

INSCRIPTIONS AT ABBOTSFORD AND HEXHAM.

SOMETIME ago our esteemed associate, Mr. Robert White, gave me a copy of a Roman inscription which he had noticed upon a stone inserted in the garden wall at Abbotsford. His reading of it was

VEXIL
LEG XX
PRIMIG

My curiosity was at once excited. We have many inscriptions in the North of England which mention the 20th Legion, but in every instance that legion bears the title of *Valeria, victrix*. The 22nd Legion took the epithet of *Primigenia*, but, so far as I was then aware, no detachment of that legion had ever been in Britain; besides the inscription in question bore the numerals xx, not xxii. At length it occurred to me that possibly we might not have the whole of the inscription, but that a portion of the stone had been broken off. I therefore took a journey to Abbotsford for the special purpose of examining the record. The inscription is placed in a recess in the garden wall fronting the house; and, apparently with the view of making the stone fit the niche, the lines of the inscription are made to assume a slanting position. The inscription has been surrounded by a boldly-moulded label; but the whole of the label, together with a considerable portion of the plane of the stone itself upon the right hand side, has been broken off. There cannot be a doubt that the inscription when entire was intended to signify that a certain building had been erected by a vexillation of the 22nd Legion styled *primigenia*, primitive. As this was the only notice I had that any part of this legion had been in Britain, I felt anxious to confirm my reading of the inscription by some other authority. On communicating with Professor Hübner of Berlin, that learned antiquary directed me to No. 5456 of Henzen's continuation of the inscriptions of Orelli, where the required confirmation was to be found. The inscription given was inscribed upon a marble cippus found at Ferentinum, in Italy. It records the name, rank, and exploits of Pontius Sabinus. As, amongst other things, it mentions that he was upon the Parthian expedition, conducted *a divo Trajano* (the emperor Trajan now transferred to

the skies), the inference is almost inevitable that the inscription belongs to Trajan's successor, Hadrian. The part of the inscription relating to our present subject is the following:—" *Præpositus vexillationibus milliariis tribus expeditione Britannica legionis septimæ geminæ, octavæ Augustæ, vicesimæ secundæ primigeniæ.*" From which it appears that he joined in the Britannic expedition at the head of vexillations, each a thousand strong; belonging to the 7th, the 8th, and the 22nd Legions. Here it may be necessary to mention that a vexillation was a body of troops selected for some special purpose from different centuries, all fighting for the time being under one common *vexillum* or standard. Thus we have distinct and independent evidence of the presence of a strong detachment of the 22nd Legion in Britain about the time probably of Hadrian's visit to it. It is probable that this legion or a portion of it was in Britain in the time of Carausius; for a coin of that emperor, described by Mr. Roach Smith in the second volume of the Numismatic Chronicle, and one in the Hunterian Museum, Glasgow, bear upon their reverse a sea-goat (the probable badge of the legion), together with the legend LEG. IIXX (*sic*) PRIMIG.

Before leaving the Ferentine inscription, I may mention that it throws light upon another Roman relic of great interest.

In describing the boss of a shield which was found not long ago in the estuary of the Tyne, and an engraving of which was inserted in the first part of the Lapidarium, through the kindness of the Rev. William Greenwell, I was at a loss to account for the presence of a soldier of the 8th Legion in these parts. All is now plain. To use the words of Dr. McCaul, whose attention has been independently turned to this inscription:—"I have but little doubt that Junius Dubitatus, named on this boss, was a soldier of the vexillation of the 8th Legion that is mentioned in that inscription. He seems to have been drowned, probably with some comrades, the boat or vessel in which he was having been upset or swamped whilst crossing or entering the river."

No inscription mentioning the 7th Legion has been found in Britain. If the vessels conveying the vexillations of these legions struck upon Tynemouth bar, or were driven by a north-east gale upon the Herdsands, the soldiers would not all get safely to land. We may thus account for the comparative absence of inscriptions mentioning them.

The next thing to be ascertained respecting the Abbotsford inscription is, Where was it found?

The stone is of white freestone, not the red sandstone of the neighbourhood of Melrose. There is no account of it in Stuart's *Caledonia Romana* or Wilson's *Prehistoric Annals*. After a good deal of correspondence, I am unable to elicit any direct testimony as to the place from which it came.

In the same garden wall where this stone is, there are five other niches of similar character to the recess in which it is placed, which are occupied by statuettes of Jupiter, Mars, Apollo, Mercury, and Venus, figures which we know were discovered in 1813, at Old Penrith. They are figured and described in Lysons' *Magna Britannia*. We may fairly suppose therefore that the stone that at present interests us came from the same locality. It must however have been discovered after the publication of the last volume of the Lysons', or it would not have escaped the attention of Dr. Bennet, the Bishop of Cloyne, who wrote that part of the work which treats of the antiquities of Cumberland.

Having mentioned these five figures of which the Lysons' give an engraving, it may not be improper, by way of digression, to state that they are emblematic of five of the days of the week. Apollo, or the Sun, represents the *dies Solis*, Sunday; Mars represents the *dies Martis*, or Tuesday; Mercury, the *dies Mercurii*, or Wednesday; Jupiter, *dies Jovis*, or Thursday; and Venus, the *dies Veneris*, or Friday. No doubt there were originally two other figures, Luna and Saturn, to represent Monday and Saturday, but which have been lost or destroyed. These seven figures would probably be placed in the sides of an octagonal building, the eighth compartment being occupied with an inscription or perhaps with a figure of Saturn or Cybele. I am indebted for these views to Mr. C. Roach Smith, who referred me in confirmation of his opinion to an article in the 2nd volume of the *Collectanea Antiqua* upon Roman Tessellated Pavements. There we have a description of a pavement found at Bramdean, in Hampshire, where a similar representation occurs. Other instances of the same arrangement are there given, at home and abroad.

One other object has recently come under my observation, to which I would call the attention of the Society. Ten days ago, Mr. Roach Smith and I visited Hexham. As my friend had not seen the Priory Church since its restoration, it was proposed that we should examine it. Whilst a messenger went for the keys we sauntered about in different directions. Mr. Roach Smith was attracted by a sort of natural sympathy to a Roman altar which stood near the entrance into the porch, and when I rejoined him he was sketching it. The stone was discovered five or six years ago, when the road was made from the Market Place to the New Town Hall, but up to that moment no one as far as we could learn had recognized it as a Roman altar, or observed that there was a single letter upon it.

The altar is a large one, being 4 feet 3 inches high, and 1 foot 8 inches broad.

Its capital and base have been cut down, so as to make them flush with the face of the altar, and thus adapting the whole slab for use as a building stone.

The inscription is nearly perfect, the only portions wanting being the single letters which indicated the prænomen or personal name of the dedicator and of his father. The letters are clearly cut and well formed. The inscription reads—

APOLLINI
 MAPONO
 TEREIVS
 F OVF
 FIRMVS SAEN
 PRAEF CASTR
 LEG VI V PF
 D D

Which may be translated—

“To Apollo Maponus—Terentius Firmus Senianus, the son of, of the Oufentine tribe, prefect of the camp of the sixth legion, styled victorious, pious, and faithful, dedicates this altar.”

I am not quite certain about the expansion of the SAEN at the end of the fifth line. I have here treated it as a second cognomen: further inquiry may lead to some modification of this view. All the rest is I think certain.

Altars to Apollo are very rare in Britain. Horsley, in his *Britannia*, only records one. It was found near Musselburgh, in Scotland, and was lost before his day. Two have been found recently, and in our own district: the first near the Cawfields Mile Castle; and the other, sorely injured, at Chester-le-Street. Another very highly ornamented altar to Apollo was found several years ago at Ribchester, and is figured in the second part of the *Lapidarium*, as well as in other works. Besides these, I do not remember any other.

In the altar before us, and also in the Ribchester altar, Apollo has the epithet *Maponus*.

An altar found at Old Penrith about the middle of the last century bears the dedication DEO MAPONO.

The origin or meaning of this word MAPONVS has not been satisfactorily ascertained. In the *Cosmography of Britain*, ascribed to an anonymous writer of Ravenna, a place called *Maponis* occurs, but its situation is not pointed out. Probably the epithet on our altars may have been derived from this place. Apollo may have been specially worshipped at this place, and the expression *Apollo Maponus* may have had an origin similar to that of *Jupiter Dolichenus*.

The office of prefect of the camp (*praefectus castrorum*) mentioned in the sixth line of our inscription has not occurred before in any altar that has

come under my notice. It is met with, however, in several continental examples. For instance, in Henzen, No. 6759, we have the precisely equivalent expression, "*Præfectus castrorum legionis III Cyrenaicae.*"

The prefect of the camp of a legion was probably the military engineer of the legion. The following is the account given of the office in Dr. Smith's Dictionary of Antiquities:—"The prefect of the camp is first mentioned in the reign of Augustus. There was one to each legion. We learn from Vegetus that it was his duty to attend to all matters connected with the making of a camp, such as the vallum, fossa, &c., and also to the internal economy of it."

It would be satisfactory to know the age of this altar, with the view of ascertaining whether or not it was possible that Terentius Firmus was the man who planned the Wall for Hadrian. The 6th Legion came to Britain in the time of Hadrian, and probably with him. There is nothing in the inscription to furnish us with a date. The form and clear cutting of the letters are not inconsistent with the supposition that the altar belongs to the reign of Hadrian.

Two of the letters of the inscription, however, (*TR* in *castrorum*) are presented in combination. I do not myself remember an instance of this in an inscription in the time of Hadrian, but it occurs frequently in the reign of his successor, Antoninus Pius. If Firmus was not engaged upon the southern Barrier in the year 120, he probably was upon the northern in 140.

The discovery of another altar, in addition to those previously known, gives strength to the conviction expressed by Horsley, Hodgson, and others, that Hexham was the seat of a Roman garrison. If more of the ground in the vicinity of the spot where this altar was found were levelled, other inscriptions might be found, and possibly one which would give us the means of ascertaining with certainty the Roman name of the place. May it be soon, and may we be there to see!

J. COLLINGWOOD BRUCE.

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P.S. Since writing the above I have received a communication from Professor Hübner respecting the point in the inscription about which I was in doubt. That learned epigraphist says, "The new altar at Hexham is very interesting. The copy of the inscription is thoroughly satisfactory; it is no great loss that the prænomen of Terentius Firmus and his father has perished; for certainly nothing else is wanting but those single letters. The *tribus Oufentina* contains the key for the explanation of *SAEN*; it is certainly *Saena* (so better spelled than *Sena*) the celebrated town of Etruria, now Siena; for this belonged to that tribe, the Oufentina. Therefore we must expand *SAEN* by *Saenensis* or *Saeniensis*," indicating that Terentius Rufus was a native of Siena:

J. C. B.