

## Legio XX., Valeria Victrix.

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A NUMBER of tiles discovered in the floor of a building in the Melandra fort<sup>1</sup> are marked V V, the initial letters of the title of the famous XXth Legion, indicating the presence of a contingent of that legion at some time when building operations were going on inside the fort. The XXth Legion is first heard of in the days of the second triumvirate, when it formed part of the army controlled by Antony. During the reign of Augustus the XXth was stationed in Illyria, where it operated against the rebel chieftain Bato, under the command of M. Valerius Messalinus, governor of Pannonia, winning a triumph for him in the year 6 A.D. Three years later occurred the disaster to the legions of Varus in Germany,<sup>2</sup> and in the following year the XXth Legion was drafted along with others to the Rhine to avenge the defeat. From 10—43 A.D. it was permanently stationed in Germany.<sup>3</sup> In 43, by orders of the Emperor Claudius, it was called upon to join three other legions, the IIInd, IXth, and XIVth,<sup>4</sup> in the invasion of Britain under the command of Aulus Plautius.

The British territory subdued by Aulus Plautius lay south of a line drawn from Bath (*Aquæ Sulis*) to London, and then N.E. to Colchester (*Camulodunum*). His successor, Ostorius Scapula, extended the Roman power

1. See p. 93.

2. Tac. Ann. i., 60—61; Dio Cassius lvi., 23.

3. Tac. Ann. i., 31, § 3; Dio lv., 23.

4. Mommsen. Rom. Prov. i., 174.

mainly towards the north and west. By hard fighting he advanced through the territory of the Silures and Ordovices in S. and N. Wales, establishing the XIVth Legion at Wroxeter<sup>5</sup> (*Viroconium*); thence he pushed on against the Cangi, in Carnarvonshire, Denbigh and Flint, and it may very well be that in this campaign he first established the Roman camp at Chester (*Deva*), which either then (51 A.D.) or very soon after became the headquarters of the XXth Legion. In 59 A.D. Britain received a new governor in Suetonius Paulinus, who spent his first two years in completing the subjugation of N. Wales; when, at the end of that time, he proceeded with the XIVth Legion to the conquest of Anglesey,<sup>6</sup> he seems to have left the XXth behind him in camp at Deva. Ostorius had been recalled from Wales by trouble with the Brigantes, a powerful tribe occupying Lancashire, Westmoreland, Northumberland, Durham and Yorkshire; and the position of Deva was admirably chosen to protect an army advancing into Wales from an attack in the rear by the Brigantes. Like Ostorius, Paulinus was suddenly recalled from his Welsh campaign by the news that the Iceni and other tribes in the S.E. of Britain had risen under Queen Boudicca<sup>7</sup> and cut to pieces the IXth Legion at Camulodunum. Returning through Deva in great haste Suetonius reinforced his XIVth Legion with veterans of the XXth (*vexillarii vicesimani*),<sup>8</sup> and these seasoned troops had the distinction of aiding in the overwhelming defeat which

5. Tac. Ann. xii., 31 (cf. Bury. Roman Empire, ch. xvi., note B) : C.I.L. vii., 155.

6. Tac. Ann. xiv., 29-30.

7. Tac. Ann. xiv., 31-37. The form Boadicea, or Boudicea, under which the name of this queen has come down to the modern world, is due to the error of an early printed edition of the *Agricola* (cf. Furneaux on Tac. Agr. ch. xvi.) : the name survives in the modern Welsh "Buddug" (=Victoria).

8. Tac. Ann. xiv., 34.

he inflicted on the revolted tribes in the neighbourhood of Camulodunum.

During the next few years the XXth Legion seems to have made itself a reputation for turbulence. Long before its transference to Britain it had played a leading part in the sedition of the Germanic legions in 14 A.D.;<sup>9</sup> and now its commander, Roscius Caelius, allowed it to get so out of control that it proved a "handful" (*nimia*)<sup>10</sup> for successive governors of Britain. Roscius was superseded in 69 A.D. by the famous Agricola, a partisan of Vespasian, who by his tact won it over to faithful allegiance to the new emperor—a feat for which he claimed no credit, preferring, as Tacitus tells us, "to give the impression of having found it loyal rather than of having made it so."<sup>10</sup> After two years in command of the legion Agricola left Britain to govern Aquitania, but returned in 78 A.D. as governor of the island, a position he occupied till 85. In his third campaign, at the head of the IXth, XIVth and XXth Legions, he extended the Roman power to the north as far as the Tyne, at the expense of the Brigantes, and in the following year drew a line of forts between the Firths of Clyde and Forth, establishing the IXth Legion in garrison at York (*Eburacum*), the Brigantian capital. Three years later (84 A.D.) the XXth Legion took part in another famous victory, the defeat of the Caledonians by Agricola at the Graupian Hill.<sup>11</sup>

From this time onward contingents of the XXth seem to have been employed on garrison duty in various parts of the north of England, indications of their presence being found in almost every quarter of the Brigantian

9. Tac. Ann. i., 31.

10. Tac. Agr., vii.

11. The identification of the *Mons Graupius* (Tac. Agr., xxix.) with the modern Grampian hills is very questionable: the MS. authority for the form *Grampius* is inferior.

territory. The need of a strong permanent garrison at Deva gradually disappeared, as the natives grew more submissive to the Roman dominion; and in Hadrian's reign (117—138 A.D.) a considerable part, if not the whole, of the XXth was employed in the building and defence of the great North Wall from the Solway Firth to the mouth of the Tyne.<sup>12</sup> In the next reign, that of Antoninus Pius (138—161), the Legion was again—or still—in the North, building the wall from the Clyde to the Forth along the line of Agricola's Wall (circa 140—144 A.D.).<sup>13</sup> There it remained apparently till some nine years later. In 153 A.D. "the soldiers of the XXth Legion" erected at Birdoswald (*Amboglanna*) an altar to the British god Cocidius.<sup>14</sup> We may conjecture that it then returned to its old quarters at Deva; for an altar to Jupiter Tanarus<sup>15</sup> was dedicated by an officer of the Legion at Chester in the following year (154 A.D.). This conclusion is not certain, as the legion may have been divided, different portions of it garrisoning the North Wall and Deva simultaneously, though the altar of 153 reads as though it was dedicated by the whole Legion.<sup>14</sup> When Severus and Caracalla visited Deva (207—8), the Legion was still there, as is shown by an altar dedicated by one of its officers, Flavius Longus.<sup>16</sup> Part, or the whole, of the Legion again accom-

12. Cf. C.I.L. vii., 623. "Legio vi. pia fidelis: vexillatio legionis xx. Val. Vic." (found at Carraw): C.I.L. vii., 749 (at Caervoran).

13. Cf. C.I.L. vii., 1133, 1137, 1139, 1141—3: the first of these is reproduced in facsimile in "An Account of the Roman Antiquities preserved in the Museum at Chesters" (published by Gilbert and Rivington), p. 33 and runs—"Imperatore Cæsare Tito Aelio Hadriano Antonino iii." (i.e. tria millia).

14. C.I.L. vii., 802. Deo Cocidio milites legionis xx. VV. votum solverunt libentes merito Apro et Rufino consulibus."

15. C.I.L. vii., 168. "Jovi Optimo Maximo T. Elupius (? Flavius?) Galeria (tribu) Praesens Guntia princeps legionis xx. VV. Commodo et Laterano consulibus votum solvit libens merito."

16. C.I.L. vii., 167. "Pro salute Dominorum nostrorum invictissimorum Augustorum Genio loci Fl. Longus, tribunus militum Legionis xx. VV. et Longinus filius ejus domo Samosata votum solverunt."

panied these emperors to Caledonia, where a "*vexillatio*" or detachment of the XXth has left a record of its presence at Netherby<sup>17</sup> (*Castra Exploratorum*), circa 220 A.D., the latest extant dated inscription referring to the Legion. The historian Dio Cassius,<sup>18</sup> who wrote in the early years of the third century, says that in his day the XXth was in "Upper Britain," *i.e.*, Britain south of the Mersey and Humber, and so presumably back again at Deva. For two centuries we hear nothing more of the Legion, and when we do next come across it, it has left Britain.

To determine the precise date of its departure from the island, a word or two is necessary as to the disposition of the legions in Britain during the first two centuries. The IXth Legion, which was so severely handled by the Iceni<sup>19</sup> in 61 A.D., was reorganized by fresh levies; it appears at York<sup>20</sup> (*Eburacum*) in 109 A.D., after which it disappears from history, being replaced in Britain by the VIth Legion *Victrix*.<sup>21</sup> It is a not improbable conjecture that the IXth was cut to pieces by the Brigantes early in the second century.<sup>22</sup> The XIVth was withdrawn from Britain by Nero for service in the East;<sup>23</sup> Vespasian replaced it by the IInd *Adjutrix*, which was stationed at Lincoln (*Lindum*), but this Legion was again withdrawn by Domitian in 81 A.D. From early in the second century, then, the Roman army in Britain contained three legions, IInd *Augusta*, VIth *Victrix*, and XXth *Valeria Victrix*. The *Notitia Dignitatum*, an official document

17. C.I.L. vii., 964.

18. See below.

19. Tac. Ann. xiv. 32. 6.

20. C.I.L. vii., 241.

21. Orelli, 3186.

22. Borghesi, *Cœuvres*, iv., 115.

23. Mommsen, *Rom. Prov.* i., 174; Tac. Hist. i. 6; ii. 11, 27 and 66.

dating from the early years of the fifth century, indicates the presence of the VIth in its old headquarters at York, and of the IIInd at Richborough, in Kent; the XXth is not mentioned as in Britain. Now from the poet Claudian<sup>24</sup> we learn that Stilicho withdrew from Britain, for his campaign against Alaric the Goth in 403 A.D., a legion that had garrisoned the northern frontier of Britain; this can, on the evidence of the Notitia, be none other than the XXth, so that our old friends disappear from the scene in a blaze of glory, as forming part of the army which helped Stilicho to inflict a crushing defeat on Alaric at Pollentia, in Northern Italy (403 A.D.).

The initials V.V., the second title of the XXth, have been interpreted in two ways, either as *Valens Victrix* or as *Valeria Victrix*. As to *Victrix* there is no question; the form *Valens Victrix*, "the powerful and victorious," would have a parallel in the second title of the *Legio II. Augusta Pia Fidelis*, "the Loyal and True"; but there is no direct evidence in its favour; the great majority of inscription have simply V.V., whilst a few give Val. Vic. For *Valeria*, on the other hand, there are at least two pieces of direct evidence. The first is an inscription,<sup>25</sup> in Latin and Greek, found at Ruâd (*Aradus*), in Syria, where Leg. XX. V.V. is represented in Greek by Λεγ. Κ̄ Ουαλερίας Νεικηφόρου. The second is a passage of Dio Cassius

24. "Venit et extremis legio praetenta Britannis,  
Quae Scoto dat frena truci, ferroque notatas  
Perlegit exsanguis Picto moriente figuras."

(Claudian, De Bello Getico, 416—418.)

25. C.I.L. vii., 186. "M. Septimio Marci filio Fabio Magno Legionis iii. Galaticae iter. et Legionis iiiii. Scythicae et Legionis xx. VV. iter. et Legionis i. Minerviae et Legionis x. Fretensis ii. L. Septimius Marcellus fratri optimo."

Ἰ Μαρκῶ Σεπτίμιω Μαρκου υἱῶ Φαβίω Μαγνῶ Λεγεωνοῦ Γ̄ Γαλατικῆς  
το Β̄ και Λεγ. Δ̄ Σκυθικῆς και Λεγ. Κ̄ Ουαλερίας Νεικηφόρου το  
Β̄ και Λεγ. Ᾱ Μινερουίας και Λεγ. Ῑ Φρετηνσιας το Β̄ Λουκιος  
Σεπτίμιος Μαρκελλος ἀδελφῶ ἀγαθῶ.

(LV. 23), written about 200 A.D., the value of which would be greater if its meaning were a little clearer. Speaking of legions which had existed from the days of Augustus to his own time, he says

“ἔτι δὲ καὶ οἱ εἰκοστοὶ οἱ καὶ Ὀναλέριοι καὶ Νικήτορες ὀνομασμένοι καὶ ἐν Βρεττανίᾳ τῇ ἄνω ὄντες· οὗστινας ὁ Ἀυγουστος ἐμοὶ δοκεῖν μετὰ τῶν τῆν τε τοῦ εἰκοστοῦ ἐπωνυμίαν ἐχόντων καὶ ἐν τῇ Γερμανίᾳ τῇ ἄνω χειμαζόντων, εἰ καὶ τὰ μάλιστα μῆθ' ὑφ' ἀπάντων Ὀναλέριοι ἐπεκλήθησαν μῆτε νῦν ἔτι τῇ προσηγορίᾳ ταύτῃ χρῶνται, παραλαβὼν ἐτήρησε.”

“also the men of the XXth, known by the additional names of Valerii and Victores, stationed in Upper Britain; these, to my thinking, Augustus took over, and to secure their loyalty joined them to the troops called the XXth, whose winter quarters were in Upper Germany, although they were not universally known as Valerii, nor do they use this title to-day.” This reads perhaps more like Irish than English—so does the Greek! But Dio does certainly imply that one of the titles of the XXth was *Valeria*, though not universally recognised and not used in his own day; also that it was a title dating back to the reign of Augustus, and that its origin was the incorporation in the legion of some troops known as Valerii—such at least seems the most probable interpretation of the very obscure Greek. We have seen above that the XXth was commanded in 6 A.D. by Valerius Messalinus in Illyria, where it won a triumph; may not the troops have assumed the title “Valerii” on that occasion, and may not Dio Cassius have misinterpreted the transference of the XXth from Illyria to Germany as the incorporation of the “Valerii” with the XXth? The titles of the Roman legions only show one parallel—with the exception of *Augusta*, which is hardly to the point—to this derivation from a proper name, viz., *Legio XXII. Deiotariana*. The

other titles are mostly derived from (a) the name of the province with which they were associated, *e.g.*, *Macedonica*, *Cyrenaica*; (b) the scene of some signal victory, *e.g.*, *Fretensis*; (c) the standard of the Legion, *e.g.*, *Fulminata*, *Alauda*; (d) complimentary titles such as *Victrix*, *Rapax*; (e) the circumstance that two forces had been amalgamated, in which case they are known as *Gemina*, *e.g.*, *Legio XIII. Gemina*. But there would appear to be nothing in the nature of the case to prevent a legion being designated by a title preserving the memory of a distinguished commander.

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