

XXIII. *A Letter from JOHN GAGE, Esq. F.R.S., Director, to Sir HENRY ELLIS, K.H., F.R.S., Secretary, accompanying a Roman Speculum, exhibited by Sir WILLIAM MIDDLETON, Bart.*

Read 1st February, 1838.

DEAR SIR HENRY,

THE Roman Speculum exhibited, was, in December 1823, found on property belonging to Sir William Middleton, in the parish of Coddendam, in Suffolk. This elegant little ornament was brought to light by a labourer at work in an inclosure near the banks of the river Gypen, and with it were found a brown earthenware urn containing burnt human bones, and a small vessel of red pottery.

A Roman road leading to an ancient ford of the river passes through the inclosure close to the spot described, being, according to Dr. Mason, the road from Colchester, by Stratford on the Stour, to Caistor.

The Speculum is a portable trinket (Pl. XXV.), consisting of a thin circular bronze case, divided horizontally into two nearly equal portions which fit one into the other; and, being opened, it presents a convex mirror in each face of the interior. The drawing is executed to the full size of the ornament, the diameter of which is 2 inches $3\frac{1}{2}$ tenths, and the depth $2\frac{1}{2}$ tenths of an inch.

The case has, on one side, a head of Nero, and on the other, a very close imitation of the reverse of a coin of that Emperor in large brass, with the legend ADLOCVT. COH., representing the Emperor addressing the army. No legend appears on the Speculum. The reliefs are enchased.

The mirror set in the lower case is larger than the one in the upper, measuring 1 inch and 9 tenths in diameter; both are remarkable for their extraordinary preservation and brilliancy. The reflecting surface of each mirror is very thin, so that the removal of the least portion shows the body beneath.

Mr. Faraday, who has had the kindness to examine the Speculum, thinks that the reflecting face is not silver, and that it contains tin, and no antimony: he being of opinion that the mirror consists of a bronze body, with a tinned reflecting surface.

In the Supplement ^a to Montfaucon's "Livre de l'Antiquité expliquée," will be found an engraving of a Roman mirror from the cabinet of Mons. Mahudel, being the upper portion of a Speculum similar to that exhibited, and having a head of Nero upon it. Count Caylus ^b also describes a circular Roman mirror from Arles, which appears to be of the same character as Sir William Middleton's Speculum.

Yours very faithfully,

JOHN GAGE.

SIR HENRY ELLIS, F.R.S.

Sec. S.A.

^a Tom. iii. pl. xxi.

^b Requeil D'Antiquités, tom. iii. p. 331; vide also tom. v. p. 174, an analysis given by Count Caylus of the metals composing Roman mirrors.



Roman Speculum found at Coddendam in Suffolk.