

ART. XI.—*The recently discovered remains at Nether Denton Parsonage.* By the Rev. T. T. Shipman, of that place.

Read on Nether Denton Parsonage Lawn, June 23rd, 1868.

IN digging the foundations of the new Parsonage, Mr. Shipman said they discovered nothing more than portions of walls formed of cobble stone laid in clay, and from the arrangement of these walls, he surmised they had been the foundations of a wall of superior masonry, or the inner works of the encampment. At the west and north of the house they found other walls, which also had evidently formed part of the camp. They discovered no articles of Roman use at the top of the hill; but in forming the drive up to the house they found several interesting articles. The soil was of remarkable depth, in some places more than eight feet; and indeed some of the articles found were lying at that depth. In the ground where the kitchen garden now was, the soil was not nearly so deep, and here they found most of the coins, and much of the pottery. This ground gave every indication of being thickly inhabited; a foot and a half only below the surface soil, they came upon what at times was a perfect slabbed and cobbled flooring; beneath the stones very generally was a seam of coarseish gravel, about one foot in thickness; and in several parts of this flooring he observed evident traces of fire-places, the stones in several parts being very black, and underneath one of these floors, they discovered in the gravel, about 22 copper coins, all within the space of a square yard. From the absence of any pottery, and from the slight depth of the soil on the surface on the top of the hill, his idea was that it had simply been a fortified watch tower, and that the inhabitants of the station had resided down below, where it would be sheltered and of more extensive area. They had discovered glass and pottery and other articles in two fields, lying south and west of the camp, and in considerable quantities, showing that it had been a post of some importance; and Mr. Parker, of Brampton, a well-known local antiquarian inferred from the large quantity of broken vessels that it had been a place where bodies were burned previous to interment, it being the custom of relatives to cast upon the burning pile, the vessels used by the deceased in their lifetime, on the supposition that they might be needed to the world to which they had gone.

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We have still the question before us—What has been the object of this camp? You will be aware that the quarries of the Coombe Craig, worked by the Romans, are in sight of this hill. Dr. Bruce naturally asks the question—While this quarry was being wrought for the building or repair of the wall, can this hill have been used as a point of observation? This may very possibly have been. Mr. Parker observes upon the Maiden Way which crosses the Roman Road from Carlisle, and runs up the brow of the opposite hill—“Our camp may have had some office to fulfil with respect to that.” But there is another point to which I would call your notice: I observe that this is the only hill in the neighbourhood (certainly the only one offering such an advantageous position in every way) from which the stations of Amboglanna and Walton House can be seen—Lanercost being, of course, in the line of vision. May not our camp have been a kind of connecting link between these important posts, and a place from whence signals may have been passed from the one to the other? I should think it most improbable that such a distance would intervene without some such connecting post as this between Amboglanna and Walton House (Petriana) a distance of about seven miles. At all events, it has evidently been a camp of some considerable importance, judging from the superior quality of the pottery and the articles of ornament found. Perhaps I might conclude my few imperfect observations by calling your attention to some of these. Of the coins there are sixteen Denarii—one, a Trajan, having a female figure seated and pouring a libation; some are of silver, others of a composition of lead and other metals, I think. There are amongst them three or four of Trajan, two of Domitian, one of Vespasian, one of Galba, one (I think) of Mark Antony, at any rate one of the Triumvirs—there are three what are called family coins, one of Petitius Capitolinus, and one I would call attention to, a coin I have not been able to discover in the books of numismatics to which I have referred—It has the head of Medusa, and on the reverse apparently a winged figure. I would also call to your notice to what I think is a coin of the British King Cunobelin, the Cymbeline of Shakespeare. The head is very plain, and the bull on the reverse equally so—the metal I cannot explain. We also found amongst these coins what I take to be a penny or groat of one of our Edwards; of the copper or brass coins there are, including perfect and imperfect, seventy-three. Some you will see are in a very decayed condition, and have no trace on them

of what they have been; those in good condition are mostly coins of Trajan, Vespasian, Domitian, Nerva, and Nero. Some of the reverses you will find very good—one of Nerva's especially, having two mailed hands clasped, and probably the Latin word "concordia." Of these coins one has been explained as of Julius Cæsar, but I confess to great incredulity as to this. Of the other articles in bronze, the most noteworthy is what has apparently been a lid of a box, having on its top the head of Medusa—the workmanship is excellent—I have had it photographed. The other articles comprise portions of seven fibulæ, one rather elaborately worked and washed with silver; the bronze socket of a lamp, with the wick and portions of congealed oil still remaining in it; three bronze rings; the ornament off the front of the scabbard of a sword; and the bronze handle of a jug or similar vessel. There are eleven perfect beads, and portions of five others. The pottery comprises the usual Samian ware: there are no perfect bowls, but some tolerable specimens of several; one or two of the drinking cups are nearly whole. The devices on the specimens of bowls are the usual ones of hunting scenes and warriors, and birds. Of the black ware, I may call your attention to two specimens as having some curious features—the one, a cooking vessel, standing on three legs; a friend of mine, who has lived a great deal in India, and who saw it the other day, tells me it is the very fac-simile of the vessel which the Hindoos use at this day as charcoal burners; the other is a portion of an urn, with a rude male or female face upon it. As is usual in Roman stations lead was found in considerable quantities. I would call your attention as a peculiarity to the leaden dish—what its use has been I cannot say, except that it may have been as a lamp. Glass was also found in great quantities, but we have nothing whole nor of any peculiarity. Of the coarser ware, there are many specimens of the amphora and the mortaria. On the handles of one or two of the former you have the name of the potter very distinct. We have portions of the usual millstone, brought from Andernach-on-the-Rhine. Dr. Bruce tells me that he has visited the very quarry from which the stones come, and that there is no mistake about them. There is a stone with a face carved upon it, to which I would ask your attention. Can it have been the burial-slab of a child? There is also another stone with some tracery upon it, very similar to what is found on Roman altars. We have been most anxiously expecting to find an inscribed stone which would give us some idea as to the
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legion stationed here, or throw some light upon the camp, but hitherto nothing of the kind has come to light. Lastly, there are several specimens in iron, amongst which are tools, an iron lamp, a pair of what Dr. Bruce thinks may be fetters, and other articles which I must not venture to give a name to. Many of them are corroded to such an extent that they may be anything and everything, and as I have heard of two or three articles of this kind being construed into gods, but after undergoing the scrutiny of a practised eye, being pronounced to be of the lowest description of "old nails." I think it will be discreet in me to say nothing about them, nor indeed to say anything more than ask your forbearance for the few imperfect observations I have been presuming enough to address to you.

The following discussion then took place on the paper.

Dr. BRUCE, after thanking Mr. Shipman for the investigations he had prosecuted, said he could not help thinking there had been a camp on the top of the hill; and when they went round it they would see something like the trace of ramparts. He understood in digging down at the highest part of the hill they came across some coarse pottery; and he could fancy that the whole hill top was occupied by soldiery, whilst in seasons of quiet, when they were not required to be within the fortifications, the prefects and superior officers dwelt in the more comfortable quarters below. They continually found, in the neighbourhood of Roman stations, what went by the name of suburban dwellings, being outside villas which the chief officers occupied in times when they could go out, and he attributed the valuable remains found in the lower ground to this fact. Those who had been accustomed to see the stations on the great wall, and the supplies derived from them, must have been amazingly struck by the quantity and richness of the articles obtained there. It seemed perfectly certain that this post was one of greater security than that on the other side of the river. Here they found vessels of luxury and objects of taste such as were very seldom found on the wall itself. They were found at Carlisle, at Maryport, at York, and as they went south, they increased in number and richness, until, in Gaul, where peace and security reigned for centuries, the value of the remains was surprising; but when they went north of the Irthing and north of the Tyne, they got into an enemy's country, where everything was sacrificed to strength and security. With regard to the marks of burning discovered, he said that all along the Roman wall, they met
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with two or, generally speaking, three layers of ashes. It appeared that at different times the enemy had come down in great force, and dislodging for a time the mural garrison, they burned everything that was combustible; then, on the enemy being driven out again, the Romans did not clear out the *debris*, but built on the top of the old ashes and refuse. Thus, in these excavations, they read the history of the Roman wall for centuries. Certainly, as soon as the Romans vacated the country, the Caledonians came down, and, if they could not take vengeance on the Romans, they took vengeance on everything that remained; they smashed all the vessels and altars, and it was a fact that very seldom had a perfect altar or image been found. In this manner the marks of burning might be accounted for, without going to the theory of burning dead bodies. The Romans, indeed, did burn dead bodies; but they also buried them unburned, as was shown by the discovery of unburnt human bones at some of the stations. Many of the coins found here were remarkably fine; each coin was a little picture, and very often the picture had an important history. By ascertaining what coins most prevailed, and taking into account the length of the Emperor's reign, they could form a tolerably accurate notion when the garrison here was strongest and in full force. The most common coins were those of Trajan, Vespasian, and Nerva.

Mr. SHIPMAN—There are most of Trajan.

Dr. BRUCE—Trajan died in 117, and his successor, Hadrian, was here—perhaps on this very hill—in the year 120; and at the beginning of Hadrian's reign the coins of Trajan would be in general use; so that, by referring to these coins, we seem to get a notion that in Hadrian's time, when the quarries over there—Coombe Craig and Lannerton—were being wrought, the garrison here was in full force. Holding up some rich Samian ware, the Doctor said it was not manufactured on the Island, but was imported from Gaul, Spain, and Germany; and to show its value, he mentioned that they often found it, when broken, to be welded together with lead, and the name of the owner was often scratched upon it, as in some of the specimens here. Another article which excited some curiosity, was a filtering vessel, which Mr. LONGSTAFF jocularly suggested was a Roman teapot.

Mr. CLAYTON—At any rate, they are remains of civilization proving the presence of the Roman officers and their ladies.

Dr. BRUCE—We often find nursing bottles, such as they feed babies with. (Laughter.) He also showed the remains
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of something very like a corkscrew ; and an ancient lamp stand. Conceive (he said) the miserable life the Romans must have had here in the dark nights of winter, in our cold and chilly atmosphere, with no newspapers or books, and relieved only by the little twinkle of a lamp like this. Taking up the top of a massive green glass bottle, he remarked that wherever they had a Roman Station, glass was found. We had a notion that it was brought into England about the time of Bede : but here was glass that had been buried at least 1600 years, and which from its form was incontestibly Roman. It was satisfactory to find, from this, that the Romans had some comforts and somehow or other managed to get their Falerian. (Laughter).

Mr. CLAYTON—(who himself *owns* the sites of three Roman stations) said it was quite clear this had been a place of considerable civilization, having been chosen from its sheltered situation as the residence of the superior officers. That the Romans had their ladies with them was evident from the exquisitely cut earrings which were commonly found.

The company then went round the grounds, Mr. SHIPMAN and Dr. BRUCE acting as *ciceroni*, and pointing out the outlines of the old fortifications. In the garden they were shown a huge conical-shaped stone. Dr. BRUCE said they were aware the Romans had no gunpowder, but they had a contrivance for projecting stones by an engine called *balista*, and he supposed this was one of those stones, but why it had this conical shape, he was not sufficiently learned in the law of projectiles to explain.

Mr. TASKER—It's just the Minie bullet on a large scale.

Mr. CHARLES J. FERGUSON—How the machine itself was worked is shown in a marvellous way in Poynter's painting in the Academy this year.

Dr. BRUCE was not aware that the Romans knew the principle upon which the Minie bullet worked ; but they knew more than we gave them credit for.