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NOTES ON LATIN INSCRIPTIONS FOUND IN BRITAIN.

PART VIII.

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49. Restorations of imperfect inscriptions, although subjects of agreeable speculation, are generally very hazardous, excepting those cases in which the extant words or letters are parts of *formulae*, and then a perfectly reliable reading may be supplied from known examples. It is very different, however, when the attempt is made to complete a fragment by supplying facts supposed to have been stated in the missing or mutilated portions. In such cases the restoration, although sometimes ingenious, is scarcely ever more than plausible. A remarkable example is presented by Governor Pownall's well known restoration of the imperfect inscription on stones found in Bath, and believed to have formed part of the frieze of the *temple of Minerva

* The only ancient authority for this temple is the following passage in Solinus :—"fontes calidi operario exculti apparatu ad usus mortalium : quibus fontibus præsul est Minervæ numen, in cujus æde perpetui ignes nunquam canescunt in favillas, sed ubi ignis tabuit, vertit in globos saxeos." The identity of the second syllable of *præsul* with the Celtic name of the goddess suggests that Solinus may have referred to it when he used the word, but the suspicion is groundless, as he says, in another place, of Angerona :—*diva præsul silentii*. Mr. Whitaker seems to have attached great importance to this passage in Solinus, and has built up some theories on it. In his estimate of its value I cannot concur : the facts and the Latinity of Solinus seem to be equally worthless. I am not disposed, however, to question the existence of a temple of Minerva in Bath, as it is otherwise probable.