IX. *Account of an ancient Bath, in the Island of Lipari : in a Letter from Captain W. H. SMYTH, R.N., F.R.S., F.S.A., to THOMAS AMYOT, Esq. F.R.S., Treasurer S. A. with a Model.*

Read 14th January, 1830.

Bedford, January 3, 1830.

MY DEAR SIR,

HAVING recently heard that the luxuriant hand of nature is already verifying my fears, as to the very site of a highly interesting Bath, in the island of Lipari, becoming disputable, I feel it a duty to forward, for the Society of Antiquaries, the Model of this edifice, which I referred to in my description of that Country.^a

Many other vestiges, scattered throughout the insular empire of Æolus, tend to show the ancient importance of this assemblage of volcanoes. Greek inscriptions, mutilated sculptures, and empty sepulchres meet the eye in many parts; but chiefly the remains of baths of all ages, so valuable have the mineral springs constantly been esteemed.

We find hot baths cotemporary with the earliest dates: thus, besides the natural warm springs of Scamander, Homer makes Andromache provide a warm bath for Hector, on his return from the field; τὰ ῥεῦμα λοετρὰ are also ordered by Nestor; and Agamemnon is said to have been slain in a bath. Those of Dædalus still exist at Sciacca, in Sicily, and the same luxury is mentioned by Pindar; and it moreover appears that these establishments were held so sacred, that those who stole

^a See the Memoir of Sicily, p. 262.

J.C. Buoilder. del^r

James BASTY sc.

Ancient Bath, in the Island of Lipari.

.....ed by the Society of Antiquaries of London. April 23rd 1830

clothes or implements from them, were deemed sacriligious, were branded with a characteristic appellation, and were punished with death.

The more ancient Roman, like the present Turkish baths, were somewhat dark, having light admitted only from the roof; "for our ancestors," says Seneca, "thought that a bath could not be warm enough, unless it was close." From the vestiges of the magnificent baths of Paulus Æmilius, Titus, Caracalla, and Diocletian, together with the clear descriptions left by the younger Pliny, Lucian, and Vitruvius, we have an accurate idea of the disposition, grandeur, and plan, of these temples of luxury.

But the one I have now the pleasure of submitting, though remarkably fine, was evidently more for the purpose of health and rest, before and after worship, than for ostentation; for it boasts neither Palæstræ, Exedræ, Xysti, nor any of the other appurtenances of splendid Thermæ. It is merged in a luxuriant vineyard, at a short distance from the humble capital, and the stream that once supplied its wholesome gases, still rises in the vicinity, with a temperature of 120° of Farenheit; but it is now allowed to waste itself, and again sinking upon hot subterranean matter, probably soars in the form of vapour, through some of the many steaming crevices which are seen in various parts of the island. The remains of this edifice consisted, first, of an anti-room, or ἀποδυτήριον, where the bathers left their garments in the custody of the *Capsarii*, or slave guards. This led on the left, down three steep steps, into a water-bath, the *frigidarium*, or *tepidarium*, of Roman Thermæ, less delicately named λουτρὸν by the Greeks. Along one side of this bath there was a large receptacle, the ἀλειπτήριον, or *unctuarium*, divided into four long compartments, in which were found many small terra-cotta vases and glass vials, *ampullæ* and *lenticulæ*, which appeared to have contained oily substances, probably perfumes and ointments, in the use of which we know the ancients to have been profuse. By another door the anti-room led into the *media-cella*, a small square room, answering the purpose also of a *laconicum*, in this comparatively small establishment.

Here the bathers were accosted by the *Aliptæ* or *Unctores*, who, previous to anointing, rubbed them down with a horn or metal strigilis, or with a pumice-stone, like the one I now forward with the model, and which I took out of a tomb among the ruins of Oæa, near Tripoli. This *media-cella* has a coarse mosaic pavement, composed of black and white tesserae, distinctly describing two marine monsters in the middle, with circles and chequers around; one of these, at the entrance, bears the rude representation of a pair of slippers, seemingly to warn bathers from treading thereon barefooted. A door in the centre of the opposite wall leads into the *Θερμολουσία*, or *Concamerata-sudatio*, a larger room, because most resorted to: it is similarly tessellated, only with a more fanciful pattern, and, moreover, has a square recess on the left side, probably for the *Sudationes*; while a semicircular one on the right, contained the *baptisteria*, *piscina*, or large basin for the bathers. The walls of these two rooms are lined with vertical square clay tubes which communicate with the *hypocaust*, a hollow space beneath the floor, about two feet high, where a *propigneum*, or furnace, augmented the heat of the stream. The mosaic pavement, with its abundant cement, rests upon tiles two feet square, and nearly three inches thick; one angle of every four of these rests upon a small square pillar, consisting of twelve or fourteen bricks. The use of this diminutive colonnade is indicated by an opening at one end, for the admission of firewood and influx of the stream before alluded to; with a similar one at the other, for its exit. Unfortunately, no part of the roof of this singular structure remains, to show how the stream that ascended through the lateral tubes, or flues, was finally disposed of.

From its vicinity to the temple of Minerva, some have wildly imagined that this apartment was dedicated to the use of a Pythia, who, like the one at Delphi, was seated on a tripod to deliver oracles, aided by the inspiring fumes that rose around, from the tubes with which the walls were lined. This explanation, though natural enough for the patriotic fervour of local antiquaries, is not so amusingly absurd as that which pronounced it to have been a species of *Æolian*

organ. This idea was probably founded on the tradition of there having been “ a sepulchre in Lipari, which no one dared approach in the night, on account of the dissonant voices, horrible howlings, and discordant instruments, which resounded through its vicinity, producing a dreadful clamour :” or, in Coronelli’s own forcible words, thus : “ Scrisse Aristotele, ch’in quest’ Isola vi era un Sepolcro, a cui niuno si poteva accostare di notte tempo, per le voci dissonanti, urli horribili, ed istromenti scordati, ch’in quelle vicinanze formavano uno strepitoso sconcerto d’Abisso.”

On returning to Sicily, after visiting this fruitful source of fable, I had the good fortune to find some of my military friends excavating at the Faro Point, also adjacent to a temple, and rejoicing at having found some bronze antiques of good workmanship. One was a bust of Minerva about three inches high, but rather of the harsh character styled *conventional* ; another was a lioness about four inches long, in a crouching position, exceedingly true to nature, but perfect only on one side, having a deep square aperture on the other. Amongst a number of indeterminable pieces, was a socket, seemingly intended for a very massive hinge to turn in. Within two feet only of the surface of the ground, they discovered some coarse black and white mosaic pavements, with a semicircular recess in one room, having its walls lined with tubes, which, communicating with a hollow space below, served, as in the Lipari bath, to impart the heat of the subterranean fire more equally to the bathers.

Again, I found exactly a similar construction, in the vestiges of some ancient baths at Catania ; also in the immediate vicinity of a sacred temple. Indeed the constant appurtenance of *Thermæ* both to Greek and Roman Fanes, in *Magna Græcia*, is generally observable.

This kind of hot air and steam bath, closely resembles those used in the present day by the Turks, the marble pavements of which are so strongly heated, as to render it necessary for the bathers to wear high clogs, a practice which seems to be referred to by the mosaic slippers

figured at the threshold of the first hot room, or *media-cella*, in the Lipari Bath. When the quantity of steam is required to be increased, they have but to throw water from a large marble bath, standing in a recess of the room, and it immediately rises in vapour. Nor can the attentive observer fail to remark the modern succedaneum for the strigil, in a harsh camel's hair bag, with which the slave covers one hand, for the purpose of cleansing the skin of those upon whom they attend; whilst the unguents, and other treasures of the *unctuarium*, are emulated also by the variety of perfumed depilatory soaps and cosmetics still in use.

It may be stated, in conclusion, that the various details of the edifice in question, were accurately measured, and can be readily examined by the scale upon the model; but for a general idea of its magnitude, it can be borne in mind, that the whole inside length, over the floors, is seventy feet; the breadth at the *media-cella* thirty-three feet; and that at the *thermolousia* fifty feet.^b

I have the honour to remain,

My dear Sir,

Your obliged humble servant,

W. H. SMYTH.

TO THOMAS AMYOT, Esq. F.R.S.
Treasurer A. S. &c. &c. &c.

^b Compare the Plates XIV. XV. XVI. taken from the Model.