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A Clay Sealing from Egypt

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A CLAY SEALING FROM EGYPT.

(PLATE XVII.)

THE object illustrated in Plate XVII. and Fig. 1, would perhaps never have emerged from the obscurity of a description in small type in an official catalogue but for Mr. Dawkins' discovery discussed on pp. 9 f. of this volume. In the British Museum *Catalogue of Terracottas* (p. 443) it is described as follows, under the number E 93: 'Hemispherical seal of clay, with eight impressions of gems stamped over it, five representing a lion attacking a goat; another, a bearded head to r, with inscription; the other two are plain stamps.' It was acquired in Egypt by the Rev. Greville Chester, and purchased from him in 1891.

This description calls for some slight revision and fuller detail. The bearded head seems to be of Roman Imperial date, and the character of the letters which form the inscription narrows the period still more, to the second century after Christ. This inscription may be read as ΑΓΑΘΟCΔΕΜΩΝ 'Αγαθὸς Δέμων (for Δαίμων), the deity alluded to being specially concerned with the providing of temporal blessings, and therefore appropriate in connection with a jar of wine. The style of the head, with its short close-cut beard, is such as we associate with the time of Pertinax, *i.e.* the end of the second century. The other impression, representing a lion attacking a goat, is probably from a seal of earlier date, and may be compared with the design on a terracotta plaque from Crete in the British Museum (*Cat. of Roman Pottery*, LI, with illustration), which is hardly later than the beginning of the Christian era. The subject is quite a popular one in Roman art, and the 'Corbridge lion' may be cited as another instance. This design is reproduced on an enlarged scale ($\frac{3}{2}$) in Fig. 1.

The manner in which these sealings were used for stopping the mouths of wine-jars has been clearly explained by Mr. Dawkins (p. 10), and it is very remarkable that the form of this later example should so closely resemble that of the earlier. On the flat side of the Museum specimen are impressions of some cloth substance still visible, with fragments of the material adhering to the surface; and the method of fastening, something

FIG. 1.—IMPRESSION OF SEAL.

like that employed nowadays for securing bottles of effervescing liquids, is not only clearly marked by three deep incisions crossing the surface of the clay, but in two of these incisions the coarse string (corresponding to the modern wire) is still adhering, with the knot in which it was tied.

Thus we have a definite proof that the method of sealing wine-jars practised in Greece in the Mycenaean Age, was still in use in Egypt under the Roman Empire, after a lapse of some 1500 years.

H. B. WALTERS.

CLAY SEALINGS FOR JARS : *a*, *b*, FROM MYCENÆAN SPARTA ; E 93 FROM ROMAN EGYPT.