

Received October 10, 1767.

XLII. *A Letter from Edward Wortley Montagu, Esquire, F. R. S. to William Watfon, M. D. F. R. S. containing some new Observations on what is called Pompey's Pillar, in Egypt.*

S I R,

Read Nov. 19, 1767. **I** HERE send you a few lines, which I believe will appear extraordinary, as every traveller that has been at Alexandria has mentioned the famous pillar of Oriental Granite, which is about a mile without the walls of that city, as erected, either by Pompey, or to the honour of Pompey. As I differ in opinion from them all, and think this famous pillar was erected to the honour of Vespasian, you certainly will expect to hear on what foundation I found so extraordinary a conjecture, as so new a one may appear to you.

By

			F. In.	
By my mens. the capital of the pillar is			9 7	
The Shaft	_____	_____	66 1	British Measure.
The Base	_____	_____	5 9	
The Pedestal	_____	_____	10 5	
Height from the Ground		_____	92 0	
Its Diameter	_____	_____	9 1	

As soon as I saw this surprizing pillar, I was convinced that, if it had been erected in Pompey's time, Strabo, or some of the ancients, would have mentioned it: I therefore determined to examine it narrowly. I perceived too that the pedestal was of a bad and weak masonry, composed of small and great stones of different sorts, and absolutely unable to sustain so great a weight; I therefore easily concluded such pedestal not originally belonging to the pillar. I attempted to get out a stone, which I did without trouble, and discovered the pedestal to be hollow. After some time, I mean during the course of many days, I made an opening wide enough to enter it; when within it, you will judge how much I was surprized to find this prodigious mass of granite, stood, as on a pivot, on a reversed obelisk, as I then believed it was, only five feet square; curious to know the length of the obelisk, I began to move the earth on one of its sides, but my surprize increased much when I found, after moving a few inches of the soil, that the obelisk was not entire, this pivot being only four feet and one inch thick. It is seated on a rock; the stone is of an extreme hardness,

ness, and almost a petrification or rather conglutination of many different stones, but all vitrescent. I never met with any stone of this kind any where, except with one small piece on the plain of the Mummies; I broke a piece of it, which Lord Bute has; a small piece too of the pillar was sent, that gentlemen may be convinced it is of red granite, and not a composition as some have imagined.

This part of obelisk is covered with hieroglyphicks, which are reversed, a plain proof the pillar was not erected whilst they were held sacred characters.

Convinced, therefore, that it was not of the antiquity one would suppose it, from being called of Pompey, I visited it several times to see if it might not be possible to find out something that would give room for a reasonable conjecture, in honour of whom, or at what time, it was erected. From the inscription I could discover nothing; it is on the west face of the base, but so much injured by time, and I may say too by malice, for the mark of an instrument are plainly discovered effacing it, that one can but imperfectly make out some Greek characters, so imperfectly indeed that no one word can be found.

At length, observing that the cement, or mortar, which closes the small separation of the shaft from the base, was quite destroyed in one part, I was curious to see if any thing was made use of within, to fasten or tie the shaft to the base; I saw there was: being desirous to know if it was lead, and if so, if it was not of that pure, and of which we still meet with some few medals; I endeavoured with a pretty large hanger to cut off a small piece of the  
grapple;

grapple ; there was a great number of lizards which had taken shelter there, and which run out on my introducing the hanger. I then discovered a dark spot, at the distance of more than a foot, within the circumference of the pillar ; which, by striking it with the hanger, I found was something stuck fast to the base ; after striking it several times, I detached it from its place, and it proved a medal of Vespasian in fine order. AVT. KAIΣ. ΣΕΒΑ. ΟΥΕΣΠ.... The reverse is, *Victoria gradiens ; Dextra spicas, sinif. palmam.*

*This medal was shewn to the Royal Society.*

The reversed hieroglyphicks are a proof that this amazing monument was not erected before Pompey's time ; and as there is no mention of it in Strabo, or any one of the antient writers that I have met with, it seems plain it was not known before the time of Vespasian. This medal could not by any accident, I think, have been introduced above a foot within the circumference of the shaft ; therefore I suppose it was placed there when the pillar was erected, which from thence I conclude to have been done to the honour of that emperor ; and perhaps on his restoring the cripple to the use of his limbs.

If you think this paper worth it, you will please to communicate it to the Royal Society, and that of the Antiquaries.

The pillar is exactly shewn, with the pivot it stands upon, with a reference to the spot the medal was found upon, in the view of it that I have sent to England.

I beg you will assure the Society of my respect,  
and how happy I shall be to execute any of their  
commands.

And I hope you will rest persuaded of the true  
consideration, with which

I am,

Dear Sir,

Your most humble servant,

Zante, May 7,  
1767.

Ed. Wortley Montagu.