

I.

NOTICE OF A GREEK MEDICAL INSCRIPTION FOUND AT CHESTER.

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Only three or four Greek inscriptions have hitherto been discovered among the many tablets that have been found at the different old Roman stations and sites scattered throughout Great Britain. Two of these Greek inscriptions known to English archæologists are inscriptions or altars to Æsculapius.¹ Lately, a third votive Greek inscription, apparently of the same class, has been dug up in Chester. I am indebted to Dr Davies of that city for directing my attention to it, and most kindly furnishing me with a drawing and rubbing of it.

The stone is unfortunately broken, the upper portion of it being wanting. It was found 18 feet below the surface when making some excavations near the Exchange at Chester. The inscription upon it is in well-formed Greek

¹ For drawings of these two Greek inscriptions to Æsculapius, see Horsley's *Britannia*, Plate 57, No. 25, and p. 293; and Lysons's *Cumberland*, p. 173. The one described by Horsley was found at Lanchester in Durham, and is very imperfect and doubtful. The second was found at one of the Roman stations in Cumberland.

characters, with some of the letters tied, and the Σ written in the lunar form C,



as often happens in such tablets. The portion of inscription left, when extended and written in modern characters, reads thus :—

Η Ρ Ψ Ι Ν
Ε Ρ Μ Ε Ν Ε Σ Ι Ν
Ε Ρ Μ Ο Γ Ε Ν Η Σ
Ι Α Τ Ρ Ο Σ Β Ω Μ Ο Ν
Τ Ο Ν Α Α Ν Ε Θ Η Κ Α

The initial letters in the first two lines are wanting, and in all probability ought to be supplied as follows :—

[Σ Ω Τ] Η Ρ Ψ Ι Ν
[Υ Π] Ε Ρ Μ Ε Ν Ε Σ Ι Ν

The inscription would, with these additions, read thus—*Ἐρμογενὲς ἰατρὸς ἀνέθηκε τὸν βωμὸν ὑπερμμενεσιν σωτηροῖν* :—“Hermogenes the physician has erected this altar to * * * * * the all-powerful preservers.” And there can, I believe, be little doubt that if the upper fragment of the altar is discovered it will be found that it has been dedicated to Æsculapius and Hygeia, to whom, in conjunction, votive tablets and altars were occasionally inscribed in the character of “the preservers” of the health and life of men. Amidst several altars raised conjointly to Æsculapius and Hygeia or Salus, and described by Gruter, one found at Messina in Sicily is remarkable as having its inscription, written like that of Chester, in Greek, and as applying the same noun $\text{C}\Omega\text{T}\text{H}\text{P}\text{C}\text{I}\text{N}$ (*σωτηροῖν*, conservators or protectors) to these

divinities with the adjective *πολιουχος* (guardian or tutelary), instead of *υπερμνηστιν* (all-powerful.)

As to who the Greek physician was who raised this altar at Chester, there is little but conjecture to offer. Dr Davies suggests, that possibly he was physician to the twentieth Roman Legion, who were long stationed at Chester; as is known from the evidence of various local inscriptions. But we have no ascertained instance of a Greek physician acting as a medical officer in the Roman army; nor does the name of a single Greek physician occur in any of the numerous medicine-stamps of private medical practitioners that have been hitherto found in England and in the other western colonies of Rome. Perhaps we may venture another conjecture. The Roman emperors had very generally Greeks as their body or court physicians. Thus Charicles was the confidential medical attendant of Tiberius; Xenophon of Claudius, &c. Possibly the Hermogenes of this inscription was the archiater and body physician of the Emperor Hadrian, who made a long visit to Britain and its various Roman stations. We know, indeed, from Dion Cassius that the medical attendant upon Hadrian during the Emperor's last illness bore the name of Hermogenes. A physician of this name, and not improbably the same individual, is mentioned by Galen as a distinguished adherent of the doctrines of Erasistratus. That the Chester stone was a votive altar raised by Hadrian's medical attendant, is rendered only the more probable by the circumstance, that the forms of the letters and their nexus in the inscription, are such as were in use in the earlier half of the second century, or at the time of Hadrian.