BRONZE MATRIX WITH HEBREW INSCRIPTION.

Dr D. Wilson exhibited and presented to the Society, a remarkable bronze matrix, of a round seal, accurately figured here, purchased by him from a

labourer, who described it as having been found during the previous spring, in ploughing a field on the eastern slope of Arthur's Seat. The adjacent village of Duddingstone is an ancient ecclesiastical site, and the parish church still retains the old Norman Chancel Arch, and other remains of the architectural





"The letters in the impression which you sent me are Hebrew, and, as far as I could make them out, they run thus:

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 זל'ו אלה בר יצחק אלמעמס אלה זל'ו יצחק אלמעמס בר יצחק אלמעמס בר יצחק אלמעמס יצחק אלמעמס בר יצחק אלמעמס אל'ו יצחק אלמעמס אל'ו יצחק אלמעמס אל'ו יצחק אלמעמס בר יצחק אלמעמס אל'ו יצחק אלמעמס בר יצחק אלמעמס אל'ו יצחק אלמעמס בר יצחק

Only the first three words are quite distinct, and must be read 'Shlomo bar Iizchak, i. e., Solomon the son of Rabbi Isaac.' In the fourth word the third and last letters are indistinct, and may be either 'm' or 's'. From grammatical reasons, I would prefer, in the beginning of the word (marked by the letter a), the $m(\mathfrak{D})$; an $s(\mathfrak{D})$ would defy every attempt to analyse the word, and reduce it to a quadrilateral stem, and the letter in the impression has indeed more likeness to (m) than to (m) (s.) In the last letter of the last syllable (marked by the letter b), it is impossible to make out whether it is Mem (m) finale , or Samech (s) . The word will then read either 'Almaamem or Almaames.' It is clearly the family name of Shlomo bar Iizchak. As to the meaning of it, it must be derived from (amam) to gather, to collect, or from the (amas) to take up, to carry, to lay burdens upon any one (in the latter signification very emphatically used 1 Kings xii. 11, and 2 Chron. x. 11.) The **\rangle (al)** is the Arabic article, and the meaning of the whole word is thus: 'The collector or distributor of taxes.' Whether we consider it as the family name of the Shlomo bar Iizchak, or as a signification of his office, it at all events shows that he was an Arabic or Spanish Jew.

"The fifth word is either the Hebrew demonstrative pronoun 'Elleh' (these, these are), or the Arabic word 'Allah' (Lord, God), as the Jews were accustomed to write Arabic with Hebrew characters. In either case there is an orthographical incorrectness, which is, however, of very frequent occurrence.

"The sixth word I cannot make out with certainty. The first and last letters are indistinct and doubtful, and may either be Wav (1) or Zain (1); the third letter may be Jod (1), or a mere point, serving as a sign of interpunction. In this case I would take the first letter to be Zain (1), which, with the following Lamed (2) is a very common abbreviation, denoting, 'His memory be blessed;' and the whole inscription would then be: 'This is Solomon Son of Isaack Almaamēs (m); his memory be blessed.' But according to this explanation there remains one letter, Wav or Zain (1,1), of which I cannot make anything."

Mr D. Liston, F.S.A. Scot., Professor of Oriental Literature, Edinburgh University, reads the legend: "(1061) אשלמה בר יצחף אחעשה הוא בר יצחף אחעשה וועל הוא בי וועל

Another Oriental scholar suggests the following mode of interpretation:—"I would be disposed to take both the fifth and sixth words as cyphers, containing particulars about the time of Solomon bar Isaac; though it is difficult to make it out, neither the era, nor terminus a quo being given. The use of letters as cyphers is very common in Hebrew, as well as in Arabic. The numerical value of the letters of the fifth word is: 1 + 30 + 30 + 5 = 66. That of the four letters of the sixth word is either: 6 + 30 + 10 + 6 = 52; or 6 + 30 + 10 + 7 = 53; or 7 + 30 + 10 + 7 = 54. The uncertainty arises from the doubtfulness of two of the characters in the last word."

The following reading by another scholar adds a fourth version:

שְלֹמה בַר יִצְחָק אָמ עָמַם אֶלָה וְלִיךְ

i. e., "Solomon, Son of Isaac! if God has loaded thee with benefits, then take thy rest." Vide Psalm lxviii. 20. Amid these various and conflicting interpretations, mainly resulting from the cacographic imperfections of the legend, it is important that the proper names are not left in doubt, as they correspond with the inscription in being of Hebrew character; while the device of the human head would otherwise seem irreconcileable with this, since the Jews have invariably eschewed all imagery.

In the Gentleman's Magazine, vol. lxiii., p. 209, Plate I., another Hebrew seal is engraved, which was found at Gibraltar, in 1801, at a considerable depth, when digging the foundations of the Library. It bears a fleur-de-lis, surrounded with six stars, between a hammer and pincers. A third matrix, with a Hebrew inscription, now in the British Museum, bears a castle and fleur-de-lis, and is quatrefoil in shape, or what may, perhaps, be styled cruciform. An impression of a seal of similar form, in the Hutton collection, kindly communicated, along with the previous one, by Mr Albert Way, was exhibited with the others. The latter, at least, could not be of Jewish origin, as it bears a cross flory for its chief device, and a cross at the beginning of the legend, which is in the common character of the fourteenth century. The subject is curious, as opening up a novel branch of inquiry in relation to medieval seals. It meanwhile seems most probable that they must all be regarded as talismanic or magical seals; though the Hebrew proper names on the Scottish example, would rather have suggested its being the seal of a Jewish merchant, but for the forbidden device with which they are accompanied.

At a meeting of the Society, March 15, 1847, Sir John Graham Dalyell exhibited a bronze or copper ring, found in a moss in Caithness-shire, which had the name of Jehovah: 'הוֹלָים' deeply engraved on it in Hebrew characters.