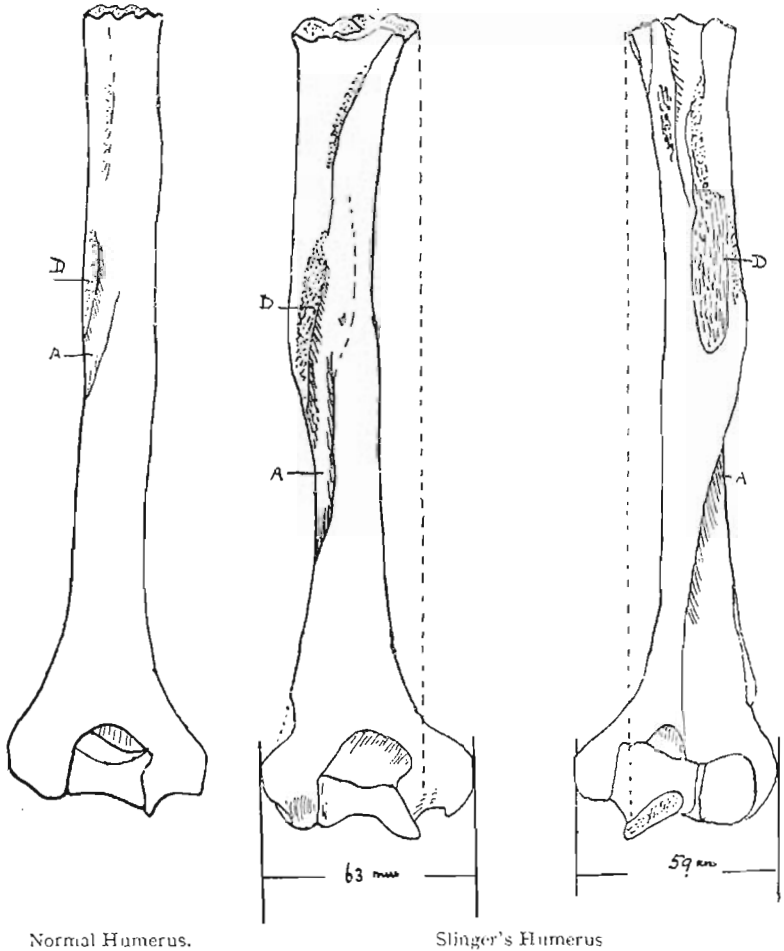


## An Upper Arm Bone of a Slinger

BY PROF. ED. FAWCETT, M.D., C.M., F.R.S.

An interesting upper arm bone (humerus) was found in a much dilapidated Roman coffin on the Dyrham Park Estate when a field near the bye-road to Lansdown was being ploughed. The coffin



contained limb bones of more than one person, so it is possible that at one time previously, when this coffin was first exposed, that other

bones perhaps never confined were put in and alongside those which had been confined, for it is surely unusual to bury two people in the same coffin.

The humerus found was from the left arm<sup>1</sup> (*see* Illustration), and from its massiveness as well as evidence of having given attachment to a very strong deltoid muscle. This muscle plays an important part in so moving the arm as to produce the movement necessary to use the weapon called a "sling." By its continued action from childhood to and through adult life it so modifies the shape of the humerus as not only to bow it outwards, but to produce large rough impressions on its outer side.

Professor J. Cameron, who has had opportunities of studying the bones of ancient slingers of Minorca, has noticed this curious conformation of the upper arm bone and gives illustrations of it.

The Balearic Islanders were the most famous slingers of ancient history. They were recruited into Hannibal's army and greatly impressed the Roman army by their prowess and skill: no doubt after the defeat of Hannibal and the addition of the Balearic Islands to Rome. Now it does not necessarily follow that the individual to whom this arm belonged was a Balearic Islander; it is possible that he was a slinger in the army of occupation of the Romans. That he was a slinger some may doubt, but this view is perhaps as good as any other.

I am much indebted to Mr. Maxwell, Director of the Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, for the opportunity of seeing and describing this bone.

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<sup>1</sup> I presume there were left-handed slingers as well as right-handed ones. Prof. Cameron has seen the condition on both sides, so that some may have been ambidextrous.