CHAPTER XI

THE BUILDINGS AT THE NORTHWEST CORNER OF THE FORUM, AND THE TABLE OF STANDARD MEASURES

The large building at the northwest corner of the Forum (Fig. 33, 1, 2, 3) was erected after the earthquake of the year 63. We do not know whether at the time of the eruption it had yet been roofed; the inside at least was in an unfinished state.

This building is divided into three parts, one of which, that furthest north, at the corner, contains both lower and upper rooms. Below, at the level of the Forum, are two dark vaulted chambers, one at the rear of the other. The front chamber is dimly lighted by a slit in the ceiling and was entered from the Forum by a narrow door; there are traces of a strong iron grating in the doorway. It has been supposed, not without probability, that these were the vaults of the city treasury, the aerarium; if they had been built for prison cells, they would naturally have had separate entrances.

Above these chambers are two rooms which open not on the Forum, but on the street that runs past them on the north (1, 1). They resemble shops and would be classed as such without further question but for the fact that the level of the floor is nearly five feet above the sidewalk, so that they could have been reached only by means of steps. If the identification of the chambers below as the vaults of the city treasury is correct, these rooms must have been occupied.
by the treasury officials, who could here transact business with the public without admitting the latter to their offices.

The middle room (2) was a public closet, with a small anteroom. As the doors to and from the anteroom were not placed opposite each other, the interior was not visible from the street. The room was not entirely finished; nevertheless, we can see the water channel running along three sides, and above it the stones on which the woodwork was to be placed; the inlet pipe was in position, as well as the outlet for carrying the water off into a sewer at the rear.

The last of the three parts of the building (3) is by far the largest. It was a high and spacious hall, with numerous entrances from the Forum. It was divided into two rooms by two short sections of wall projecting from the sides, and was evidently a market house, perhaps for vegetables and farm products.

The rooms formed by enclosing the small colonnade at the rear of the court of Apollo have already been mentioned (p. 62). At the left of the stairway leading to the second story (shown in Plan II) is a small room which opens in its entire breadth upon the Forum (11). Close by is a recess (10), also open toward the Forum, in the side of the first of the thick pillars which separate the Forum from the court of the temple.

In this recess stood the table of standard measures, mensa ponderaria (Fig. 34), which is now in the Naples Museum, unfortunately not entire; a part of it has disappeared. The part remaining consists of a large slab of limestone (a little over 8 feet long and 1.8, or 2 Oscan feet, wide), in which are nine bowl-shaped cavities with holes at the bottom through which the contents could be drawn off; this slab rested on two stone supports, and similar supports above it carried another slab, which is now lost, with three cavities. The table thus contained twelve standards of capacity for liquid and dry measure, but only ten are shown in the illustration, as two are too far back.

It is evident that the table has come down from the pre-Roman period. The names of the measures were originally written in Oscan, beside the five largest cavities, and though the letters were later erased, they are still in part legible. Only one word, however, can be made out with certainty, beside the next to the smallest cavity; that is Kuirites, plainly the same as the Greek Choimix. We naturally infer that in the pre-Roman time the Pompeians used Greek measures.

In the time of Augustus, about 20 B.C., the cavities were enlarged and made to conform to the Roman standard, but the new names were not put beside them. The inscription on the front of the larger slab has reference to these changes: 'Aulus Clodius Flaccus, the son of Aulus, and Numerius Arcaeus Arellianus Caledus, the son of Numerius, duumvirs with judiciary authority, in accordance with a decree of the city council, caused the measures to be made equal' to the Roman measures.

A similar adjustment of measures to the Roman standard is indicated by the use of the phrase metra exaequare on a table found at Minturnæ. The adoption of a uniform standard was made a subject of imperial regulation by Augustus, who, by this means, sought to promote the unification of the Empire. Similar tables of measures have been found in various parts of the Roman world, as at Selinunt in Sicily, in the Greek islands, and at Bregenz on the Lake of Constance.

It is probable that an official charged with the oversight of the measures had his office in the small room next to the stairway (11).