CHAPTER LVIII

INSCRIPTIONS RELATING TO BUSINESS AFFAIRS

The most important inscriptions relating to business transactions are the receipts, discovered in 1875, which formed a part of the private accounts of L. Caecilius Jucundus (p. 447). They were written on wax tablets, which were carefully packed in a wooden box. The box, which was in the second story of the house, crumbled to pieces when the volcanic dust about it was removed; but many of the tablets, 154 in number, still retained their shape and were taken to the Naples Museum. The wood of the tablets had turned to charcoal, but the writing has been for the most part deciphered. One receipt dates from 15 A.D., another from the year 27; the rest belong to the decade immediately preceding the earthquake, 52–62 A.D. The documents are of the greatest interest as casting light on the business methods of antiquity.

Most of the tablets are triptychs. The three leaves were tied at the back so as to open like the leaves of a book, making six pages (Fig. 274). The average height is about 5 inches, the width varies from 2 to 4 inches. Pages 1 and 6 served as covers, being left smooth and without writing. Pages 2, 3, and 5 were hollowed out, leaving a polished surface with a raised rim around it. On this surface a thin layer of wax was spread, in which the letters were made with a stylus; the writing could be easily read because the wood, which was of a light color, showed through wherever a scratch was made in the wax coating.

Two pages facing each other, 2 and 3, were devoted to the receipt. Page 4, as shown in Fig. 275, was not hollowed out but was divided into two parts by a broad, flat groove running across the middle. When the document was ready to be sealed, the first two leaves were brought together and tied by a thread.
which passed around the middle, the ends meeting in the groove on page 4. In this groove at convenient distances melted wax was then dropped, on which the witnesses, ordinarily seven in number, impressed their seals. The names of the witnesses were written with pen and ink in a line with the seals, parallel with the sides of the page, sometimes at the right, as in Fig. 275,

sometimes divided, the first name and the gens name being at the left of the seal, the cognomen at the right.

This arrangement made it impossible to consult the receipt without cutting the thread or disturbing the seals of the witnesses. To meet the difficulty a memorandum, which was practically a duplicate receipt, was placed on page 5; this could be read at any time.

The difference in form between the receipt, on pages 2 and 3, and the memorandum will be plain from the examples. The receipt, with few exceptions, is simply a record of an oral acknowledgment in the presence of witnesses that a sum of money was received, accepti latio. In nearly all the tablets this acknowledgment and the names of the witnesses, on page 4, are in the same handwriting, which must have been either that of Jucundus himself or of his secretary. It did not matter who wrote the receipt; in case of a dispute the seals of the witnesses would alone be sufficient to prove its genuineness. The memorandum, however, was ordinarily in a different hand,

either that of the person who gave the receipt, or of some one authorized to write for him. As it was not under the seals of witnesses, the handwriting might become a matter of importance if any question should arise in regard to the document.

The entire tablet, with its receipt, memorandum, and names and seals of witnesses was called perscriptio, 'entry of account.' This word appears ordinarily on the edge of the tablet, with the name of the person who gave the receipt in the genitive case.

Nearly all the tablets record transactions connected with auction sales, the person whose effects were thus disposed of giving
Jucundus a receipt in full for the proceeds of the sale less a commission, mercede minus. A few contain receipts for rent which Jucundus paid for the use of property belonging to the city—a fullery (p. 394), the rent of which altogether amounted to 1652 sesterces, about $75; a pasture, for the use of which he paid 2675 sesterces, about $130; and a piece of arable land, fundus, on which he paid 6000 sesterces, about $300, in rents.

We present an example of both classes of receipts. The first, which we may call Tablet A, was given by a lady, Umbricia Januaria, for the proceeds of an auction sale; it is dated December 12, A.D. 56. The other, Tablet B, is the receipt for the rent of public pasture land and belongs to the year 59 A.D.

**TABLET A**

**Title**

_Perscriptio Umbriae Januariae, ‘Entry of account of Umbricia Januaria.‘_

**Receipt.** Pages 2 and 3

_Hs n. CC | 32 | XXXVIII, quae pecunia in stipulatum L. Caecilius Iucundus venit ob auctionem Umbriae Januariae mercede minus persoluta habere se dixit Umbricia Januaria ab L. Caecilius Iucund._


‘Umbricia Januaria declared that she had received from L. Caecilius Jucundus 11,039 sesterces, which sum came into the hands of L. Caecilius Jucundus by agreement as the proceeds of an auction sale for Umbricia Januaria, the commission due him having been deducted.

‘Done at Pompeii on the twelfth day of December, in the consulship of Lucius Duovius and Publius Clodius.’

**Names of the Witnesses.** Page 4

The seals of the witnesses, nine in number, appear in the groove at the middle of the page. The names are in the genitive case, as if dependent on _sigillum, ‘seal.’_

**RECEIPTS OF CAECILIUS JUCUNDUS**

Q. Appulei Severi.
M. Lucreti Leri.
T. Iuli Abascanti.
M. Iuli Crescencis.
M. Terenti Primi.

_Q. Epidi Hymenaei._
_Q. Grani Lesbi._
_T. Vesoni Le..._ 
_D. Volci Thalli._

‘Seal of Quintus Appuleius Severus, Marcus Lucretius Lerus, Tiberius Julius Abascantus, M. Julius Crescens, M. Terentius Primus, M. Epidius Hymenaeus, Q. Granius Lesbus, Titus Vesonius Le... , D. Volcius Thallus.’

**Memorandum. Page 5**


‘On December 12, in the consulship of Lucius Duovius Avitus and Publius Clodius Thrasea, I, Decimus Volcius Thallus, having examined the tablets put under seal, at the request of Umbricia Januaria declared in writing that she had received from L. Caecilius Jucundus 11,039 sesterces as the proceeds of an auction sale after deducting his commission. Done at Pompeii.’

Tablet A gives the ordinary form of the receipt and the memorandum. There are occasional variations. A few tablets have only two leaves and four pages. In such cases, the leaves are tied and sealed in the same way as the first two of the triptych, but only half of the fourth page is left for the signatures of the witnesses; the memorandum is written on the other half with pen and ink, and so appears on the outside of the tablet.

In two of the older tablets, dated 27 and 54 A.D., the memorandum, as the receipt, is a record of an oral acknowledgment; it may be that this was the proper legal form in use to the end of the reign of Claudius. In a few of the later examples, as Tablet B, the receipt as well as the memorandum has the form of a voucher in the handwriting of the person who receives the money, or his agent.
TABLE B

RECEIPT. Pages 2 and 3

L. Verania Hysae, L. Albucius Justo duumviris iure dicundo
XIII Kalendas [aetatis] Iulias Privatus coloniae Pompeiana seruus scripsisse me accepisse ab L. Caecilio Incundo sestertios mille sescentos septuaginta quinque nummos, et accepit ante hanc diem, quae dies fuit VIII idus Ianuas, sester[tios] mille nummos, ob vectigal publicum pasqua [for pasquorum].

Actum Pompeii, in Fonteio C. Vipsani cos.

‘On June 18, in the duumvirate of L. Veranus Hysaeus and L. Albucius Justus, I, Privatus, slave of the colony of Pompeii, declared in writing that I had received from L. Caecilius Juncundus 1675 sesterces, and previous to this day, on June 5, I received 1000 sesterces, as rent for the public pastures.

‘Done at Pompeii in the consulship of Gnaeus Fonteius and Gaius Vipstanus.’

NAMES OF THE WITNESSES. Page 4

In the groove in the middle of the page are four seals. As the receipt was given for the city, the witnesses were the two duumvirs and the slave Privatus, who received the money. The name of Privatus appears twice with seal, under that of each duumvir. Names of witnesses, as well as individuals, owned slaves.

L. Verani Hysaei
Privati, c. c. V. C. ser. (for colonorum coloniae Vereiae Corneliae serui)

L. Albucius Justi
Privati, c. c. V. C. se.

Chiographum Privati c. c. V. C. ser.

‘Seal of Lucius Veranius Hysaeus; Privatus, slave of the citizens of the colony of Pompeii; L. Albucius Justus; Privatus, slave of the citizens of the colony of Pompeii.

‘Autograph of Privatus, slave of the citizens of the colony of Pompeii.’

MEMORANDUM. Page 5

L. Verania Hysaei L. Albucius Justo duumviris iure dicundo XIV Kal. Privatus c. c. V. C. ser. scripsisse me accepit.

INSCRIPTIONS UPON AMPHORAE

Posse ab L. Caecilio Incundo HS = DCLXXV et accepit ante hanc diem VIII idus Ianuas HS = nummos ob vectigal publicum pasquorum.


The language of the memorandum is so nearly identical with that of the receipt that it is unnecessary to add a translation.

A considerable number of the amphora found at Pompeii bear inscriptions, generally written with a pen in black ink, but sometimes painted with a brush in red or white. Most of them contained wine. The percentage of Greek inscriptions is large, an evidence of the strength of the Greek population in the region about the city.

The wine underwent fermentation in large round vats of baked clay, dolia, which stood in the wine cellar of the villa, cella vinaria, or in a court (p. 364); from these the amphorae were filled. The vats containing the common wines were ordinarily emptied before the next vintage, when they were needed for the new wine, but the better sorts were allowed to remain in the dolia for a longer time. The wine of one Pompeian amphora was left in the vat till after the harvest of the second year: C. Pomponio C. Anicio cos. ex fundo Badiano, diu [usu] id. Aug., binum, — ‘Consulship of Gaius Pomponius and Gaius Anicius. From the Badian estate. Poured (into amphorae) August 13. Two years old.’ In what year Pomponius and Anicius were consuls we do not know.

The earliest amphora of which the date is certain was filled in 25 A.D.: [Cosso] L. tulo M. Asinio cos. fund. The place from which it came, however, is not so easily determined, since fundus may refer to the town of Fundi, or stand for fundus, ‘estate,’ the name that followed having been obliterated. The names of two such estates were lately recovered from amphorae in the house of the Vettii, fundus Satrianus and fundus Asinianus.

In addition to the product of Italian vineyards the Pompeians used also imported wines from the coast of Asia Minor and the islands near by. One dealer, M. Fabius Euporus, kept wine from Cnidos, Cnidium. Wine from the island of Cos is fre-
quenty mentioned, as in this inscription: *Covm vet*[us] *P. Ap-
pulei Bassi*; — 'Old Coan of Publius Appuleius Bassus.'

Different kinds of wine were sometimes designated by char-
acteristic names. A certain Greek, M. Pomponius Teupon,
produced a brand which he called 'Frenzy Wine' (Διότης),
as if so strong that it would make the drinker frantic. Another
Greek, Timarchus, named one of his wines 'White Drink,'
Δευκονομάριον.

An amphora in the house of the Vettii was labelled *Gus-
taticium, 'Breakfast Drink';* it no doubt contained mulsum, a
kind of mead made by mixing honey with wine, which the
ancestors drank with the first meal of the day. The word
mulsum occurs on another amphora discovered previously.

Fruits and other edibles of all kinds were kept in amphorae.
On one was written: *Oliva alba dule* (for olivae albae dules)
P. C. E.,—'White sweet olives of P. C. E. '; the name cannot
be determined from the initials. On other amphorae the words
for bean meal (lomentum), honey, and lentils appear, the last
being designated by the Greek word.

A large number of small jars contained the fish sauces,—
garum, liquamen, and muria,—of which the ancients were so
fond; reference has already been made to Umbricius Scaurus
(p. 15), who seems to have had several establishments for the
making of the sauces, conducted by slaves, freedmen, and per-
haps by members of his family.

The best quality of garum, which was probably a thick
preparation, a kind of fish jelly, was designated by the letters
g. f., for garum — flos, 'garum blossom,' as in the following
inscription: *g[aran] — f[los] sembr[t] Scauri ab Eutych
c' Scauri;—'Scaurus's tunny jelly, blossom brand, put up by
Eutyches, slave of Scaurus.' We frequently find liquamen op-
timum, 'best liquamen.'

The muria was apparently a fish pickle, certain parts of
the fish, or certain varieties, being preserved in brine. According
to Pliny the Elder some fish sauces were prepared in a special
way, to be used by the Jews on fast days; two of these, as
already noted, appear in the inscriptions upon Pompeian jars,
garum castum and muria casta (p. 18).

In these inscriptions upon jars of various sizes the name of
the proprietor is sometimes given, in the genitive case, as *M.*
Caesi Celeris, — 'Of M. Caesius Celer.' The name of the man
to whom the consignment is made is put in the dative, as Albu-
cio Celso.

The name of the consignor sometimes follows that of the
consignee, as liquamen optimum A. Virnio Modesto ab Aga-
thopode, — 'Best liquamen, for Aulus Virnius Modestus, from
Agathopus.'

An inscription similar to that just mentioned, on an amphora
found in the house of Caecilius Jucundus, illustrates the extent
to which family pride might assert itself in the naming of chil-
dren: Caecilio Incundo ab Sexto Metello, — 'To Caecilius Jucun-
dus from Sextus Metellus.' The sender and the recipient were
both sons of Lucius Caecilius Jucundus. According to common
usage, one of the sons would have received the name Lucius
Caecilius Jucundus, after the father; while the other would have
been called Lucius Caecilius, with a cognomen derived perhaps
from the name of the mother. But the prosperous Pompeian
wished to suggest a relationship with the distinguished family
of the Caecilii Metelli, so he named one son Sextus Caecilius
Jucundus Metellus, and the other Quintus Caecilius Jucundus,
the name Quintus being common in the family of the Caecilii
Metelli. The names of the two sons are found together in an
election notice: Q. S. Caecili Incundii, — 'Quintus and Sextus
Caecilius Jucundus.'

Besides the names of the makers, inscriptions relating to
weight and ownership are found on the cups and other objects
of the Boscoreale treasure. Thus on the under side of the
Alexandria patera (Fig. 187, and p. 380) we find the following
record, the letters of which are outlined with points: Phi[ala]
uncia, 'The bowl and the relief medallion' together 'weigh
2 pounds, 10 ounces, and 6 scruples. The bowl weighs 2
pounds, 2 1/2 ounces; the relief medallion weighs 7 1/2
ounces.' In giving the items separately no account was taken of the
scruples. Reckoning the Roman pound as 327.453 grammes, the weight of the patera with its relief was 934.608 grammes, or 2.504 Troy pounds. This differs from the present weight by less than a gramme.

Occasionally a name in the genitive case is found with the record of weight, written with the same kind of letters; in such cases it is probably safe to assume that the name is that of the original owner. On the under side of one of the pair of cups ornamented with skeletons (Fig. 217) is the inscription: GAVIAE P.·II. SEIII; a later hand, writing with a fine point, added VAS II in the space after GAVIAE, as if to supply an obvious omission, so that the inscription in full would read, Gaviae. Vas[a] II [p[endentia] p[ondo libras] II, uncias VIII, [scrupula] IV, ‘The property of Gavia. The two cups weigh 2 pounds, 8 ounces, and 4 scruples’ (2.351 Troy pounds).

In some instances the name of a later owner has been scratched on the surface with a pointed tool. The name of a woman, Maxima, written in full or in abbreviation, appears on forty-five of the pieces in the Louvre. We may safely accept the conclusion of De Villefosse, that she is probably the one who made the collection, obtaining her specimens from different sources, and that to her the Boscoreale treasure belonged at the time of the eruption.

Besides the seals which were used in signing documents the Romans had stamps, signacula, which they impressed upon various articles as a means of identification or as an advertisement. Impressions of such stamps are found upon bricks and other objects of clay, and in one or two instances upon loaves of bread. Several charred loaves in the Naples Museum have the stamp: [C]eleris Q. Grani Veri ser.,—‘(Made by) Celer, slave of Quintus Granius Verus.’

The names upon stamps appear regularly in the genitive case, as N. Popidi Prisci, spelled backward on the stamp, so that the letters appear in the right order in the impression. Since the time of Fiorelli many houses have been named from the stamps found in them; in the house of the Vettii, for example, two stamps were found with the names of Aulus Vettius Restitutus and Aulus Vettius Conviva.