

## DISCOVERY OF A ROMAN ALTAR AT PROCOLITIA.

DURING the present year there has been dug up amongst the ruins of the earliest buildings of the Roman station of Procolitia (the seventh *per lineam Valli*), an altar dedicated to the genius of the place—"Genio hujus loci." According to the Roman superstition, every person, and every place, had a presiding genius. In this instance the object of the dedication is distinct and clear, not so the names of the dedicators. The lettering is by the hand of an unskilled sculptor, and is indistinct in the third and fourth lines; these appear to be the letters—

GENIO  
 HUIUS LO  
 CI TEXAND  
 ET SUAVIS  
 VEX COHOR  
 II NERVIOR  
 VM

of which the following would seem to be a probable reading:—"Genio hujus loci Texander et Suavis Vexillarii cohortis secundæ Nerviorum." The dedicators are thus assumed to be Texander and Suavis, two Vexillarii of the second cohort of the Nervii. The name of Texander has not been met with in any inscription found in Britain; the name of Suavis is recorded on a centurial stone found in the vicinity of Procolitia as that of a centurion employed in building Hadrian's Wall, and there might well be a standard bearer having the same cognomen. It is satisfactory to the writer that Dr. Bruce (whom he regards as the best authority on the subject) concurs in this as the probable reading of these imperfect letters. The standard bearer of the Legion was styled "Aquilifer, from Aquila, the Ensign of the Legion; the standard bearer of the cohort was styled Signifer, from Signa, the standard of a cohort; and the standard bearer of a century (company) or any body of troops serving under a vexillum, was styled "Vexillarius. The second cohort of the Nervii, whose officers dedicate this altar without doubt came to Britain with the Sixth Legion, early in the reign of Hadrian. It is mentioned in the diploma of that emperor, A.D. 124, and the only

other record of this cohort which has been discovered in Britain is an altar found near the line of the road of Agricola, between the stations of Cilurnum and Magna, dedicated by Decimus Cærellius Victor, a præfect of the Second Cohort of the Nervii. The Nervii were a people of Belgic Gaul, distinguished for their valour. Julius Cæsar, in the Second Book of his Commentaries de Bello Gallicô, describes his invasion of Belgic Gaul at the head of eight legions, and his approach through the country of the Ambiani to that of the Nervii, and he thus states the result of his inquiries as to the habits and character of the Nervii:—"There is no intercourse with them by merchants; they do not allow wine, or any other things tending to luxury, to be brought into their country, because they are satisfied that by such things their minds would be weakened and their courage impaired; they are a people fierce and of great valour." The great Roman general proceeds to narrate his advance into their country, and his desperate conflict with them on the banks of the Sabis (the modern Sambre). A people who could maintain such a conflict with the disciplined legions of Rome must have contained excellent materials for soldiers, and so the Romans must have thought, for at a later period no less than six auxiliary cohorts of the Nervii served in the Roman armies. The permanent garrison of Procolitia was the first cohort of Batavians, which has left numerous records of its presence there, extending from the reign of Maximinus, A.D. 237, to the date of the Notitia Imperii, supposed to be A.D. 400. Very near to the spot where this altar was found was dug up a fragment of an inscribed stone, containing a very few letters, but enough to justify the conjecture that the inscription relates to some act to which the Sixth Legion and some troops of the Nervii were parties. The Sixth Legion and the second cohort of the Nervii (probably one of its auxiliary cohorts) arrived in Britain at the same time. The Sixth Legion took part in the building of the Wall of Hadrian, of which the station of Procolitia is a component part. Amongst the ruins of that station many tiles have been found bearing the impress of that Legion, LEG. VI. V., "Legio sexta victrix." The Sixth Legion remained in Britain, its head quarters being at York, till the date of the Notitia Imperii, in which it is placed as being under the command of the Roman officer styled Dux Britanniarum, "sub dispositione viri spectabilis Ducis Britanniarum." The district under the command of this officer includes all the garrisons on the Wall of Hadrian, the Wall of Antoninus would seem to have been previously abandoned. Immediately after the date of the Notitia, Stilicho, the general, and the Minister of the youthful Emperor Honorius, called in the legions from the provinces for the purpose of resisting the invasion of Italy by the Goths under Alaric.

Amongst the legions so called in would be the 6th, and no doubt it is the legion referred to by the poet Claudian, the "Vates Sacer," who sung the exploits of Stilicho—

Venit et extremis Legio prætenta Britannis  
Quæ Scoto dat fræna truci, ferroque notatas  
Perlegit exsanguis Picto moriente figuras.

It may be hoped that future excavation may bring to light further fragments of this inscribed stone, of which so little has been yet found; and the same hope may be extended to the discovery of further fragments of a bronze statute of the size of life, of which the hand, a favourable specimen of the sculptor's art, has been lately exhumed.

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