

ART. XLI.—*On the Inscription at Blencowe Hall.* By E. C. Clark, M.A., LL.M., Regius Professor of Laws at Cambridge.

NOTE.—On the occasion of the Society's visit to Blencowe Hall, the following verbal description was given by Mr. C. J. Ferguson:—

Blencowe Hall consists of two square embattled towers connected by a curtain of domestic buildings. The south-west tower, which is rent from top to bottom, has one of smaller dimensions joined to its west side, forming the whole building into the shape of the letter L. This tower is made more picturesque by a luxuriant plane tree, which has its root under the wall. The south-east tower has some plain gargoyles remaining. The offices stand round a court-yard entered through an elliptic arched gateway. Behind the hall are the ruins of a chapel, with a yard belonging to it, in which is a reservoir, supplied by a spring of water, supposed to have been used as a baptistry: formerly it was faced with hewn stones, but they are now removed. The form was a square, each side about twelve feet, and about four deep. Near the hall is an ancient burial-ground, with a stone cross, on which are the arms of Blencowe.

The hall windows are square, with mullions and dripstones, the corbels of some of which are shields, having the initials H. B. and armorial bearings. Over the principal door are the initials H. B. and three shields: one of these defaced, evidently of set purpose;* the second, is a chevron between three mullets, *Crackenthorpe*; and the third fretty and a chief. Lower down is a shield bearing the old arms of Blencowe, viz., a canton on a plain shield. Above the shield is the word "Quorsum;"—on its right the words "Vivere mori;"—on its left, "Mori vitæ;" and below, "Henricus Blencowe." Nearly all existing county histories quote this inscription as if the last word was "vita," instead of "vitæ," which it undoubtedly is, thus shirking the difficulty of translating the correct version.

After Mr. C. J. Ferguson had finished, some discussion arose as to the meaning of the inscription: it has since been laid before an eminent classical scholar, Professor Clark, who has written the short but interesting note on it.

* See ante p. 312. Note.

IF the inscription in question originally ran in the form given in the County Histories, *i.e.*

QUORSUM :

VIVERE MORI ——— MORI VITA

the line shewing the place of the shield, only one rendering appears to me possible.

'Whither?' (supply 'are we bound?') 'To live (is) to die, 'to die (is) life.'

"That bourn we know not, unto which we tend;
To live may be to die, to die be life."

If, on the other hand, the original reading was *vitae*, this word and the first *mori*, must both be datives, and the very ingenious rendering of Mr. Lees, commends itself as the best possible. 'To live to the fashion (of this world) is to die to 'life (eternal).' Here the first dative is taken to mean 'in accordance with,' the second 'in respect of.' The latter construction at least is somewhat questionable, if tried by the standard of classical latinity. But the latin of heraldic mottoes is not to be tried by this test, and the pun on the double meaning of *mori* is in favour of Mr. Lee's interpretation, such conceits being common enough in these compositions. The meaning of the motto, under this interpretation, is perhaps not very obvious, but it is as much so as that of 'mens cujusque is est quisque,'* (Pepys) and and many others. *Quorsum* should now, to suit the rest, mean 'To what end or object do we live,' rather than 'whither are we going.' The former meaning is I think, decidedly unclassical, but the remark made above upon the construction of the two datives will also apply here.

All turns upon the correct reading of the original motto. If both versions exist, on equal authority, it seems to me more likely that the harder *vitae* should have been erroneously altered to the easier *vita* than *vice versa*.

* The mind's the standard of every man.