

XXV.—*An Account of some Roman Shoes lately discovered at Whitley Castle, Northumberland, in a letter from the REV. A. HEDLEY, to JOHN ADAMSON, Esq., Sec.*

*Whitfield Rectory, October 2, 1826.*

MY DEAR SIR,

AT our August meeting, you will recollect that you submitted to the inspection of the Society the remains of some old shoes, sent by your colleague, which he affirmed to be Roman, but which the meeting thought more likely to belong to a much more recent period, having been found near the site of an old monastery, in the neighbourhood of Carlisle, though on the line of the Roman Wall. When on a late visit to me here, he rode over with me to Whitley Castle, the Roman *Alione*, as we heard that the proprietor, Mr. Henderson, had lately been making some excavations among the ruins of the station. Among other things he had found, he told us, some old shoes, and whilst he was gone to fetch them, I recollected those above-mentioned, and was in the very act of rallying our worthy friend on the subject, when as a just judgment on my presumption, in steps Mr. Henderson with perfect *fac-similes* of them, which he had dug out of an old dunghill, undoubtedly Roman, as well as the shoes. Like those from Carlisle they had been made and worn right and left. Those of the Ladies had been much ornamented and escaloped, &c. in the upper leathers, with ears for lace-holes. The soles of some of them were studded with nails of precisely the same kind, so far as I can recollect, as those in the sandals presented to the Society. The nails were of a bright blue colour, probably a

coating of Prussic acid. Among these curious spoils of ancient times were some *jet Armillæ*, fragments of green glass, very coarse, and evidently cast, and a piece of a transparent vessel of a pale yellow colour, but whether of mineral origin or a composition of that kind of paste in which the ancients sometimes imitated precious stones, we could not, at the moment, decide. It deserves a further examination, and I shall endeavour to procure it from Mr. Henderson, for this purpose. He has partly laid bare a Sudatory; but, perhaps, the most interesting, at any rate, the most *valuable* discovery, is the dunghill, having already experienced its wonderfully fertilizing effects upon some grass land.—It has by no means the appearance of being *effête*, but has a *sappy* unctuous feel, a property which its deep covering of soil has probably tended to preserve.

The acknowledgment of error is always becoming, and often the only amends that can be made for it; and I think it due to truth and to Mr. Hodgson to declare, that I for one condemned the Roman pretensions of his shoes, in utter ignorance of the subject, never having seen any thing of the kind before. I am now, however, quite convinced, that this was a most irreverent proceeding, and that the shoes found at Carlisle and those I saw at Whitley Castle, must have been made and worn by the same people; and as the latter are undoubted remnants of the Roman æra in Britain and of the Roman people, there can be little or no question that we may safely assign to the former a similar origin.—And to ascertain a point of this kind is to the Antiquary of some curiosity and importance, as, if we except their armour and their personal ornaments of metallic or mineral manufacture, *shoes* are perhaps almost the only species of Roman habiliment that *ever* have come down to modern times.

I am, MY DEAR SIR,

Your's very truly,

ANTHONY HEDLEY.