ART. I.—*Rey-Cross.* By W. G. COLLINGWOOD, M.A., F.S.A.

Read at the site, September 16th, 1926.

REY-CROSS, as it is often in modern writing, or Rere-cross as anciently and locally, is not now in Westmorland. Half of it used to be, for all through the middle ages it was the boundary-mark between us of the West and Yorkshire. So we are not trespassing here, in the antiquarian sense; it is as much ours as our neighbour's. Our Society came here on August 18th, 1880, on July 8th, 1887, and on July 4th, 1893; and the fixing of the shaft in its base was done, and the railings were made, by ourselves and the Yorkshire Archaeological Society in 1887. In 1909 we had the railings re-painted under the kind care of Dr. Abercrombie of Augill Castle, whom we remember with great affection and respect. The recent notice-board is not ours.

Visiting it once more, let us recall what may be said of it, and what may not; for as in the case of many famous monuments, most of what is commonly said is fabulous.

King Marius. The first legend connects this place with a son of the historical Arviragus of the first century A.D. King Arviragus no doubt existed; Juvenal names him; but the stories told of his reign are a medley of incidents which actually occurred in the Viking Age. They are found in the Welsh "Bruts," dated by Skene (Chronicles of the Picts and Scots, pp. 120, 122) between 1120 and 1135, whence (or from similar sources) Geoffrey of Monmouth copied them; and others used the same stories as episodes in the Arthurian legend, all put into shape in the twelfth century. It is now clear that they are romances compiled by Welsh and Breton bards and

story-tellers from scraps of pedigrees and traditions of the ninth and tenth centuries—not earlier for the most part, though some contain waifs of Celtic mythology. Of this the tale of Marius is an example. As Geoffrey tells it, the story runs that Marius, son of Arviragus, defeated a certain king of the Picts from Scythia named Roderic, and set up a stone in memory of the victory in the province which was called Westmorland from his own name—Westmariland, supposed by twelfth century antiquaries to mean West-Marius-land. "There is an inscription," he adds, "retaining his memory to this day in that country." It is probable that the inscription was on a Roman altar, once known at Carlisle but now lost, which ought to have been read MARTI, to Mars, not MARII, of Marius. We are suggesting further that the battle described was no other than the legendary battle of Arthuret between Roderic and Maurus, Meuric or Morken. And the sequel of this story is mixed up with a widespread Celtic myth of the settlement of the Picts, pure fable but accepted as history by Matthew of Westminster (thirteenth century), by a French Scottish Chronicle of 1280, and a Latin one of 1348 (given in *Chron. Picts. and Scots*, pp. 199, 298). But even these never say that the battle was on Stainmoor. That was a later addition quoted by Archbishop Ussher in the seventeenth century, who gave as the substance of the inscription on the Stone of Marius—

"Here the King Westmer
Slow the king Rothynger."

That is to say, the king of Westmer-land slew Roderic or Rhydderch—a name we know well enough in Cumberland. But we need not follow this fairy tale any further.

Hatheolf. Another legend was related to us by the Rev. Thomas Lees of Wreay, when we met here in 1880 and in 1887, from the story of "Horn Childe and the maiden Rimnild." This is a fourteenth century poem, relating incidents supposed to refer to the fifth century. There

was an Anglian prince Hatheolf, who was feasting on a Whit-Sunday at Pickering when he heard that three kings, Ferwell, Winwald and Malkan, from Ireland were ravaging Westmorland. They met on Stainmoor. Ferwell and Winwald were slain. Hatheolf killed 5000 men with his own hand but was beaten down with stones by the Irish and stabbed by king Malkan. Malkan returned to Ireland but was afterwards slain at the battle of Yolkil by Horn, son of Hatheolf. That is the story, baldly put; to which Mr. Lees added that he thought Melkinthorpe was named from this Malkan, as being his halting-place on the way to and from Stainmoor. Hardly possible in the fifth century or before the Danish word *thorp* came here in the ninth! But no doubt some Irish Viking Maelchon settled there in the tenth or eleventh century; and the whole story obviously relates to the Viking Age, being in fact a garbled version of the historical battle of Stainmoor, to which we shall come later. That the legend was accepted by Father Haigh carries no weight, for there have been few such displays of learning and ingenuity, led astray by a string of fallacies, as Haigh's Anglo-Saxon studies.

Eadmund the Magnificent. We all know how king Eadmund conquered "Dunmail, last king of rocky Cumberland," and handed over the country to the heir of Scotland as a sub-kingdom under England. In relating this event, the Scottish history of 1280, already mentioned, says that thereafter the Scots laid claim to Cumbria as far as the "Reir croiz de Staynmore." But again, it does not assert that the cross was then set up as a boundary-mark by king Eadmund. It only tells us that this place was so called in 1280. Earlier still the Chronicle of Lanercost names the "Rer Cros in Staynmor" as the boundary claimed by the bishop of Glasgow in 1258 as against the bishop of Carlisle; and Chancellor Prescott referred (*Wetherhal,* p. 385) to a similar state-

ment as made about 1275. The cross, in the middle ages, was already there and already known as a meer-stone between east and west.

William the Conqueror. The document of about 1275 is given in full by Canon James Wilson (*St. Bees*, p. 531), and has been used to support another legend. It says, but says untruly:—" Ranulf de Meschines came to England with William the Bastard, the Conqueror; and king William the Conqueror himself gave to the same Ranulph all the land from a place called Rere Crosse on Stayn moor to the river over against Scotland called Sulewaht," i.e. the original ford of Solway. He did not; but from this or some similar claim, advanced in the Edwardian wrangle over the Borders, Hector Boece (or Boetius), late medieval and quite uncritical, assumed—as Camden quoted him—" This stone was set up as a boundary between England and Scotland, when William the first gave Cumberland to the Scots."

Speed's version (1623) is not more convincing. He makes Malcolm of Scotland proffer peace and deliver hostages to the Conqueror upon Stane-more, and says that " as he takes it " the cross was then erected " to show the Limites of either Kingdome." All this is guesswork, and it is doubtful whether stone crosses were set up as boundary-marks before the practice was introduced by the twelfth and thirteenth century abbeys. But Camden and others accepted the explanation of Hector Boece. Camden spoke also of " the remainder of a Cross, which we call Rere-cross, and the Scots Rei-cross, that is *a Royal Cross.*" This is a mistaken interpretation of the word, which like the " Rear or Ray Cragg " in the old bounder of Coniston pretty certainly means " boundary," from the Norse *rá*, as in *rá-merki*, a land mark. In a document of 1314 it is spelt " Redecros," natural enough as the guess of a southern clerk, but not usual in the north; and the cross is not red, but of the yellowish-white grit stone with

large pebbles in it, often used for tenth and eleventh century monuments in these parts. Dr. Todd and Nicolson and Burn, eighteenth century antiquaries, copied Camden. Bishop Gibson in his notes to Camden (1725) was more particular; he said that the road "passes through a large camp where the stone of king Marius formerly stood; instead of which there is another erected call'd Rere-cross." The statement is puzzling, but Bishop Gibson seems to have accepted the story of Marius, though he realized that the stone was not so old.

The Roman Milestone theory of the origin of the stone, said to be supported by "authorities," was apparently invented by General Roy about 1769, when he was surveying Roman remains in this district. He said—"Rey cross stands within the camp . . . and seems to have been a Roman milestone." Dr. Guest of Cambridge, whose *Origines Celticae* is not now taken as authoritative, and our Mr. Lees were inclined to accept the General's theory. Chancellor Ferguson later (*Hist. Westmorland*, p. 52; our *Transactions*, O.S. xiii, 50*f.*) discredited it, though "a portion of a Roman milestone on which is COH. V.,* is, or was, at the Spital-house near the camp." Indeed, a Roman milestone may have been used as the material for this cross, but we have to note—(*a*) the shaped head, as of a wheel-cross with all the carving worn off it, and one side split away; (*b*) the base, which was there before modern times and is that of a cross; and (*c*) old descriptions which suggest patterns as of a tenth century cross, carved on the shaft. Speed (1623) described "a stone crosse, on the one side of whose shaft stood the picture, and armes, of the king of England, and on the other the image and armes of the king and kingdome of Scotland." He meant that the carving was already indistinct, but it was thought that a figure and ornament

**sic*, possibly cos. v —R. G. C.

had been cut on the stone. In 1852 Hylton Longstaffe said that near the cross was " a weather-worn slab, about four feet long, having traces of a human figure, apparently once inlaid with some precious metal. A conical aperture in the top perhaps contained a metal cross." By this he may have meant that the shaft was lying apart from the base, as we know it sometimes was before 1887, and that the traces of carving resembled the matrix of a brass in a church; or that there was another piece, for part is lost. In his time perhaps the side of the head had not been split away, and there was a break—the beginning of the damage—which he took for a dowel-hole. At any rate we can still see the shaping of the circular head, and traces of interlacing on the west side of the shaft. To attempt any restoration of the worn hollows in the panels would be guess-work, but they are such as might represent carving after nearly a thousand years of exposure to weather of the roughest, and to many a wayfarer by this frequented road.

Suppose, now, that the carving was once something like the famous "devil" in Kirkby Stephen church, perhaps not quite so deep, it might weather to this; and such figures and ornament would be taken by medievals to mean the kings and heraldry of the two realms. As part of such a cross the stone can be understood, but it is not simply a broken Roman milestone. By its name we see that it was thought to be a cross more than six and a half centuries ago; and as there was no cross-road here, *that* explanation will not hold.

The Rey-cross Camp. The monument stands close to an earthwork, sometimes confused with the Roman fort of Maiden castle a mile and a half to the west. Some description of this camp was given by Chancellor Ferguson here in 1893 and in his *Westmorland* of 1894. It is remarkable for its size, and for having eight or ten gates, with a " tumulus " or traverse in front of each. Within this

large camp is a smaller one, meaning that it was re-occupied by a smaller force. MacLauchlan thought it British, but its ramparts are slight, and though not quite regularly laid out it has not the usual curves of a British plan. Nor is it likely to be Danish, for in spite of popular attribution there are no " Danish camps " in our district. Nor can it be a medieval manor-garth, for the site is prohibitive. A Roman army may have camped here on the march; and even if it were twice occupied as a temporary halting-place, very little in the way of relics would be left on the surface.

The history of the Cross. It was here or hereabouts in the thirteenth century, as we have heard already; but Bishop Gibson has thrown doubt on its exact site. Now in or about 1539, Leland the antiquary made two statements of interest in this matter. He said (fol. 63) " There is in Westmerland, as it is said, a famose Stone as a limes of old time, inscribed . . . " and he omitted the inscription. And further (fol. 116) " There is a place an viii Mile plaine West from Bowis . . . a Thoroughfare in Richmonshire cawllid *Maiden Castel,* where is a greate rounde Hepe a 60 Foote in Cumpace of rude Stones, sum smaule, sum bygge, and be set *in formam pyramidis*; and yn the Toppe of them al ys set one Stone *in conum,* beyng a Yard and a half in lenghth. So that the hole may be countid an xviii. Foote hy, and is set on a hille in the very Egge of Stanemore. And this is a limes betwixt *Richemontshire* and *Westmerlande.*"

Leland seems to have confused the two earthworks; but when Bishop Gibson, two hundred years later, said that the " stone of Marius " *formerly* stood in the camp through which the road passes, and that *another* was erected and called the Rere cross, we wonder whether the cross was at one time on a mound, such as the traverse of the camp-gate, used perhaps as a burial-cairn, and subsequently re-erected where it is now. If that were the

case, it is all the more likely that it was the gravestone of some great person, slain here in battle.

The battles of Stainmoor. On the border between east and west, and on this road which has always been the main route across the north of England, there must have been fights. We can give particulars of one which occurred on August 4th, 1314, when Sir Andrew de Harcla met the Scots below Stainmoor and fought them near "le Rede cros." The Exchequer Accounts of his expenses at this battle are quoted by Mr. J. E. Morris in our *Transactions* (N.S., iii, 317*ff.*) and we gather that Sir Andrew had with him three knights, 50 men-at-arms (heavy cavalry), 30 hobelars (light horse) and 100 archers. Twenty-five horses were killed and had to be paid for. Henry de Bromley lost a grey horse and Sir Thomas de Torthorald lost a black charger with one foot white.

Much earlier, about 971, the Pictish Chronicle (written about 990) records that Kenneth mac Malcolm ravaged the Sassenach as far as Stanmoir, which is, I think, the earliest actual record of the place-name.

But there was a much more important battle fought here, less than twenty years earlier, the battle of which the romance of Child Horn seems to contain an echo. This has been discussed in articles of mine in Calverley's "Crosses" (1899) and in our *Transactions*, N.S., ii, so that the brief conclusions are all that need be stated here.

Eric Bloodaxe, son of Harald Fairhair of Norway, was king at York about 946 for a couple of years. This Viking rule of Northumbria was a menace to the peace of England, and king Eadred of Wessex succeeded in driving Eric out. Then Olaf Cuaran, son of Sigtrygg the Dane, managed to slip into York, and to hold the little kingdom for about four years, while Eric went raiding on the Irish sea and perhaps further. He was a very notable Viking; one could make a long story of his adventures; but in a word he was much more picturesque than amiable, and

his witch-wife Gunnhild was a terror to all. Moreover he was Norse, and the York settlers were mainly Danes; north of the Tees the population was chiefly Anglian. So on his return to Yorkshire, in or about 954, he was entrapped "in a lonely place named Steinmor," says Roger of Wendover, by the forces of Earl Oswulf of Bernicia and of Maccus or Macon, son of Olaf Cuaran. All the more serious chroniclers, that is to say not the professed romancers but the annalists, whether English, Irish or Icelandic, unite in recording a great battle in which Eric himself and many others fell; a very great battle, second only to Brunanburh of nearly twenty years earlier, and even more decisive, for it put an end to foreign domination in England for more than half a century. And just as there is a famous song about Brunanburh, so there is about this battle, the Norse poem composed for Queen Gunnhild on the death of her lord. It pictures him as a pagan—though he had been nominally converted—coming to Odin in Valhöll and welcomed by the great heroes of old. Dasent has paraphrased it in "Burnt Njal," ending thus:—

Hail to thee, Eric, now !
Heartily welcome thou !
Enter, thou mighty king, enter the hall.
I ask but this only,
What princes from far
Come with thee ? Not lonely
Thou surely hast hastened,
Leaving the battle where foemen fell chastened,
Hither to heaven from hurly of war.
Kings five, Eric said,—
Their names I will tell:
I the sixth at their head
In the gory fight fell . . .

Now if the Rey cross was a gravestone dating after the middle of the tenth century, it is not impossible that it was

meant to commemorate one who fell in this battle, or in some other fight on Stainmoor. Nearer than that we cannot go; but that, from all indications, seems to be the probability. In a century or so, being in fact the meer-stone between the kingdoms, it got the name it has borne ever since.