

*An Account of an Inscription discovered at Walwick Chesters, in the County of Northumberland, by the Rev. JOHN HODGSON, Secretary.*

*See Plate VI. Fig. F.*

THE tablet, which bears this inscription, is broken into three pieces, and imperfect on the right side. The remains of it measures thirty-eight inches in length, and thirty-two inches in breadth. It was discovered some years since, at Walwick Chesters, in Northumberland; and is, at present, in the possession of Nathaniel Clayton, Esq. of that place. The letters, which remain upon it, are very perfect, and the parts, which are blank, have been designedly erased. In its present mutilated condition, it is impossible to ascertain with certainty, the particular purpose for which it was erected; but it is interesting, on account of the facts it contains, and the inferences deducible from it.

It mentions an Emperor of Rome, who was grandson of Severus; the second Ala of the Astures; a person of the name of Marius Valerius; the presence of a prefect called Septimus Nilus; and refers to something that, having been injured by time, had been rebuilt, and dedicated on the third of the Kalends of November, when Gratus and Seleucus were Consuls.

Heliogabalus was grandson of Mæsa, the sister of Severus, and styled himself DIVI SEVERI NEPOS. He began to reign in 218, and was slain on the tenth of March, 222. Gratus and Seleucus were Consuls in 221: this inscription was, therefore, made on the thirtieth of October, in that year, and refers to Heliogabalus. After the death of an Emperor, who was hated, his name and titles were often erased from public monuments, a practice which accounts for the mutilations in this inscription.

The *Notitia Imperii*, a record, which mentions transactions which occurred after the reign of the Emperor Theodosius the First, and, consequently, after 375, enumerates the names of eighteen cities per lineam Valli; and particularizes the rank of the officers, and the names of the several divisions of the Roman army, by which they were garrisoned. In the sixth of these cities, which it calls *Cilurnum*, and which answers to Walwick Chesters, it places the prefect of the second wing of the Astures (*Prefectus Alæ secundæ Asturum Cilurno*). The coincidence, therefore, between this inscription and the *Notitia*, clearly proves that the ancient name of Walwick Chesters, was *Cilurnum*. A similar agreement exists between the *Notitia* and inscriptions found at the stations at Benwell, Halton Chesters, Carrowbrugh, House Steads, Little Chesters, Burdoswald, and other stations on the line of the Wall.

The Astures were a people of Spain: the first *Ala* of them was quartered at Benwell, and on an inscription belonging to that place, is called *Ala prima Hispanorum Asturum*, and is coupled with the name of Gordian. An inscription, discovered at *Æsica*, or Great Chesters, on the Wall, also mentions the second cohort of the Astures; but the *Notitia* says *cohors prima Asturum Æsica*.

The *Alæ* were auxiliary cavalry, and each of them consisted of four or five hundred horse, and were divided into ten *turmæ* or troops.

I conceive that the term *vetustate* referred to some edifice that had fallen into decay. The first *Ala* of the Astures rebuilt a temple at Benwell in the time of Gordian; and the second cohort of the same people re-edified a ruined granary, from the ground, at Great Chesters, in the time of Alexander Severus. The Emperor Gordian also rebuilt certain decayed barracks and magazines at Lanchester, and I apprehend that the inscription in the crypt at Hexham, which has *HORR* .. .. upon it, relates to the repairs of some granary. It is worthy of remark that all these repairs were done nearly about the same time; and, I think, the term *vestustate conlapsa*, fallen together by time, implies that these edifices had acquired a very considerable age at the time they were rebuilt.

Perhaps the repairs, which this inscription records, were done by some part of the second Ala of the Astures, the name of which was in the plural number; and the four last lines, when perfect, stood in some such manner as the following. The titles and offices of the Emperor may be seen in several inscriptions in Gruter, Reinesius, and other authors.

ALÆ. II. ASTVR. TEMPLVM. VETVSTATE. CONLAPSUM. RESTITV  
ERVNT. PER. MARIVM. VALERIVM. LEG. AVG. PRPR.  
INSTANTE. SEPTIMIO. NILO. PRAEF. ALÆ. II. ASTVR.  
DEDICATVM. III. KAL. NOVEM. GRATO. ET. SELEVCO COSS.

In Horsley's *Britannia Romana*, and in Gough's *Camden*, there are copies of two inscriptions of this kind, found at Lanchester, in both of which, the names of the propretor and the prefect, are in this mode of phraseology. I have inserted *templum* to agree with *dedicatum*, supposing that the flattery of the times had complimented this execrable Emperor and Priest of the Sun with some title of divinity, and dedicated a temple to him.

JOHN HODGSON.