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**On the Inscribed Brick-Tabula found at Cirencester**

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## ON THE INSCRIBED BRICK-TABULA FOUND AT CIRENCESTER.

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(WITH PLATE).

THE tile illustrated was found in a heap of fallen wall-tiles in one of the rooms of a R.-Br. house in Victoria Road, Cirencester on 9th Feb., 1922. The deposit could be detected just shewing itself under the edge of some two feet of dark soil where the exposition of one of the pavements found had perforce to leave off. Hence, although the propinquity to a vigorous young apple-tree root made us careful for its owner's sake, examination of the spot made it just possible to get out a great part of the tiles without doing real harm. Many more are there still. Special requests to the workmen employed and to the intelligent foreman, as to the need and importance of finding an inscription of any kind, whether in brick or stone, had a fortunate effect. For, on next revisiting the site I was at once told of this find and that of a number of ordinary tiles bearing already familiar lettered stamps.

On being produced I was aware that we had found something of a very singular character and quite outside the ordinary inscribed factory-tile with a fabric mark.

Several features declared this to be the case.

First of all there was the unusual measurement. The total length= $16\frac{5}{8}$ ". The width, 5" though incomplete, may be estimated (probably) at 7", because the Inscription occurs placed as though calculated just to avoid the tile-man's semi-circular (double) brush-mark as well as to be opposite its natural middle or the centre of the half-circle.

The next peculiarity shews that the tile had a special feature, namely, a raised projecting ridge or border (probably top and bottom), all along its length and starting with a broad chamfer, or flat splay, evidently of some definite functional purpose, *i.e.* some (? wooden) support or attachment. This is most unusual.

This last (*left*) if taken with the nature and position of the inscription parallel to (and above) it, may reasonably suggest that this inscribed tile was placed where it could be well seen and easily read, *i.e.* upon some wall of the House. This seems to be the more likely as there was no mortar found within the cursive lettering and numerals, which would not have been the case had the tile been embedded as are fabric-tiles or hypocaust ones. The semi-circular "brush-mark" is quite common on tiles of various sizes and is quite independent of their official letterings.

Next, the cursive was made with a *stylus* of bone, or perhaps, of metal; and it shews a mature professional hand-writing.

The abbreviated grouping clearly discovers

CLLTXVIII

The latter figures (representing our more modern XIX), are preceded by four letters, the purport of which formula is, up till the present, elusive, for we have so far no precise parallel to this example. That others, though imperfect, resembling it did exist is, however, made practically certain by the former finding at Berkeley (1865) of two tiles, one of which is now in the Museum at Bath (cf. *Vict. Hist. Co. Som.* vol. 1, p. 285)

:DCLVI (?)

where the same raised ridges are fully represented, though the lettering is damaged.

Neither the nature of these inscriptions nor the numerals upon either point necessarily to anything Legionary; nor,

of course, was Corinium a military centre any more than was Berkeley. How such tiles reached Berkeley is not known.

The number 19, however, upon a "*tabula*" or "*tegula*" affixed to some wall in an important finely paved-house, in such a town as was Corinium, suggests one or two questions? For example, can it have denoted the distance to or from a *Trajectus*, or ferry, across Severn, at *Glevum* (or *Clevum*, as the Itinerary calls it). It will be observed that *CL* equally occurs upon the Berkeley-Bath tile, though without letters between it and the numerals. In the case of our tile, although 19 Roman miles might pretty fairly stand for the distance, i.e. from *Glevum*, we should be still confronted with *LT*, which scarcely can mean *Legionis Trajectum*; while, in the case of the other tile (of a certainty imperfect), it is not possible to say whether the *CL* should represent *Clevum* or *De Clevo*, or *castrum Legionis*; nor, indeed, whether the tiles found incorporated in the church, were brought thither from a distance, or were found (as we believe) near Berkeley? Until fresh examples of similar type shall be forthcoming it will be safer to acknowledge our inability to fix the evidently definite significance of either. The House whereto it belonged stood near the Cricklade Gate of Cirencester; and it may have been that of some official of the district.

In the same excavation numerous examples of familiar local tile-maker's stamps also came to hand, and fortunately, among them were several which confirmed the force of our suspicions long entertained as to the fragmentary tiles (both in the Cripps Museum and in that of Lord Bathurst), bearing the letters I..HS. and which (it is well known), have persistently been mis-attributed to the famous 7th cent. Christian formula. In the new and fresh examples these initials of a tile-maker (or owner of a kiln), are clearly LHS. A good example is now in the

Gloucester Museum. The writer has presented the Cursive tile to the Earl and Countess of Bathurst, and it is now in the Corinium museum.