

An Account of a sepulchral Inscription, discovered at Little Chesters, in the County of Northumberland, by the Rev. ANTHONY HEDLEY, A. M.

(Read January 3d, 1821.)

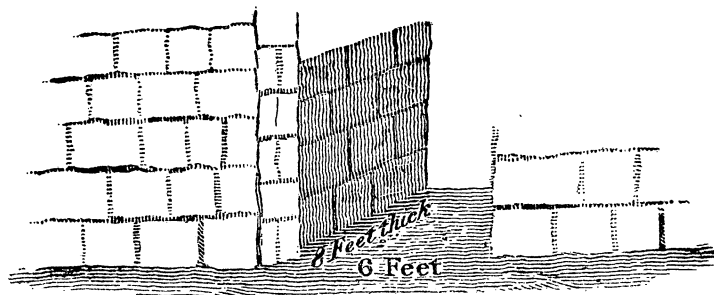
THE Roman Station of Little Chesters, (Vindolana) though mentioned in the Notitia as one of the stations *per lineam Valli*, is distant from it upwards of a mile. It is, however, little more than half a mile from Hadrian's Vallum, which runs here at a considerable distance southward from the wall of Severus. It is situated upon the Via Vicinalis, which took the shortest direction from Walwick Chesters (Cilurnum) to Carrvorrán (Magna.) This ancient military way, in many places still very perfect, is, with slight occasional repair, part of the township road, and is called by the country people the *Causeway*. A Roman mile stone, six feet high, but without any inscription, is now standing upon it about fifty yards east from the station, and twelve or fourteen years ago, another was standing a mile to the west. Could the *precise* spot where the latter stood be determined, and the road accurately measured between the two, might it not assist in settling the contested point about the length of the miles expressed by the numbers of the Itinerary?

Vindolana being a British appellation, and signifying in that language, the *fort on the height*, was perhaps originally a British post.—Situating on the southern confines of the territory of the Ottadini, it was probably one of a chain of fortresses erected by them against their powerful neighbours, the Brigantes. There is reason to believe that it was taken possession of, and garrisoned, with many of the neighbouring stations, by the Romans, when Agricola brought this part of the island into subjection. An inscription found here, and mentioned by Horsley, seems to refer to Trajan, the predecessor of Hadrian, who

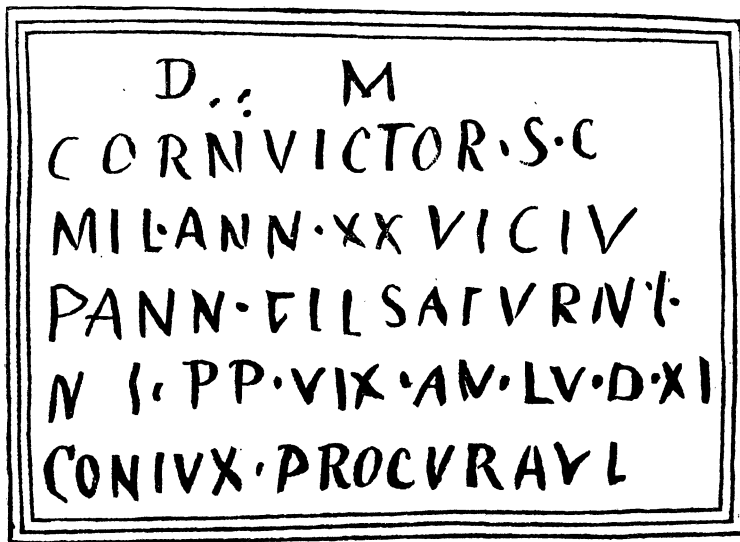
died A. D. 117. It is quite certain, at least, from another inscription, mentioning Calphurnius Agricola, who was proprætor under Marcus Aurelius, that there was a garrison here about A. D. 165. And we know from the Notitia, which is supposed to have been compiled in the time of the second Theodosius, viz. about A. D. 445, and immediately before the withdrawing of the Roman forces from Britain, that it was then garrisoned by the Cohors quarta Gallorum. It seems, therefore, to have been occupied by the Romans during the whole of their stay in the northern part of our island.

Little Chesters became my property in 1814, by purchase, from the heirs of Mr. William Lowes, who is mentioned by Wallis as the proprietor in his time.

In the spring of 1818, the tenant having occasion for stones to build a fence, had recourse to some *rudera* near the ramparts of the station, which (*horresco referens*) had, for time immemorial, been the common quarry of the farm, and partly of the neighbourhood, for almost every purpose for which stone is wanted. On digging in front of its east entrance, where the ground slopes down very swiftly to a rivulet, called Bardon Burn, his labourer discovered a flight of stone steps, leading up this declivity, to the entrance itself. On clearing away the rubbish about the gateway, the wall on the left was found perfectly entire to the height of six feet, and about eight feet in width, the usual thickness of the wall of Severus. The entrance was about six feet wide, and



had the ordinary bolt hole and cheeks for the door worked in the masonry. The wall on the right had been thrown down nearly to its foundation, and among its ruins was found a monumental stone in excellent preservation, now in the collection at Wallington. It is an oblong square, 26 inches by 21, and perfectly devoid of ornament, excepting a plain moulding in relief, as a kind of bordering. Its back is rugged and unhewn, so that it must have been built up in a wall.— It contains the following inscription, in letters so clear and distinct, and so little obliterated by exposure to the weather, that it seems to have been set up not long before the overthrow and abandonment of the station.



Which I read thus:—

DIS MANIBUS;
CORNELIUS VICTOR, SIGNIFER COHORTIS
MILITAVIT ANNOS VIGINTI SEX, CIVIS

PANNONCUS, FILIUS SATURNI-
 NI PIENTISSIME VIXIT ANNOS QUINQUAGINTA QUINQUE DIES
 UNDECIM
 CONJUX PROCURAVI.

There is some difficulty in the letters S. C. Gruter, in one instance, renders them *Sibi Curavit*, and nothing is more certain than that the Romans often made preparations for their own sepulchral monuments during their life time, as we learn from the frequently recurring expressions "*vivus fecit sibi*"—"sibi vivus ponendum curavit," &c. : but in our inscription, the "*conjux procuravi*," about the meaning of which there can be no doubt, seems to be at variance with this supposition. I am inclined to agree, therefore, with an antiquarian friend, who thinks that the letters in question denote the military rank or office of Cornelius Victor, and I know of nothing for which they can stand, except the reading I have ventured to assign. Though the eagle was the general standard of the legion, it may be inferred from several passages in the classics,* that each cohort had its particular signum, as well as its own signifer. The following instance, referred to below from the Commentaries, is very express. In the engagement between Cæsar and the Nervii we are told "*quartæ cohortis omnibus centurionibus occisis, signiferoque interfecto, signo amisso*," &c. Cornelius Victor, a native of Pannonia or modern Hungary, and who had served twenty-six years, might therefore die, *signifer*, or standard bearer, of the Cohors quarta Gallorum.

The labourer, never, I believe, consulting his employer, tore up, without any compunction, the fine flight of steps leading to the gateway, and likewise rased to its very foundation, the wall on the right. Had he fortunately left every thing as he found it, the discovery would have presented one of the most gratifying sights to the Antiquary, now to be met with on the line of the wall. There is now,

* Cæs. B. G. ii. 25. Liv. xxvii. 15. Tac. Ann. i. 18. Hist. i. 41.

alas! little to be seen, and excepting in two or three, I am afraid not much more to be discovered in any of them. It is melancholy to reflect that these eighteen immense magazines of Roman Antiquities should have been almost completely rifled, and no one good collection formed of their contents, as a great proportion of the articles that have been dug up has, if not destroyed by the ignorance of their chance discoverers, either perished through neglect, or been divided among a great many private museums, as well as a few public ones in different parts of the kingdom. And it is strange, that from the time of Camden, who first explored them with an antiquarian eye, down to our own, nothing, or next to nothing, has been done towards systematically clearing the ground plan of one of these stations. Might not a portion of the funds of this Society be usefully and legitimately employed in an attempt of this kind? Great Chesters, Housesteads, and Risingham in Reedwater, each still afford a promising field for this kind of research. Half a dozen labourers for a fortnight, at an expense of not more than five pounds, would clear away much of the rubbish from any one of these stations, and not only discover, it is to be hoped, many curious and precious fragments of antiquity, but throw a very interesting and desirable light on the stationary economy of the Romans, and on the form and arrangement of their castra stativa.

ANT. HEDLEY.

Summer Hill, January 2d, 1821.