



The Origins of Deva

THE following paragraphs contain an adaptation for English readers of a short but valuable paper lately published by Professor A. von Domaszewski in the *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* (1893, xlviii. pp. 342 foll.), which, I think, deserves the attention of Chester antiquaries. In adapting the original, I have freely added or omitted as seemed to me desirable, in view of the difference of readers, but, speaking generally, the text is taken from Prof. Domaszewski's article, while the footnotes are my own. As will be seen, the Austrian scholar's main points are that the foundation of Chester belongs to a very early period of the Roman occupation, and that the camp was from the first till the retirement of Agricola (or thereabouts) a double camp, held first by the XXth and XIVth legions, subsequently by the IInd Adjutrix and XXth. Parts of these theories have been already thrown out by others, but they are here argued out with an abundance of support and a completion of view which give them every claim to originality. I have omitted some technical details, and a suggestion as to the frontiers of Britannia Superior and Inferior, which does not bear directly on the origins of Chester and which I have the misfortune not to accept as proven. I have also ventured, in two of

the notes, to criticise two of the minor conclusions in the text.

“The excavations made during the years 1890-2, in the north city-wall of Chester, have brought to light a number of inscriptions which enable us to fix, with far more certainty than we could before, the disposition of the Roman legions in the principal fortresses of Britain. We have, of course, always known that, when once the province was settled, the three legions which ultimately garrisoned Britain, the IInd Augusta, the VIth Victrix, and the XXth Valeria Victrix, were permanently stationed, respectively, at Caerleon (Isca), York (Eburācum), and Chester (Deva). But we have been in great ignorance as to the precise steps by which this arrangement came about; and the quarters of the various legions under Ostorius or Suetonius Paulinus or Agricola (that is, during the first forty or fifty years of the Roman occupation), have been matters mainly of conjecture. But the discovery at Chester of eleven, perhaps of fifteen,¹ gravestones, which belong to the legio II. Adjutrix, have let in a flood of light. This large number of sepulchral monuments cannot be due to chance; the legion must have been definitely stationed at Chester. Of this legion we know that it was enrolled mainly from the sailors of the Ravenna fleet in A.D. 69 or 70; that it probably came to Britain with Petillius Cerialis in the next year (A.D. 81); and that it was transferred to Germany somewhere about A.D. 85. We may then fix its presence at Chester to the years A.D. 71-85, or to some approximate date. We shall not, however, infer that, while it was at Chester, the Twentieth was elsewhere. On the contrary, the indications which we have, lead us to suppose that, at this time, the camp at Chester was a double one,

¹ The eleven inscriptions are those of C. Iuventius Capito, Q. Valerius Fronto, G. Calventius Celer, C. Valerius Crispus, L. Terentius Fuscus, L. Valerius Seneca, and five broken stones (*Athenæum* 3364 and 3376, April 16th and July 9th, 1892). To these certain exx., Prof. Domaszewski adds four probable ones, M. Valerius Martialis, a fragment, and two stones found in the earlier excavations of 1887-8 (*Eph.* vii. 892, 908), basing his view on the birth places ascribed to the soldiers. If anything can be inferred from the round head line, two other gravestones (*Eph.* vii. 885 and *Athenæum* 3376, No. 12) may belong to this legion. The number of certain gravestones of legion XX. is 25, and others may be assigned to it with much probability. Three dedications mention legion XX.; none legion II. Adjutrix.

containing two legions, an arrangement of which we find several examples in the Roman army before Domitian.¹

“But we can go further. We can trace the existence of a double camp at Chester, not of course garrisoned by the same legio II. Adjutrix, into the early days of the Roman occupation. This legio II. was sent over, in reality, to take the place of the legio XIV., one of the four legions originally sent to conquer the island, which had been recalled to Mainz in A.D. 70. This reduced the garrison to three legions; it soon became necessary to send a fourth, and (as we have seen), the Second was sent. We may, then, regard the Second as the successor of the Fourteenth, and we shall note with interest that in the Boadicean revolt of A.D. 61, the Twentieth and the Fourteenth legions appear to act together, as the Second and Twentieth do under Agricola. Suetonius, says Tacitus, in the retreat from Anglesea, collected what troops he could—the Fourteenth legion, detachments of the Twentieth, and a few (probably 2,000) auxiliaries—in all about ten thousand men.² He could get no more. The small garrisons up and down the occupied districts were in great danger, and in any case inaccessible.³ The infantry of the Ninth legion had been cut to pieces by the natives. At Caerleon the danger was so great that the *praefectus castrorum*, in charge of the camp, deliberately disobeyed an order to join Suetonius.⁴ When, therefore, we

¹ According to Suetonius (*Vita Dom.* 7), Domitian forbade double camps, because L. Antonius, wintering with two legions, had attempted a revolt, which shewed the unwisdom of concentrating troops in one man's hand. The revolt of Antonius was in A.D. 88-9.

² Tac. *Ann.* xiv. 34 foll.

³ Tac. *Agr.* 16.

⁴ This disobedience involves one or two difficulties. The *praefectus castrorum*, the officer concerned, was, according to Prof. Domaszewski, in charge of the camp only, while the body of the legio II. Augusta, under the *legatus legionis*, was in the field somewhere. Had, therefore, the *praefectus* moved, Caerleon would have been *ipso facto* lost to the Romans. We cannot be sure that the praefect was in command of the legion, for (1) supposing a temporary vacancy, the natural substitute for the *legatus* is, as Prof. Domaszewski points out, a tribune of senatorial rank; and (2) had the praefect had the men, he would have had no reason for disobedience. However, the remark of Tacitus, that the praefect, by his action, *gloria legionem suam fraudaverat* (*Ann.* xiv. 37), shews that the historian, at least, regarded him as in command. Tacitus, who is quite as bad on military details as on topography, has probably stated the details so loosely that a certain solution of the problem is hardly possible.

find the latter taking the field with the whole of the XIVth and part of the XXth legions¹, and a few auxiliaries, we may conclude that there is some connection between the legions. And when further, the historian Dio practically says that the decisive battle was fought near a fortress, we may identify that fortress with Chester. Suetonius fought with a legion and a half, and a few auxiliaries: had he had time to penetrate far into Britain, he would clearly have picked up other reinforcements, at least of auxiliaries. The theory, therefore, that he fought the fight with the available garrison of Chester and near Chester, fits the situation admirably, and we may conclude that the garrison at the time was formed by the XIVth and XXth legions.²

“We have further proof that the XXth legion was in Chester at a very early date. As Mommsen has observed, one of the Chester inscriptions (*Eph.* vii., 902) seems to mention a centurion of that legion without a cognomen, and this feature dates back to the early years of the conquest. The use of the cognomen became universal during the reign of Claudius

¹Dio 62, 8, 1. Probably, as Prof. Domaszewski remarks, the commander and part of the XXth legion remained in garrison at Chester.

² Prof. Domaszewski, following Mommsen (*Roman Provinces* i. 181 note), here deliberately rejects the narrative of Tacitus (*ann.* xiv. 33-4), according to which Suetonius had reached and deliberately abandoned Londinium before his decisive battle against Boadicea. It must be admitted that Tacitus gives us a very vague account of the military operations of this war: he assigns no reason for the march on London; he omits to mention whether Suetonius went thither with troops or without; and only refers to his forces in a subsequent chapter. But it seems to me rash to completely reject the narrative. It is quite conceivable that, as Horsley supposed (*Britannia Romana*, p. 33), Suetonius went to London because the road led there; if he was aiming at Colchester, the Watling Street and London would almost certainly have been his quickest route, and probably his only road. The English antiquaries have usually supposed that the battle was fought in or near London, and some of them have suggested the site of King's Cross, which, owing to this notion, had once a narrow escape of being called Boadicea's Cross (*Notes and Queries*, vi. 5, pp. 281, 489, Walford *Old and New London* 5, pp. 330-40). The facts are insufficient to justify any dogmatic conclusion; here, as too often in military and geographical questions, Tacitus leaves us in the lurch. But I cannot help thinking that Suetonius did march through London, and that Prof. Domaszewski has gone too far in rejecting the account of Tacitus and in placing the battle at Chester.

(A.D. 41-54), and the inscription of this centurion must go back to his reign.

“The geographical position of Chester explains well enough the speed with which it was occupied. Chester, Caerleon, Lincoln, and Colchester, form, as it were, a quadrilateral of fortresses.¹ Colchester, indeed, was a colony, founded in A.D. 50, but, like most of the first century colonies, it was a colony of veterans, and its citizens were at the same time its garrison. Under the misgovernment of Nero they failed to fulfil their object, and the town was destroyed by the Britons; but their failure does not disprove the object. In this quadrilateral, then, which we may put earlier than Suetonius, Deva was a double camp, and the reason is plain. Its work was double—defence against Wales, and defence against the Irish pirates. The other two fortresses, Caerleon and Lincoln, had each one legion, the IInd and the IXth respectively, and accordingly, in the Boadicean war of A.D. 61, these two legions act quite independently.”

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¹ Mommsen (*Roman Provinces i.* 178) conjectured that Ostorius, about A.D. 51, planted a fortress at Wroxeter with the 14th and 20th legions, and refers to this the much disputed passage of Tacitus *castris † antonam et Sabrinam fluvios cet.* Prof. Domaszewski regards this conjecture as based on insufficient evidence, there being only two inscriptions of the XIVth legion at Wroxeter, while one is at Lincoln. The direction of the roads and the occurrence of the two tombstones suggest to me that Viroconium was occupied before Chester, and I was at one time inclined to connect the corrupt *Antonam* of the MS. with *Trisantona* (as Mr. Bradley does), and to make the Tern the *Trisantona* (*Journal of Philology xvii.* 269.) However, Mr. Bradley has pointed out to me that the *Trisantona* appears to be the Trent, though it might conceivably have also been a name for the Tern, and, with Mr. Bradley's conjecture *cis Trisantonam* (for *castris antonam*), the passage makes excellent sense: the Trent and Severn became the Roman frontiers. That Viroconium was occupied before Chester, if only for a short period, seems to me conclusively proved by the course of the roads, which (as I hope to shew elsewhere) throw a good deal of somewhat neglected light on the early history of Roman Britain.