to Tho. Holles, Esq; dated at Naples, April 27, 1754.*

Read June 13,  
1754. ONE reason for not answering your letter earlier has been the embarrassments, which I have had about the museum, especially in forming the place itself to a convenient shape for the things, which it is to contain. Till this was done, the whole was unavoidably in great confusion. I had the direction likewise of the people, who work'd under-ground, and of the several artists otherwise employ'd. Besides, I was desirous to send you the printed catalogue of the museum, which has long been order'd, yet cannot still be publish'd these three or four months. When it is out, I shall be at liberty to write more fully and freely than is at present permitted. However, I can now send you an account of the discoveries made of late, that is, within these twelve months, in the pretended city of Herculaneum. I say *pretended*, because it is my own opinion, that the place, where they have dug for some time past, and actually do now dig, is not Herculaneum, but a different place from it, tho' almost contiguous to it; as I could easily make appear, was I at liberty to write: But time will clear up this matter. My duty made it necessary for me to descend into it almost daily; and when my business was done, I always indulged my curiosity and genius in viewing and examining the several objects there. The place  
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where they are digging, at present, is under *Il Bosco di Sant' Agostino*, but a little distant from the royal palace at Portici. Its depth is 125 Neapolitan palms\*, one of which is more than the mercantile canna of Rome. All the buildings discover'd in this site are noble: Many of the pavements are of mosaic, variously and finely made; others are of different-colour'd marbles, dispos'd with a beautiful symmetry; and most of them are already taken up. In one of these buildings there has been found an entire library, compos'd of volumes of the Egyptian Papyrus, of which there have been taken out about 250; and the place is not yet clear'd or emptied, it having been deem'd necessary to erect props first, to keep the earth, which lies above it, from falling in upon it. These volumes of Papyrus consist of Latin and Greek manuscripts; but from their brittleness, occasion'd by the fire and time, it is not possible to unrol them, they being now decay'd, and rotten. His majesty however has done his part; having sent for a certain monk from Rome, who belong'd to the Vatican library; in hopes, by his means, to have unfolded them; but hitherto in vain.

Your servant Paderni alone can shew some fragments of several lines, and more than this, he is much afraid, will never be seen. Of these there are many in my custody, which I suppose you will have the pleasure of observing, in the intended catalogue. There have been found of those small tables, which they cover'd with wax and the *palimpseston*, and then

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wrote

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\* A Neapolitan palm is said to be 11 $\frac{3}{4}$  inches English.

wrote on them with the *stylus*: but all these are become a kind of cinder; and have likewise suffer'd by the damps; from both which circumstances they are now so tender, that they break with the touch.

In the same place there have been met with three small busts; one of Epicurus, another of Zeno, and the third of Humachus; with the names of each inscrib'd upon the basis, in Greek letters. A little distant from the preceding site has been discover'd another noble building, with a square court belonging to it; the inside of which, alone, has been hitherto examin'd. This square is form'd with fluted columns made of brick that was stucco'd. In the angles were four terms of marble, with busts upon them, in bronze, of the finest manner, having the name of the Greek workman upon one of them. In the centre, betwixt the terms, there was a small fountain, form'd by a vase shap'd like a cockle-shell, and supported by a small fluted column. There have been likewise found three other busts, large, and in bronze also, of the most excellent workmanship. Within these few days the following things have been taken out of the same site; to wit, a female statue, six palms high, perhaps a goddess, tho' without any attribute, and but of middling workmanship; two most beautiful candlesticks, six palms and an half high, exquisitely wrought in chas'd work; other candlesticks, much damag'd by the fire and time; many fragments in bronze, which, not having any particular merit, it is needless to describe, except two small figures of fawns, that are finely executed. In the same place was discover'd a large fountain, lin'd throughout with lead; round it were eleven heads of lionesses, out of which the water flow'd.

flow'd. Pipes of lead are very often met with ; and a day scarce pass'es, but something is brought to be deposited in my custody. The above is all I can write, at present, concerning our late discoveries. The museum goes on increasing greatly. Now there are in it two curule chairs, which are uniques ; these were in a chamber by themselves, and had been somewhat injur'd. One is simply of bronze, and the other of bronze, which had been gilt. I can assure you, that when, in the course of a few months, every thing is properly ranged and placed in this museum, it will be one of the finest in Europe ; as well for the singularity, as beauty, of its objects. Now, particularly, I wish you were here ; being thoroughly persuaded, that you would pass entire days with me in it, as several other of my friends have done, with the utmost satisfaction. If my time had not been so entirely taken up in putting the museum into some general order, I could easily have given your learned friend, Dr. Ward, the desir'd information about the antient weights and measures ; which particular things, however, are not yet distinctly methodiz'd. We have various measures, but without any marks upon them : By their form, they appear such, as are describ'd by Montfaucon, and others. We have, also, many weights of all sizes, with their several marks upon them, proper for scales ; and many steelyards, likewise, of all sizes, the links of which being broken, it will first be necessary to restore them, before any proofs can be made of them. I already conceive a high esteem for Mr. Stuart and Mr. Rivet, from the honour, which they have acquir'd to themselves by their celebrated undertaking. When they come hither,

ther, I shall endeavour to procure them subscribers to their work, and shew them every civility in my power.

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LXXXVI. *Experimental Examination of a white metallic Substance said to be found in the Gold Mines of the Spanish West-Indies, and there known by the Appellations of Platina, Platina di Pinto, Juan Blanca. By William Lewis, M. B. F. R. S.*

P A P E R I.

Read May 30, 1754.

*Experiment I.*

**T**HE substance brought into England under the name of *platina* appears a mixture of dissimilar particles.

The most conspicuous, and by far the largest part of the mixt, are, white, shining grains, of seemingly smooth surfaces, irregular figures, generally planes with the edges rounded off. Upon examining these with a microscope, the surface appear'd in some parts irregular; the prominencies smooth, bright, and shining; the cavities dark-colour'd and roughish. A few of them were attracted, tho' weakly, by a magnetic bar.

The grains above describ'd are the true *platina*. The heterogeneous matters intermingled among them, in the several parcels, were,