



THE ROMAN INSCRIPTIONS DIS-
COVERED AT CHESTER, DURING THE
FIRST REPAIRS TO THE NORTH WALL,
IN 1887.

BY W. THOMPSON WATKIN.¹

(Read 19th December, 1887.)

WHEN I last had the pleasure of reading a paper before this Society, some three years since, on "Facts connected with the Roman occupation of Cheshire," I said that in the Roman age there had existed in Chester "stately and classic structures, of which all trace, above ground at least, had vanished," also that "it was but little we knew of the history of *Deva*," but that much of that history had to be disinterred, and no doubt eventually would be disinterred, in the form of inscriptions.

Ever since then, I am glad to say, there has been a more or less increasing interest taken in the Roman antiquities of this city, which has at last culminated in the grand discoveries made of the inscribed and sculptured stones built up in the north wall, near the Phœnix Tower, discoveries remarkable in themselves, and which are now being followed

¹ Owing to Mr. Watkin's death, this paper has not had the benefit of his corrections and additions. It has, however, been carefully read over by one of his friends.

up by other discoveries equally interesting. I hope they will still continue to be made. Hundreds of Roman inscriptions are, as I have frequently said, built up in the walls. It has long been a puzzling question, how is it that so few traces both of Roman architecture and Roman tombstones have been found in Chester, whilst other large Roman stations yield them plentifully? That is now being answered—baths and basilica—Prætorium and Forum, have all been robbed, despoiled, and even demolished for the sake of their large and valuable stones in order that at various times the walls might be kept in an efficient state. But I do not intend to-night to touch upon the question of the age of the walls—that question is being well “threshed out” elsewhere—and so I will say nothing as to the time when these stones and the great number of tombstones were removed and built into the wall. The stones more or less speak for themselves as to the grandeur of the buildings from which they were taken, but the inscriptions require some looking into to make them reveal their hidden meanings. This is what I now propose to do, and I venture to hope that, although my paper is literally finding “sermons in stones,” those sermons may not be found dry and uninteresting.

Some of the original stones are exhibited here to-night, but others are too ponderous to be easily moved. Their inscriptions have, however, been carefully copied. No. 1 (No. 35)¹ is

L . ANNIVS . L . F
TRO . MARCEL .

Though imperfect, this stone would appear to have con-

¹ The numbers within brackets are the official numbers cut on the stones, so as to enable them to be readily identified. (See Mr. Matthews Jones' Report, pp. 1—10.)

tained beneath the inscription the bust or half length of the deceased. As a specimen of the order of the *nomina* in Roman inscriptions, where the tribe and birthplace (or *domus*) are given, it will well serv  as an illustration. We have first of all the initial letter of the *prænomen* (L) standing for Lucius, exactly as in the present day J. would be presumed to stand for John. If any other *prænomen* was meant, we should have another letter of it, just as we have Jas. for James, or Jos. for Joseph, to mark the distinction between John and these other names. Next we have the *nomen* (which answers to our modern surname) *Annius*; this the person commemorated could not avoid having, any more than the son of a Mr. Jones could avoid bearing his surname. But as there were a good many gentlemen who might rejoice in the name of Lucius Annius, as there are in the present day many who bear the name of John Jones, it was necessary to distinguish which Lucius Annius was meant. This was done by the introduction of another name called the *cognomen*, and this name, instead of being placed *before* the *nomen* (or surname), as in the present day, was placed *after* it; and not only so, but the initial letter of the name of the father, and in many cases the tribe, was also interjected between the *nomen* and *cognomen*. This is the case here. The expansion is *Lucius Annius L(ucii) F(ilius) Tro(mentina) (tribu) Marcellus*, or translated, "Lucius Annius Marcellus the son of Lucius of the tribe Tromentina." The lost portion of the inscription would give his age and possibly his birthplace, the latter following the word Marcellus, which would be its nominal position. To instance a parallel case in English, we might say that the deceased was named John Llewellyn Jones, the son of John (Jones), a Flintshire man, a native of Bagillt. The *prænomen* was not *always* used in inscriptions. Just the same thing occurs in the present day.

Mr. Charles Roach Smith, for example, is frequently spoken of as Mr. Roach Smith, the Charles or letter C. being dropped.

This will be seen in the next inscription (No. 19), which is

D . M .
FLAVI
A . SATV
RNINA .

This is also, as regards the close of the inscription, imperfect. It opens with the well-known D . M ., standing for *D(iis) M(anibus)*, i.e., "To the gods, the shades," or "To the divine shades," *Flavia Saturnina*, the *prænomen* not being given. The age, &c., is broken off. All that we can say is that the stone commemorates Madam *Flavia Saturnina*. It appears, from slight traces left, to have borne above the inscription a representation of the death-bed scene, as in many other instances.

No. 3 (No. 23), whilst opening with D . M . (*Diis Manibus*), gives us the *tribus* and also the birthplace. It is, however, imperfect :

D . M
M . SEXTIVS·
CLAV . BELLIC
CLA . CELEIA . A
RVM . X
PEND .

and should be expanded: *D(iis) M(anibus) M(arcus) Sextius Clau(dia [tribu]) Bellic(us) Cla(udia) Celeia A(nno)rum . . . (Sti)pend(iorum) . . .* or translated: "To the divine shades. Marcus Sextius Bellicus of the Claudian tribe, (a native of) Claudia Celeia . . . years of age . . . of service." It is only recently that I have seen either this stone or a drawing of it. From a rubbing sent, I concluded that the letter C was the end of the third line, which I find it is not, and that CIA was the commencement of the fourth,

whereas it is CLA. I consequently expanded the end of the third and commencement of the fourth as *Belliccia*, part of the word *Belliccianus*. These are in reality *Bellicus Cla*. The last abbreviation we have in other instances in the case of the town or colony of *Claudia Celeia*, e.g., Orelli No. 501, where CLA . CELE is used. The town which is now named *Cilly*, was in the ancient Noricum.

No. 4 (No. 24) is a most interesting stone. On its face it bears the representation of a centurion and his wife, the latter on a smaller scale, as if in the background. Beneath the feet of the centurion is the inscription (see Plate I., frontispiece):—

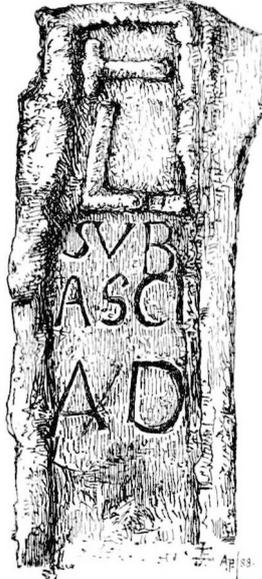
D . M .
 M . AVR . NEPOS . > LEG
 XX . VV . CONIVX
 PIENTISSIMA . F . C
 VIX . ANNIS . L .

The only difficulty in this is the *prænomen*. I opine that the stone cutter has intended to give us MAR . for *Marcus*, somewhat ligulate, but has stopped. One archæologist asserts that the stroke after the M is a well-known abbreviation for the *prænomen Manius*, but this is generally M^o; a small comma-like figure being introduced after the M. Granting, however, that the *prænomen* is *Manius* rather than *Marcus*, the expansion would be *D(iis) M(anibus) Manius Aur(elius) Nepos centurio Leg(ionis) Vicesimæ V(aleriae) V(ictricis). Conjux Pientissima F(aciendum) C(uravit). Vixit Annis. L.* "To the gods the shades. Manius Aurelius Nepos, a centurion of the Twentieth Legion, the Valerian, the Victorious. His most dutiful wife caused this to be made. He lived for fifty years."

Upon the side of this stone is an inscription, which is, so far as recorded, unique in Britain. Under the representations of an *ascia* (or axe) and a *malleus* (a hammer or mallet) we have the words—

SVB .
 ASCI
 A . D

or *sub ascia d(edicavit)*. "Under the axe (she) has dedicated [the inscription]." Numerous instances of this somewhat mysterious formula occur in the south of France and



CARVING AND INSCRIPTION ON THE SIDE OF THE STONE BEARING THE FIGURES OF A CENTURION AND HIS WIFE. (Plate I.)

elsewhere. Many are in the Lyons Museum. At Colchester and at Lincoln tombstones have occurred with the representation of the *ascia*, but without any allusion to it. We shall, however, gather more as to the sense of this inscription immediately.

No. 5 (No. 58) is only the lower part of what has been a grand monument, consisting of at least two large stones, the upper one, in addition to the commencement of the inscription, has probably borne a full-length (or nearly so)

representation of the deceased. What remains of the inscription is:—

PVB . > LEG . V . MACED . ET
 VIII . AVG . ET . II . AVG . ET . XX . VV
 VIXIT . ANNIS . LXI . ARISTIO
 LIB . H . F . C

Leaving for the moment PVB at the commencement of this inscription, the remainder is plainly, *Centurio Legionis V. Maced(onicæ) et VIII. Aug(ustæ) et II. Aug(ustæ) et XX. V(aleriæ) V(ictricis)*, *Vixit annis LXI. Aristio lib(ertus) h(eres) f(aciendum) c(uravit)*. "A centurion of the fifth legion (surnamed) *Macedonica*, and of the eighth (surnamed) *Augusta*, and of the second (surnamed) *Augusta*, and of the twentieth (surnamed) *Valeria Victrix*. He lived sixty-one years. Aristio (his) freedman (and) heir caused this to be made." The Second Legion, *Augusta*, the Twentieth Legion, and a vexillation of the Eighth Legion were in England in A.D. 44, under the Emperor Claudius, and from continental inscriptions it would almost appear that a vexillation of the Fourth Legion (likewise surnamed *Macedonica*) was also here. It is quite likely (as the inscription is evidently of early date) that the officer who has been commemorated by this stone served in each of the legions named in Britain, though, if so, a vexillation of the Fifth Legion must be added to those already known to have been in our island. I think the letters PVB. at the commencement have been part of some such title as CVRAT. OP. PVB (*curator operum publicorum*), and if the upper part of this stone is found, it will probably prove not only the truth of this, but that the defunct was a native of Rome itself. Certainly, he was an important man in *Deva*.

No. 6 (No. 21) is on a tombstone, the upper part of which represents the deceased lying upon a couch, with a cup or

glass in his right hand, leaning upon his left arm, his head to the right, and a tripod table in front of the couch. (See Plate IV.) The inscription is:—

D. M
FVRI . MAXI
MI
MIL . LEG . XX . VV .
ST XXII
H . F . C

D(iis) M(anibus) Furi(i) Maximi Mil(itis) Leg(ionis) Vicesimæ V(aleriæ) V(ictricis) Stipend(iorum) XXII. H(eres) F(aciendum) C(uravit). "To the divine shades of *Furius Maximus*, a soldier of the Twentieth Legion, the Valerian, the Victorious, of twenty-two years of service. (His) heir caused (this) to be made." We have here an example of the deification (to a certain extent) of the dead, the divine *manes* of the defunct being named, as we often meet with it elsewhere. This is the second instance of a member of the gens *Furia* being named in a Chester inscription, the other being on the altar to Minerva by *Furius Fortunatus*.

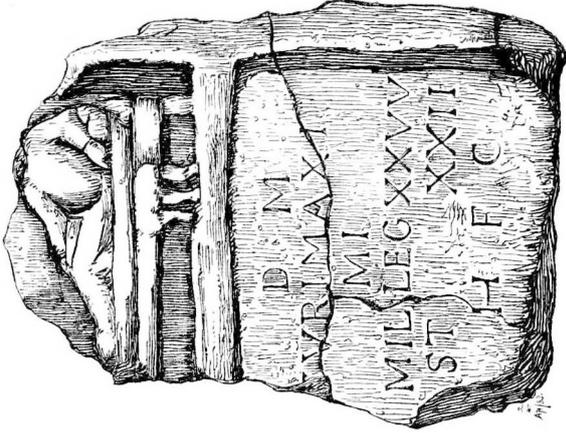
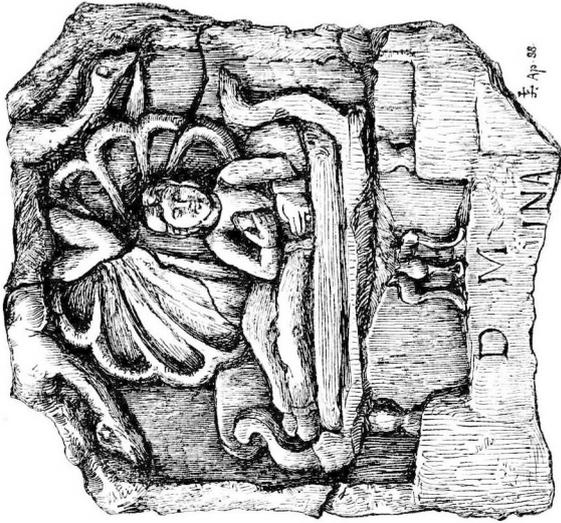
No. 7 (No. 14) is also interesting. A plain inscription within a panel; it reads:

D. M.
M . AVRELIVS . ALEXAND .
PRAEF . CAST . LEG . XX .
** NAT ** RVSC **
** X . AN . LXXII * * * * *
* * * ICES ET . S * * * * *

*D(iis) M(anibus) M(arcus) Aur(elius) Alexand(er) Præf(ectus) Cast(rorum) Leg(ionis) Vicesimæ . . . Nat(ione) . . . Vix(it) An(nos) LXXII . . .*¹ "To the divine shades.

¹ Mr. Watkin does not mention the last line. It may, however, be added that this line is very puzzling, and that out of thirteen letters we are only certain of three, CES occurring about the middle of the line, and probably followed by ET.

PLATE IV.



ROMAN TOMBSTONES, FOUND IN THE NORTH WALL OF THE CITY OF CHESTER, IN 1887.

Marcus Aurelius Alexander, Præfect of the Camps of the Twentieth Legion, . . . by nation . . . He lived seventy-two years," &c. There can be no reasonable doubt, I think, but that the usual v.v., for *V(aleriæ) V(ictricis)*, was at the commencement of the fourth line. In the same line we have the nationality of the deceased given. Some of the letters are doubtful. The first version of the inscription only gave RVC; from this Mr. Roach Smith inferred that *Rucconia* was the birthplace. Subsequently I had RVSC sent to me, from which I inferred (ET)RVSCVS would be the word. From the same letters M. Mowat, of Paris, infers (SY)RVSC(O)*mmagenus*, and thinks, according to recent correspondence I have had with him, that he can detect the SY before them. It is simply a question of whether ET. or SY. are the letters. If the former, the deceased was an Etruscan; if the latter, he was a native of Commagene, in Syria. M. Mowat's reading is rendered more probable by the appearance of what seems to be the upper part of an O after the C. We have another instance of the presence of natives of Commagene in Chester, in the inscription on the large altar dedicated by Longus and Longinus to the *Genius Loci*. They also belonged to the Twentieth Legion.

With this stone we have now inscriptions of a *Præfectus Castrorum* of each of the three legions permanently quartered in Britain. The name of one belonging to the Second Legion occurs on an altar at Caerleon (the head quarters of his corps); one belonging to the Sixth Legion is named on an altar found at Hexham; and this stone is the third. Quite recently, also, the name of another officer, who had been *Præfectus Castrorum* of the Second Legion, *in Britannia*, has been found in Asia Minor.

No. 8 (No. 29) has some singularities. Its upper part contains two figures in recesses. There are spaces beneath

the feet for inscriptions, one of which is inscribed, but the other is blank. The inscription, which is under the left figure, at present reads (see Plate V.) :—

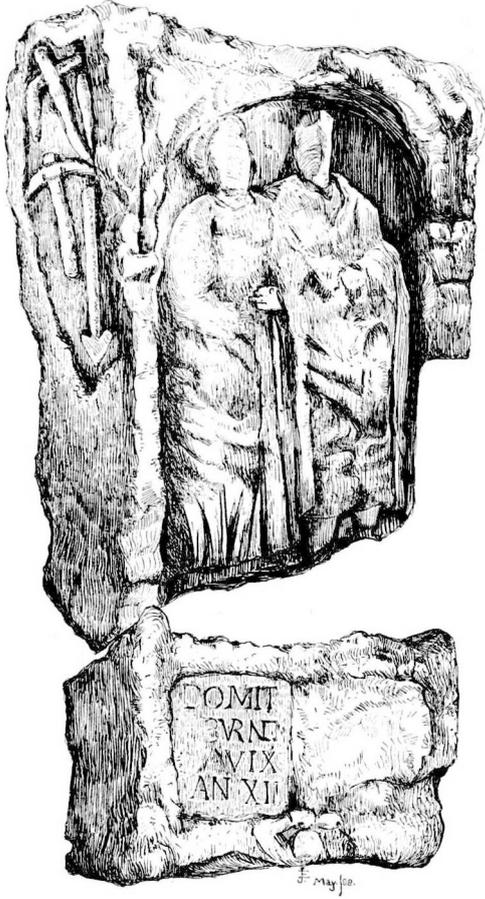
(D)OMIT
 .. VRNI
 .. A VIX
 .. N XII

that is, *Domitia Saturnina Vixit Annos XII* [? *XLI*]. It seems most probable that the figure above the inscription is a female, as in the other the garment is shorter and portions of two legs are visible, but both figures are much worn. The great value of this stone, however, consists in the representation upon its side of the *ascia* (or axe), combined with what seem to be a *malleus* (or hammer), a *ligo* (or spade), and a *scalprum* (or chisel); and we have here all the implements necessary both for digging the grave and carving the stone. The inscription has evidently been dedicated *sub ascia*, and the stone enables us, by the representation of the four implements, to understand that by that phrase, it was not only the carving and dedicating of the stone that was meant, as some writers have thought, nor yet simply the digging of the grave, as others have asserted, but both combined.

No. 9 (No. 28) represents, again, a death-bed scene; the defunct commemorated being here in a semi-recumbent posture upon a couch, with the usual tripod table in front. He is holding a glass in his right hand, and a child at the foot of the couch is in an imploring attitude. (See Plate III., opposite p. 8.) Unfortunately, with the exception of D. M. for *D(iis) M(anibus)* the inscription is broken off. The *ascia* and *malleus* are on the side of this stone also.

In No. 10 (No. 30) we have also a female, on a couch, in a semi-recumbent posture. There is a sort of scallop shell ornament behind, and the tripod table in front. All that is

PLATE V.



ROMAN TOMBSTONE, FOUND IN THE NORTH WALL OF THE CITY OF
CHESTER, IN 1887.

(Showing the *ascia*, *mallens*, &c., on the side.)

left of the inscription beneath are the letters D. M. for *D(iis) M(anibus)*, and the end of the first line, which has been INA, evidently the termination of a female name. (See Plate IV., opposite p. 18.)

No. 11 (No. 25) in some respects resembles No. 1, naming the *tribus* and also the *domus*. It reads :

D . M .
M . CLVVI . M .
ANI VALENTIVS
FORO . IVLII

i.e., *D(iis) M(anibus) M(arcus) Cluvius M(arci Filius) Aniensis (tribu) Valentius (or Valentinus) Foro Iulii*. "To the divine shades. Marcus Cluvius Valentius, the son of Marcus, of the tribe Aniensis (from) Forum Iulii." Several places bore the name of Forum Iulii, the two most prominent being the modern Frejus and the modern Friuli. It is most probable that the first-named town was the birthplace of the deceased.

No. 12 (No. 31) is interesting. It is a monument erected to three young slaves by their master. The text seems to be, untying the ligatures :—

DIS . MANIBVS
ATTANVS . N . .
ATILIANVS AN X
PROTVS . AN XII
POMPEIVS
OPTATVS . DO
MINVS . F . C .

and I would read it *D(i)is Manibus Attanus (A)n(nos) . . . Atilianus An(n)os X . . . , Protus an(nos) XII. Pompeius Optatus Dominus F(aciendum) C(uravit)*. "To the divine shades. Attanus (he lived) . . . years, Atilianus ten (or more) years, Protus twelve years. Pompeius Optatus (their) master caused (this) to be made." It seems evident that the NS in the second line is NVS ligulate, and there is pos-

sibly another numeral after the x in the third line. *Vixit* is understood. This is the first inscription found in Britain in which the word *Dominus* occurs in the sense of "master."

No. 13 (No. 4) is a mere fragment and much worn. It seems to be,

G . XX . VV .
X . AN .
H . F . C

and has commemorated some member of the Twentieth Legion, for we have part of the words *Leg(ionis) Vicesimæ V(aleriae) V(ictricis)*, part of *Vix(it) An(nos)*, and the initial letters of *H(eres) F(aciendum) C(uravit)* "His heir caused to be made."

No. 14*.¹ I am not sure of all the letters in this much worn fragment. I am inclined to think they are—

C . F . CLA
SAV
XXX

i.e., *C(aii) F(ilius) Cla[udia(tribu)]*, in the second line *Sav* would be part of the word *Savaria*, a well-known town of the Claudian tribe, and it is here in the normal place after the *cognomen*. The *xxx* are numerals, part of the expressed age of the deceased.

In No. 15* we have nothing but *vs*, probably part of the *cognomen*, and *xxx* . part of the numerals of the age.

No. 16* is part of a large and fine inscription, but beyond the letters *IF* or *IE*, with part of *v* above, we have nothing left. It has probably come from a building.

No. 17* has been also a tombstone. Before it was noticed to be inscribed, the workmen had been chiselling it to fit it

¹ The inscriptions to which an asterisk is here affixed are included in Mr. Jones' No. 59, being too worn and fragmentary to be separately numbered. (See p. 10.)

again for the wall. We have consequently only a few letters left, of which nothing can with certainty be said, though several possible readings of some of them may be attempted.

No. 18*¹ is also too small and worn a fragment to pronounce definitely upon.

No. 19 (No. 16), though its purport is clear, is much worn, and some of the letters are uncertain. The letters that can be positively identified seem to be—

D .
CINCINI .
VETERANV
VIX . AN . LXXX
CVRA . . AEL
C A N D I

It commences with the usual *D(iis) M(anibus)*, but the name of the deceased is doubtful. It has been rendered *Cincinius*, but there is no such name known. Still it is possible that such a name may have existed. The stone is imperfect, and we have, no doubt, lost the *cognomen*. We can gather, however, that the deceased was a veteran of eighty years of age [*vix(it) an(nos) LXXX.*], and that the stone was erected by some one whose *nomen* was probably *Ælius*.

Such, then, are the inscriptions which have so far been exhumed, with the exception of those which have only been recently disinterred, during the repairs of the last few weeks. Unlike the stones from buildings (though as to those there are exceptions) they are all of early date, and the comparative state of freshness of most of them suggests that, like tombstones in country churchyards, they gradually sank in the ground, or fell over on their faces (thus preserving the inscriptions), until they were ruthlessly taken

¹ See note on p. 22.

up by a race, to whom Roman tombstones were about the last thing to which consideration was shown. Centuries after altars to the heathen gods had ceased to be respected, the memorials of the dead were still held in reverence, not only by law, but by common consent and by Christian charity. Heathen invasion was, strange to say, the commencement of their desecration, though at the same time it was a foreign race which carried it out, and the fanatical zeal of various professing Christian sects in later ages completed that which the invader had begun.

However, they are still amongst us, notwithstanding they are removed from their original sites, and from their inscriptions we gather the nationality of some of the officers and soldiers who garrisoned *Deva*; we gather too that the slave owner also was represented in the *castrum*. Syria, southern France, and the Adriatic shores sent their contingent here. On one stone an officer high in command, the *Præfectus Castrorum*, who was responsible for the formation and preservation of the camps of the legion, either permanent or temporary, is commemorated. I hope that before the excavations are closed some tablet with a dedication to an Emperor, and bearing the name of his legate, may be found, as in other places. Chester at present is singularly devoid of an inscription of that class; but I do not despair of yet seeing a tablet set up by the order of the great Agricola himself. There is a mine of archæological wealth still buried at Chester. Be it yours to remove the veil which has for centuries hid it from human eyes.

