

ART. XV.—*Notes on a Roman Altar and other Sculptured Fragments at Haile.* By CHAS. A. PARKER, M.D.

Read at Kirkby Lonsdale, June 27, 1883.

THE little church at Haile (or Hale) is prettily situated in a deep dell, no doubt in ancient times thickly wooded, through which runs a stream, which still retains its old name of Kirkbeck. Three places of worship still exist on its banks, St. John's, Old St. Bridget's, and Hale, and there is a tradition of a fourth—viz., a chapel attached to Carnarvon Castle, an ancient residence of the le Flemings of Rydal, the site of which is still known as Castlear.

Haile Church is now undergoing restoration, and the plaster having been stripped off the walls, both inside and out, some fragments have come to light which, though few in number, show that a more pretentious building than the present stood there in pre-Puritanic times. The modern church is built of red sandstone, the sizes of the blocks being most irregular; some are very large and some square, resembling Roman stones, but without marks of broaching. The voussoirs of the small semi-circular window-heads are particularly large and heavy. The pulpit stood against the south wall of the nave. After removing it and scraping off the plaster, a lettered stone was seen to be built into the wall, just above the level of the floor. This was taken out, and, after being carefully examined, was built into the inside wall of the new vestry. This interesting fragment proved to be a Roman altar. It is of red sandstone, and measures $16\frac{1}{4}$ inches in height by $9\frac{1}{4}$ inches in breadth, and is about 8 inches thick. The left hand upper corner is broken off, but the inscription, which is incised and in the usual Roman characters, is uninjured by the break. The sides

sides and back are rough and uncarved. The lettering is for the most part distinct, and is in nine lines running thus—

DIBVS
HERCVLI
E·T
SILVANO
-F·E
PRIMVS·CVAR
PRO·SE ET
VEXLATIONE
V·S·L·M

The first word, DIBVS, is an irregular dative plural of DEUS, which is peculiar to inscriptions.

Altars to Hercules are not uncommon. They have been found on the line of the Wall and in Scotland.

The letters E·T, in spite of the stop between them, probably read as one word ET.

Among the lesser deities of Rome, Silvanus, god of forests and hunting, seems to have been an object of especial reverence. Altars dedicated to him have been found at Birdoswald, Moresby, Netherby, and Newcastle-on-Tyne. The Birdoswald altar is dedicated to the holy god Silvanus (DEO SANCTO) by the hunters of Banna, the Moresby one by the 2nd cohort of the Lingones. In Scotland, one was found at Castlecary and another at Eidon dedicated by a centurion of the twentieth legion.*

In the next lines, F·E, PRIMVS CVAR, lie the difficulties of of the inscription.

F·E. PRIMVS are the names of the dedicator, PRIMVS being the cognomen. The F has a long spur, which denotes that it is intended for FL, which would read FLAVIVS, but that Flavius being a gentile name should occupy the second place. The whole may read FELICIVS E(NNIVS) PRIMVS as the name. ENNIVS PRIMVS occurs on an altar found in Wales.

* The Celt, the Roman, and the Saxon, p. 325.

The last word, CVAR, is not common at all. The top of the c just touches the top of the v, but I do not think it is meant to be ligulate. I think it must be intended for CVRATOR, the office held by Ennius Primus. This word, CVRATOR, occurs on a stone found at Cilurnum on North Tyne, which is now at Alnwick Castle. It is not often that Roman sculptors make a mistake in spelling, but they sometimes do, and this is a very natural one. According to Mommsen, the curator of a cohort or ala was not its regular commander, but one who shared the command with the tribune or præfect. Dr. Hübner, of Berlin, thinks that "if not indeed CVRATOR, it must be CV(STOS) AR(MORVM), Keeper of the weapons." Mr. W. Thompson Watkin suggests QVAR as the correct reading, and thinks it refers to the nationality of the dedicator, who has been of the tribe of the Quariates, a people of Gallia Narbonensis.

PRO.SE is plain enough. There is no stop after the SE. The ET looks at first sight like H, but the cross mark, which is narrow and shallow, has been caused by a slip of the chisel.

VEXLATIONE takes up the whole of the eighth line. The first E looks very like I, but on careful examination proves to be an E; the cross lines being very short, owing to the crowding of the letters. In like manner the cutter—fearing, apparently, that he would not get in the whole word—has combined the first I with the L; so the whole word reads VEXILATIONE. This combining of letters; called ligature, is well shown on a slab found at Chesters in Northumberland, the date of which is A.D. 221. Mr. T. Wright says, "ligature is common in Roman inscriptions, especially of this age;" so that this may be a clue to the date of the Haile altar.

Dr. Bruce suggests a vexillation to have been a body of men drawn from different cohorts or legions for a special purpose, and fighting under one vexillum—a vexillum of its own. An altar found at Brougham, Westmorland, is dedicated

cated by a vexillation of Germans; also a broken tablet near Penrith, both being in honour of the DEÆ MATRES. Other inscriptions by vexillations have been found; in particular, the celebrated rock overhanging the Gelt.

The inscription concludes with the usual formula, V.S.L.M.,—that is, V(OTUM) S(OLVIT) L(UBENS) M(ERITO). The whole thus reading :

Dibus
Herculi
et
Silvano
Felicivs Ennivs
Primus curator
pro se et
vexillatione
votum solvit lubens merito

How this altar came to be built into the church wall, there is no evidence to show. It is hardly possible that the deep hollow in which the church stands could have been a Roman station of any sort. The church is a little over a mile and a half from Egremont Castle hill, and two and a half miles from the camp on Infell in Ponsonby parish, a straight line drawn between these two places passing through the churchyard. Possibly the stone was brought from Egremont. It is worth noticing that another straight line—drawn from the camp at Ravenglass to the camp at Moresby—also passes close to the churchyard, the two lines crossing each other in the village of Hale.

A fragment also was found what must have been a massive churchyard cross. It measures 17½ inches in length, is 20 inches broad at the base, and 18½ inches at the upper end of the fragment, and is 7½ inches thick. It is of hard white stone, and is built into the east wall of the nave outside,—*i.e.*, into the projection caused by the nave being wider than the chancel. Only one face
is

is visible, which has two parallel straight lines running up the centre, from which spring horizontal lines on each side about $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches apart, curving in graceful rolls and curls, and ending in leaflets or trefoils. The sculpture is in high relief, and has a raised border running up each edge. The discovery of this cross is interesting, as--both from the material of which it is made, "hard white stone," and the nature of the ornamentation—it resembles a cross at St. Bees* and two more at St. John's, Beckermeth,† which have been figured and described by Canon Knowles. It most resembles the headless cross at Beckermeth, and is, perhaps, the latest of the four, but scarcely later than the eighth century. These white stone crosses are of a totally different school from the red sandstone crosses of this district. There is no pellet work on the Hale fragment, but in two places little separate pieces are carved to fill up gaps. It also helps to complete the line of churchyard crosses along the coast, to the large number of which I would call the attention of this Society, viz. :—

St. Bees.—One cross in situ, and several fragments.

Egremont.—One cross-head.

Hale.—Fragments of two crosses.

St. John's, Beckermeth.—Fragments of several, and one socket.

St. Bridget's, Beckermeth.—Stumps of two crosses in situ; a cross-head is said to be built into the east gable and plastered over.

Ponsonby.—A stump in situ, but chiselled down.

Gosforth.—One cross standing, and fragments of two others.

Irton.—One cross perfect and in situ.

Muncaster.—Cross-shaft in situ, and a cross-head.

* *Ante* vol. ii., page 28, No. 5.

† *Ante* vol. iv., page 144, Nos. 1 and 3.

Waberthwaite.—Two cross-shafts in the wall.*

This long line of coast crosses surely points to the fact of the Christian missionaries coming from over the sea, and making their first settlements near where they landed. It is also noticeable that in the churchyards of the townships in this district, all of course later than that of the mother church, no crosses have (to my knowledge at least) been found. All the crosses still standing are on the south sides of their respective churches, with the exception of St. Bees where the churchyard lies altogether on the north side of the building. A small fragment of red sandstone, was found, measuring 12 inches by $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches, and broken off obliquely at the lower end. It is part of a sepulchral slab of remarkable simplicity having cut upon it in relief a plain wheel cross, the arms of the cross not projecting beyond the circle. It was found in the interior of the churchyard wall two years ago. There are four other carved fragments which long formed the coping of the churchyard wall, but are now by the pious care of the vicar fastened securely against the new wall in an upright position so that the carving can be seen. They have been figured and described by Canon Knowles.† Some fragments of tracery were found together with pieces of the sides of heavily moulded windows, one having been square-headed. Also two fragments of quatrefoil pillars of unusual sections and a broken octagonal stoup, all of red sandstone.

* For these crosses see *Ante* Vol. ii, p. 27; Vol. iii, p. 95; Vol. iv, p. 139; Vol. vi, p. 373. See also Vol. v, p. 149 and 153.

† *Ante* Vol. iii, p. 95.