



[By permission of the Colchester Corporation.]

Tombstone of M. Favonius Facilis, Centurion of Legio XX.
Colchester Museum ($\frac{1}{3}$ size).



A Roman Centurion of the 20th Legion

BY HENRY TAYLOR, F.S.A.



HAVING been called several times of late into the neighbourhood of Colchester, on business matters, I have on each occasion availed myself of the opportunity to visit the admirably arranged Museum of Local Antiquities in the Castle of that ancient town, which fortress, dating from the Saxon Era, was built, in a great measure with the bricks, tiles, and other remains obtained from the Roman city of Camulodunum.

In this Museum there is a beautifully sculptured tombstone, which is an excellent representation of a Centurion in costume, or rather (as we say to-day when speaking of a soldier) in uniform. The inscription, at the foot of this tombstone, shows that it was erected to the memory of one Marcus Favonius Facilis, a Centurion of the celebrated Legio XX, which during the whole period of the Roman occupation of this country had its headquarters at Chester, the Roman Deva. It formed part of the original invasion in A.D. 43, and it probably remained here so long as

Roman troops remained in Britain. Some of its memorials found in the north-east wall of Chester in 1887 appear to date not very long after A.D. 43.¹

I thought it might be interesting to our members to see, possibly a rough likeness, but, at any rate, the full dress uniform of a Roman Centurion, who probably was here in Chester with his Legion, in the first century of the Christian Era. I therefore asked the Corporation of Colchester to allow me to photograph the tombstone. They not only consented, but, to save the expense of a special photograph, have through their Curator, Mr. A. G. Wright, kindly lent our Society one of their blocks illustrating the tombstone, which has enabled me to present an illustration of it with this description.

The tombstone was found in August, 1868, outside the Roman Wall of Colchester, on the Lexden road, in a cemetery mainly of first century graves. "The stone, which seems to be a fine oolite, is 6 feet high, 2 feet 4 inches wide and 8 inches thick. It had, unfortunately, been broken; but as the upper part, with the figure, had fallen on its face, it is still in fine preservation. The figure stands in a sort of recess cut into the stone to the depth of nearly six inches. The lower portion, with the inscription, was standing two feet and a half below the surface and facing north."² There is, I understand, no doubt about either the text of the inscription or its meaning.

"M[arcus] Favon[ius] M[arci] F[ilius] Pol[lia]
Facilis > (=Centurio) Leg[ionis] x x (=Vicesimae)—
Verecundus et Novicius Lib[erti] Posuerunt—H[ic]
s[itus] e[st]."

¹ See Vol. VII. (N.S.), *Chester Arch. Society's Transactions*, pp. 10 and 42.

² *Proceedings, Society of Antiquaries*, iv. (1869), 271.

The letters are deeply cut and the words are divided by triangular stops. Professor Hübner remarked that the absence of the letters V.V. [Valeria Victrix], the usual titles of the 20th Legion, might possibly indicate an early date. Translated into English the inscription runs thus:—

“Marcus Favonius Facilis, son of Marcus, of the Pollian tribe, a Centurion of the 20th Legion. Verecundus and Novicius, his Freedmen, placed it. He lies here.”

Mr. Henry Laver, F.S.A., of Colchester, calls my attention to the fact that the Freedmen have placed their names in full on the inscription, whereas those of the Centurion are contracted, and he remarks: “Man the world over is the same.” At the foot of the tombstone was found a cylindrical leaden cist, with a lid, thirteen inches high by ten inches in diameter, containing burnt bones, a lachrymatory bottle of pale green transparent glass, and an exquisite drinking cup of greyish pottery, as thin as a sixpence.

Our member Dr. F. Haverfield, F.S.A., Camden Professor of Ancient History in the University of Oxford, and Mr. H. Stuart Jones, M.A., have recently published a paper in the *Journal of The Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies*, on “Some representative examples of Romano-British sculpture.” Referring to this tombstone they say: “As may be inferred from the find-spot and from the lettering and other details of the inscription the tombstone³ is of

³ *Arch. Zeitung*, 1868, p. 112; *Essex Arch. Tran.*, 1873, pp. 88, 161; *Journ. Arch. Assoc.*, 1870, p. 249; *Proc. Soc. Antiq.*, IV., 1869, p. 271; C.I.L., VII., n. 90; figured also in a good many works.

the first century. It bears, indeed, no *dona militaria* like the well-known tombstone of Caelius, now at Bonn, but it renders accurately the equipment of the Centurion. The *vitis* of his rank is in the right hand. The cuirass is of leather with two rows of flaps at the waist and on the sleeves,⁴ and is confined by a belt, *cingulum*, doubtless also of leather, which is adorned with bronze plaques. The greaves, *ocreae*, which marked off the centurion from the private soldier, are also indicated; the shoes seem to be *calcei*. The left-hand grasps the *gladius* by the hilt; in addition, a dagger or *parazonium* is attached to the belt.⁵ The monuments show that it was worn by all grades of soldiers. The centurion's equipment is completed by the *sagum* which, like the *paludamentum* on countless imperial statues, forms a bunch of drapery on the left shoulder and passes over the left arm. This motive, which is derived from the Attic art of the fourth century B.C.,⁶ illustrates the conventional character of Roman art in virtue of its dependence on classical tradition."

I thank the Society of Roman Studies for allowing me, with Dr. Haverfield's consent, to give this able

⁴ A similar cuirass, with three rows of flaps, is worn by Caelius. The *lorica squamata*, which appears on the reliefs of L. Sertorius Festus (Lindenschmidt, *Tracht und Bewaffnung*, pl. 1, 6), and of T. Calidius Severus (A.E.M., V. p. 206), must have been a short-lived, or never very usual, fashion.

⁵ The name is attested by Martial, Vol. XIV. p. 32, whose words "Arma tribuniciam cingere digna latus" need not be taken to confine its use to the officer; compare Mommsen, *Staatsrecht*, I., pp. 433, 434.

⁶ The so-called "Antinous" of the Belvedere and its replicas prove that Praxiteles originated the motive. It is reproduced in various heroic statues (*Museo Chiaramonti*, 175, etc.) as well as in those draped in military fashion.

and lucid description of the Roman Centurion's equipment from the very valuable paper by Dr. Haverfield and Mr. Stuart Jones in their recently published *Journal*.⁷ The Society have lately prepared and offered for sale a collection of casts designed to include representative sculptures and architectural decorations of the Roman Period in Britain. This tombstone forms one of the series. It would be well if a copy were secured for our Chester Museum.



⁷ *Journal of Roman Studies*, ii. 124.