

its imaginary coat, is no other than platina still: and, which is of more extensive utility, to distinguish all the abuses, that may be made with this metal, and restore the gold, so debased, to its original purity and value.

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XXI. *An Account of the Temple of Serapis at Pozzuoli in the Kingdom of Naples: In a Letter to John Ward, LL. D. and R. S. Vice-Præs. by the Rev. John Nixon, M. A. F. R. S.*

S I R,

Read Mar. 17.  
1757. **B**EFORE we enter upon a more particular consideration of this noble piece of antiquity, it may not be improper to premise the general account (and indeed the only one I have met with yet published), which is given of it by Mess. Cochin and Bellicard, in a little (1) treatise printed at Paris in 1755. These gentlemen acquaint us, that in 1749 there were only three pillars of this building visible, and that they were buried half way within the ground: but that soon after, workmen being employed by order of the King of the Two Sicilies to dig at the place, they came to the pedestals of those pillars; and at length discovered the building to have been a temple, which

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(1) Observations sur les Antiquités d'Herculeaneum, &c. p. 82.

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(as it was judged by the principal (2) idol found there, and some other circumstances) was dedicated to Serapis. They tell us further, that many statues and vases of excellent workmanship had been taken out of the ruins; and that the whole temple was extremely magnificent, being built, or cased throughout, with marble, even to the parts appropriated to the meanest offices.

This account, tho' short, is yet sufficient to excite in the curious a desire to be more fully informed, both as to the ancient and modern state of this place. To gratify in some measure that desire is the purpose of the present letter.

In order to form any conjecture concerning the antiquity of the building before us, we must know, that the worship of Serapis, to whom it is supposed to have been consecrated, was not introduced at Rome till towards the end of the republic; and then tolerated in the suburbs only (3). However, at length he was allowed to have temples erected to him within the precincts of the city; chiefly by the authority of Vespasian, who was thought to have restored a blind man (4) to his sight at Alexandria by the aid and direction of this deity. And upon this account he continued to be held in high veneration by Titus and Domitian, the sons of that Emperor, as appears by their (5) stamping his

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(2) For a more particular account of this statue, now in the palace at Portici, I beg leave to refer you to a paper of mine read before the Royal Society on Feb. 24. last.

(3) Dio. L. xl.

(4) Suet. Vesp. c. 7.

(5) For authorities, see Middleton's *Germana Antiq. Mon.*  
p. 152.

image on the reverse of their coins. Now as it is reasonable to suppose, that the other cities of Italy followed the example of the metropolis in this instance, as well as, we find, they did in others of a similar nature; we may with some probability place the foundation of this temple at Pozzuoli somewhere within the period assigned above.

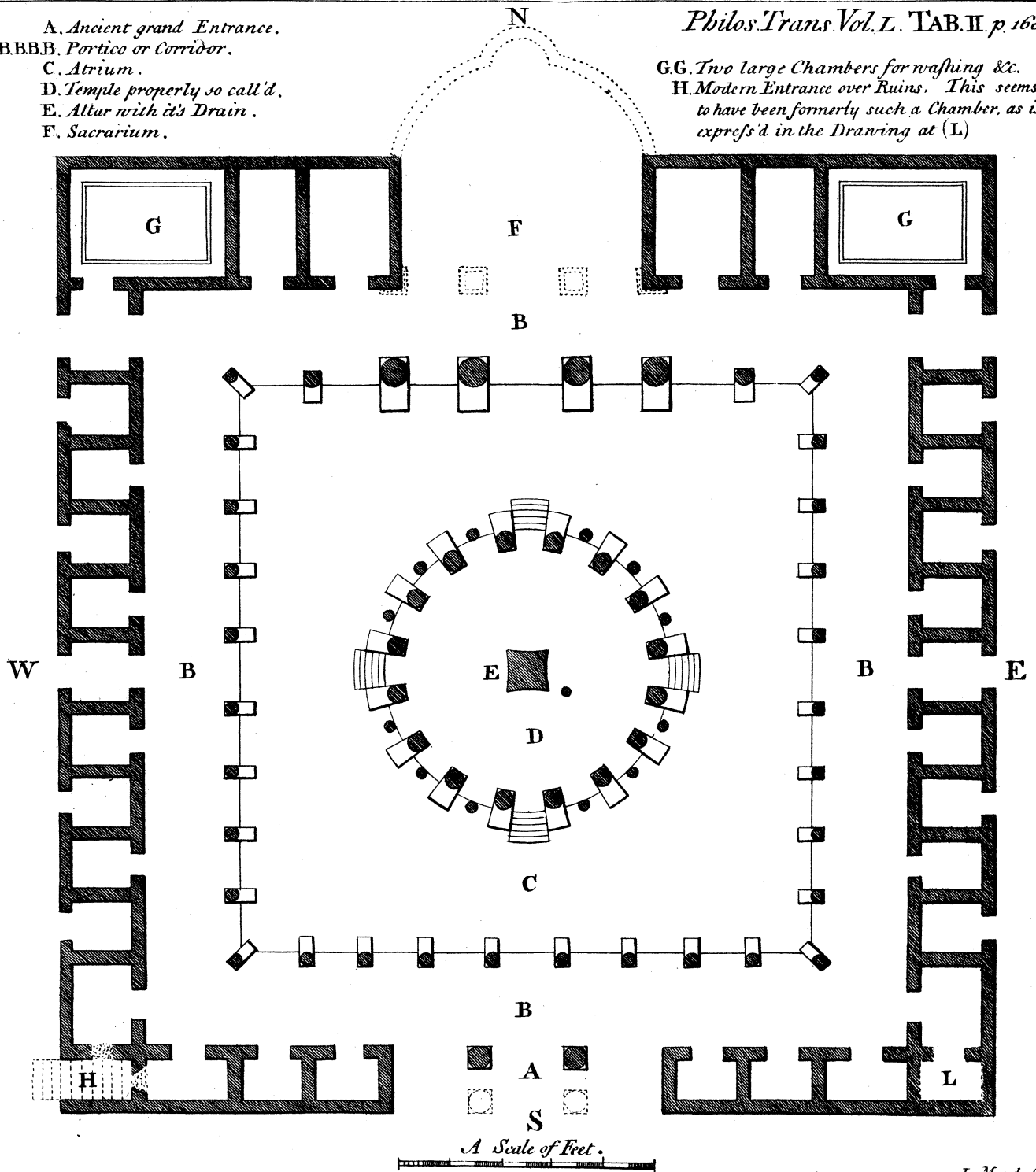
As for the particular state of this building, it is situated on the west side of the town, near to, and upon a level with, the beach (*See TAB. II.*). Its grand entrance is towards the south, and seems to have been a vestibule supported by four columns. This introduces you into a spacious portico, or corridor (6), which was designed to defend such as assembled here to worship from the injuries of the weather; as also to afford a commodious passage into a range of rooms of different dimensions, disposed on all the four sides of the court.

These chambers seem designed for preparing the sacrifices, lodging the priests, and keeping their vestments; as also the fuel, stores, and other things requisite for the service of the temple: not to omit the convenience of purifying both the priests and the

(6) Pliny (L. ix. ep. 39.) acquainting his architect with his purpose to repair a temple of Ceres, which was upon his estate, says, *Nullum in proximo suffugium aut imbris, aut solis. Videor ergo munifice simul religiosoque facturum, si ædi, quam pulcherrimam extruxero, addidero porticus: illam ad usum deæ, has ad hominum.* That these portico's commonly inclosed the whole site of the ancient temples, as in this at Pozzuoli, seems implied in what follows: *Quantum ad porticus, nihil interim occurrit, quod videatur esse istinc repetendum: nisi tamen, ut formam secundum rationem loci scribas; neque enim possunt circumdari templo: nam solum templi hinc flumine — hinc viâ cingitur.*

A. Ancient grand Entrance.  
 B.B.B.B. Portico or Corridor.  
 C. Atrium.  
 D. Temple properly so call'd.  
 E. Altar with it's Drain.  
 F. Sacrarium.

G.G. Two large Chambers for washing &c.  
 H. Modern Entrance over Ruins. This seems to have been formerly such a Chamber, as is express'd in the Drawing at (L)



worshippers by bathing or washing. This last destination is countenanced, with regard to the chamber on the north-west and that on the north-east corner, by the row of stone seats, which still remains on each of the sides of the former. These seats have a gutter, or channel running along at the foot of them on the floor; and are likewise perforated with holes of a proper size, with funnels passing from them below. On these benches probably the persons to be purified placed themselves, that the water might be let out upon them from pipes; or administered in vases or ewers by the attendants, and afterwards be carried off by the passages mentioned above (7).

Nor can a provision for washing or bathing in this temple seem strange to any one, who reflects, how high a rank this mode of purification held among the religious ceremonies of almost all nations of the world. As for the Romans, with whom we are principally concerned in the present inquiry, the subsistence of this usage among them might be abundantly shewn by the testimonies of their writers; and also by the accommodations provided for it in other buildings of the same character with that before us. Some of these still remain within the neighbourhood of Pozzuolo, *viz.* the magnificent temple near the lake of Avernus ascribed to Apollo, which has an apartment adjoining to it indisputably intended for the purpose

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(7) Mess. Cochin and Bellicard seem to think this room was intended for another purpose, by their calling the funnels under the holes in the seats of it, *conduits des fossés d'aisance*. Which of the two hypothesis's is to be preferred, I submit to the judgment of the learned; or rather, whether both of them may not be admitted, as in no-wise incompatible the one with the other.

intimated above. For it is furnished with several stone cisterns, whose inward dimensions are proportioned to the ordinary size of an human body; and near them is a spring, out of which the water was taken up, and poured into a basin hollowed out in the side of the wall: from thence it ran along in a groove or channel cut in the ends of the cisterns, to be let out upon the persons bathing in them, according to their pleasure, or as occasion should require. So likewise in the temple of Venus (as it is commonly called) near Baiæ, there is a large chamber containing several stone seats for washing, with little cells contiguous to it for undressing before, and anointing the body and dressing afterwards.

I have but one more particular to add concerning the apartment in the north-west angle of the temple, *viz.* that, when it was cleared of its rubbish, there was found in a niche in one of its sides a male and female figure naked, and in the most flagrant act of natural lewdness. It is now (as we were informed) in a private room in the palace at Portici, nor can be seen without the King's special permission. In the same place, probably, may stand the statue of a satyr in an unnatural action with a goat, which was found at Herculaneum, and is, they say, of exquisite sculpture, but concealed in the palace above-mentioned with the same strict care as the former.

Having thus viewed the several chambers in the exterior parts of the building, it is requisite (in order to a regular prosecution of our design) to return to the grand entrance. And here, passing thro' the corridor above described, we come to a square court or *atrium* paved with large slabs of white marble  
 streaked

streaked with blue or greyish veins. At the distance of 25 feet further, in the center of the said court, stood the temple properly so called, containing a circular area of 54 feet diameter, and elevated above the level of the pavement, so as to admit an ascent to it of five steps (8), in four different parts answering to the four sides of the corridor. This area is surrounded with sixteen pedestals, on which formerly were columns to support a rotundo or dome. Against each of these columns, on the outside, there seems to have been placed a statue, and, in the intermediate spaces, vases for incense, or lavers for washing, upon low stands on the floor. In the middle of the temple was erected the grand altar, the traces of which still remain, with a sink or drain near it to receive and carry off the blood of the victims, &c.

Northward of the temple, and at the distance of 25 feet, being the same space, that was between it and the corridor at the entrance, was once another stately vestibule or pavilion, supported by four columns four feet and an half in diameter, and of the Corinthian order, as appears by three of them, which still subsist standing in a line with the outer face of the corridor. This pavilion (if we may judge by analogy from what we find in other temples) led to an inner recess or *sacrarium* terminating, probably, in the segment of a circle: but of this we had no certain proof, as the rubbish was not yet removed from this part of the building.

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(8) Vitruvius, Lib. iii. cap. 3. *Gradus in fronte ita constitutendi sunt, uti sint semper impares: namque cum dextro pede primus gradus ascendatur, item in templo primus erit ponendus.*

I beg leave further to mention a remarkable appearance in some of the columns of this temple, *viz.* that that part of them, which was lowermost, as well as that, which was nearest the capitals, is well preserved and pretty entire; while part of the intermediate space for two or three feet together is discoloured, as if it had suffered by burning; and also excavated in such a manner (9), as to contain multitudes of little shell-fish, which appear, like the pholades in some stones, almost totally inclosed within their cells, so as not to be got out without breaking. I know no way to account for this so probable, as by supposing, that the lower parts of these columns were secured by the mass of rubbish, that inclosed them, as the uppermost were by their elevated situation, from being perforated either by the corrosive quality of the sea, which (according to tradition) formerly covered the site of this temple; or by the animalcula, which are bred in that element; while the middle parts standing in the water were (perhaps for ages) exposed to the injuries mentioned above. I had no opportunity of taking the height of the uppermost line, where the above-mentioned

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(9) The learned Abbate de Venuti, F.R.S. and Antiquary to the Pope at Rome, has lately by letter favoured me with an ingenious account of this phænomenon; tho' he mentions the granite columns only as affected by it. *Cùm columnæ, quæ circumbant templum, excavarentur e terrâ, quæ erant partim obrutæ — minutissimæ conchæ, quæ ex testaceorum genere sunt, atque in saxorum rimulis prope mare reperiuntur, ideoque a vulgo Trutti di Mare appellatæ, columnas hæc (i. e. Thebaicas) quam sæpissimè perforaverant, sese componentes, veluti apes in alveari, cùm essent sejunctæ integumentis ex ipso lapide subtilissimis. —*

alteration



alteration in the columns ended, from the level of the sea in the bay; which would have shewn how high the water must have risen formerly above its present mark, to produce the effect ascribed to it on this hypothesis. But, however that may be, the nature of the situation of this place (10) being considered, the innovation supposed to have happened in it will not, I presume, be thought improbable; especially in a country so plentifully stored with combustible matter in its interior parts, and consequently so liable to changes in its outward form, as this is, and has been for many ages. For an extraordinary instance of this we need go but a little way from this place, *viz.* to Il Monte Nuovo, a hill about four miles in compass, which in 1538 was cast up in one night's time by an eruption, whereby the greatest part of the Lucrine lake was filled up, and the town of Tripergola, with a church, convent, hospital, and other buildings, intirely buried.

I shall conclude with acquainting you, that at the corner of the court of this temple, near the present entrance, there lie some large bases of marble, which (as we were informed) were taken out of the sea at about a mile's distance from Pozzuolo, and are inscribed DVSARI SACRUM. What was the original situation of these monuments, it may not be possible now to ascertain. As for DVSARES mentioned in the inscription upon them, G. Vossius (11) (upon

(10) Vid. p. 168.

(11) Nec alius a Διονύσω sive sole est Δυσάρης, sive Δυσάρης, vel Δευδάρης. Quæ vox (ut suspicor) conflata ex דַּוְרַי Dutz et אַרְצָה Arca.

(upon the authority of Tertullian, and Stephanus Byzantius) makes him to have been an Arabian deity, the same as Bacchus or Sol according to the Roman theology. That learned man is likewise inclined to think, that the name DVSAIRES is compounded of two Hebrew words; one of which signifies *joy*, and the other, *the earth*, i. e. mortals, who inhabit it. This etymology properly expresses the genial effects of the sun, which makes glad the heart of man by ripening the fruits of the earth, especially the grape: Whence Virgil calls wine,

*Munera lætitiæque Dei.* Æn. i. v. 640.

and styles Bacchus the fabled inventor of it,

— *Bacchus lætitiæ dator.* Ib. v. 738.

I am,

S I R,

With the greatest respect,

Your most obedient humble Servant,

London,  
March 14. 1757.

J. Nixon.

*Aretz.* Quorum prius (*gaudium*) alterum notat (*terram*) ut notet *lætitiæ terræ*, sive mortalium. Nam Liber sive sol lætitiâ implet mortales, maturando fruges, et uvas, unde de vino sic Maro,

*Munera lætitiæque Dei.* Æn. i.

Dufarem verò esse Arabum numen indicat locus ille Tertulliani in Apolog. c. 24. “Unicuique etiam provinciæ et civitati suus deus est. Ut Syriæ Astartes; ut Arabiæ Disares.”

Etiam apud Stephanum sive Hermolaum Byzantium — Δυσάρη — σκόπελος ἢ κορυφὴ ὑψηλοτάτη Ἀραβίας. Ἐρηται δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς Δυσάρη. Θεὸς δὲ ὅστος παρὰ Ἀραβίη ἢ Δαχαρνῶν τιμῶμενος — Vossius de Idololat. L. ii. c. 8.