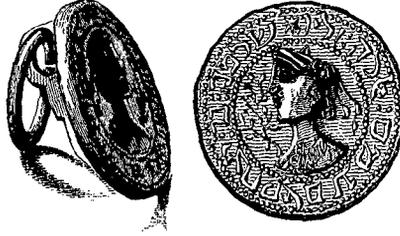


#### BRONZE MATRIX WITH HEBREW INSCRIPTION.

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 decorations of the twelfth century.



In the vicinity of the church another matrix of an early knight's seal, was found about twenty years since, and was in the possession of the late Thomas Thomson, Esq., F.S.A. Scot., whose brother was minister of the parish. The discovery of the matrix figured here, on this site, need not therefore excite surprise, were it not one of a rare and peculiar type. It is remarkable that it appears to be nearly identical, in device and legend, with a seal engraved in the Gentleman's Magazine, June 1787, Plate II., fig. 8. Unfortunately the latter is given without any description, or account of its discovery. The seal represents a turbaned head in profile, and round the circumference is a Hebrew legend, the first portion of which Dr Wilson observed there could be little hesitation in reading **שלמה בר יצחק**, *i. e.*, SOLOMON BAR ISAAC. He then submitted the results of a correspondence with various Hebrew scholars, with a view to determine the true interpretation of the whole legend. Theodore Meyer, a learned German Jew, writes :—



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 :

שְׁלֹמֹה בֶּרֶךְ יִצְחָק אִם עִמָּס אֱלֹהֵי 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 irreconcilable 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 Dalryell exhibited a bronze or copper ring, found in a moss in Caithness-shire, which had the name of Jehovah: יהוה deeply engraved on it in Hebrew characters.