

AN ACCOUNT OF THE EXCAVATION OF THE SOUTH GATEWAY OF THE STATION OF CILURNUM.

BY THE REV. J. COLLINGWOOD BRUCE. READ AUGUST 27TH, 1879.

IN the month of June last, Mr. Clayton, the proprietor of the estate on which it stands, excavated the southern gateway of the Roman station of CILURNUM, the modern Chesters, on the line of Hadrian's Wall. Being resident in the immediate neighbourhood at the time, I had the opportunity of daily inspecting the work as it proceeded; and I now, at Mr. Clayton's request, propose to give an account of the results which have been obtained.

As is well known to the members of this Society, many portions of this station had previously been laid bare, rendering us familiar with its northern and two eastern gateways, with the buildings of its prætorium, and the forum.

The southern gateway, which was selected as the next spot to be subjected to the spade of the excavator, did not before the commencement of operations promise important results. Its position was feebly indicated by a slight depression in the centre of the southern rampart of the station, and this rampart did not rise much above the general level of the adjoining ground.

As one result of the excavation, we have before us the entire design of the gateway of a Roman station, which is perfect in all its parts. The carefully executed Plan with which Mr. Clayton has provided us exhibits its form. The whole of the masonry is remarkably solid and substantial, the workmanship being of the very best kind. Many of the stones exhibit on their face a kind of feathered tooling, similar to that which we find on the stones used in forming the land abutment of the Roman bridge at this station.

The plan of the gateway is similar to that of the gateways of the stations in general; but this, as well as the other principal gateways of

the station, is larger and more massive than those of some of the other stations. Thus, in this gateway the space between the pivot holes of each entrance is eleven feet nine inches, whereas at BORCOVICUS it is only nine feet six inches. This circumstance is of some importance. Several facts lead to the conclusion that the station of Cilurnum was erected by Agricola, soon after his subjugation of the country of the Brigantes. That general, we know, wished to exhibit to the natives of the North of England the resources of Rome, and to enamour them with her arts. Certainly in this station he has left nothing undone to impress them favourably. As the stations which he left in his rear stood alone and were not connected by a wall, it was necessary that they should be peculiarly strong and able to resist attack. Tacitus tells us that none of them were ever successfully assailed. (Agricola, cap. xxi., xxii.)

The main gateways of a Roman station had two portals, and on each side of them was a guard room for the accommodation of the soldiery who kept watch and ward. Each entrance was spanned by an arch both on its outer and inner face. None of the voussoirs have been found belonging to the arches of this gate, but the massive stones remain, and are shown in the Plan, which formed the solid basis on which it was upreared. As will be seen in the Plan, the wall separating the two portals has had a passage-way left in it, by means of which the soldiers on guard could more freely communicate with each other. Each entrance has been closed on its outer face by two leaved gates. These gates have moved on wooden pivots, the lower part of which has been shod with a circle of iron. In this instance the iron cylinders were found sticking fast in the pivot holes, traces of the wood which they had encircled being found inside them. The pivot on which the upper part of the gate moved has been received into a circular aperture bored right through a large stone built into the upper part of the structure. A stone of this kind is now lying amongst the *debris* of this gate. It has evidently been twice used for the purpose referred to, as it has two perforations through it; the one is fractured, the other has a diameter of seven inches. The doors which closed the gates have evidently been strengthened with iron bars and studded with iron nails, considerable remains of oxydised iron, suggestive of such a use, having been found. As was usually the

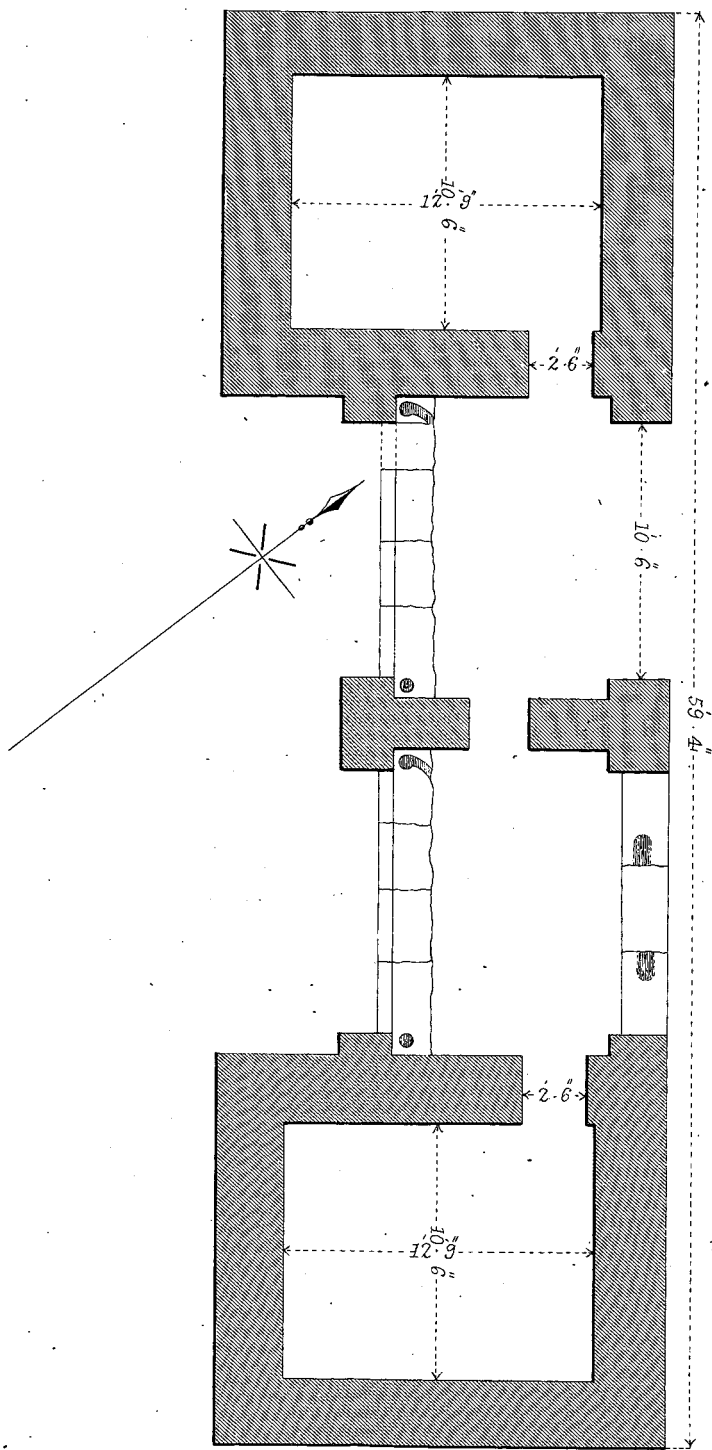
SOUTH GATEWAY, CILURNUM.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0

10

20 Feet.

Scale.





case, the doors when closed have struck against a ridge of masonry rising three or four inches above the sill of the door. This ridge is increased in height in the middle.

Immediately in front of the gates is a gutter cut out of solid stone which has been covered over with flags.

In excavating all the portions of this work, vast quantities of stone and rubbish were met with, as well as bones and horns of cattle and deer, and fragments of Samian ware and other pottery. In the eastern guard chamber two layers of wood ashes, sometimes as thick as three inches, were encountered. Similar appearances are met with whenever any of the buildings of the Wall are excavated.

In the eastern guard chamber a quantity of thick plaster was found, with which no doubt the walls were coated. The plaster is covered with fresco painting, the colours used being chiefly brown, black, red, and yellow.

The number of coins discovered is inconsiderable; many of them are so worn and defaced as to be illegible. Of those which can be identified, the earliest is of Vespasian, and the latest of Postumus; they are all of brass. There was also discovered the head of a statue neatly executed in stone. In the highest course in the eastern wall of the eastern guard chamber is a stone bearing the inscription, LEG VI VI—*Legio sexta, victrix*: the Sixth Legion the Victorious. The lettering of the inscription is feeble, and of a character indicating a late date. The stone on which it is carved differs from the other stones of the apartment in which it is placed. It was probably an after insertion, and was not placed there until the time of Severus at the earliest. The Sixth Legion, as we are all aware, did not come to Britain until the time of Hadrian.

But the most important of the results of this excavation was the discovery of two portions of a bronze tablet giving the privileges of Roman citizenship and the right of marriage to certain troops which were then serving in Britain. This interesting and important document was found in the eastern guard room, amongst the *debris*, about four feet above the level of the original floor.

Every reader of the New Testament is aware of the importance that was attached in the times of the early emperors to the privilege of being a citizen of Rome—that it was a privilege possessed not only

by the natives of the Eternal City or even of Italy, but by the denizens of foreign parts—and that it was a privilege which descended from father to son. “And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman and uncondemned? When the centurion heard that, he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou doest : for this man is a Roman. Then the chief captain came and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea. And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was free born.” On reading this passage we cannot but be struck, among other things, with the readiness with which the apostle’s assertion that he was a Roman citizen was received : his word does not seem for a moment to have been doubted. One fact which is stated in the life of Claudius by Suetonius perhaps accounts for this—“*Civitatem Romanam usurpantes in campo Esquilino securi percussit.*” Cap. xxv.—“Those that falsely pretended to the freedom of Rome he beheaded on the Esquiline.”

We shall presently see the care which the authorities at Rome took that pretenders might be easily detected, and that persons entitled to the citizenship might without any difficulty make good their claims.

On three previous occasions bronze tablets or portions of them have been found in England, conferring upon certain troops serving in Britain the rights of citizenship. Two of these belonging to the reign of Trajan and the third belonging to the reign of Hadrian, are preserved in the British Museum. The earliest of them, which was found at Malpas, in Cheshire, bears date A.D. 104. Fac-simile engravings of these, prepared with great care, are to be found in the “*Lapidarium Septentrionale*” of this Society, to which work they were presented by our noble patron, his Grace the Duke of Northumberland. In addition to these three diplomas the fragment of another tablet of like character seems to have been found at Walcot, near Bath, in 1815. Mr. Charles Lysons mentioned the fact of its discovery, and exhibited a drawing of it to the Society of Antiquaries, but the original has for some time been lost sight of. The fragment is a very small one, and is chiefly occupied with the formal part of the document. Through the kindness of our colleague, Mr. C. Roach Smith, I am enabled to submit to the Society a “rubbing” taken from the plate

itself. The fragment contains one word, *PROCVLEIA*, which will be useful to us in discussing the Chesters tablet.

These tablets are generally called *Tabulæ Honestæ Missionis*, because, in addition to conferring the citizenship with the right of marriage, they testify that the individuals obtaining it have completed their full time of military service and have obtained an honourable discharge. More briefly they are termed military diplomas. They are literally doubled-up documents. They consist of two small plates of bronze which have been fastened together at their lower extremities, probably by thongs of leather, and so folded together for greater convenience of carriage. The deed was engraved both on the outside and inside of the plates. Being thus in duplicate, there could be no doubt as to the correctness of any word or expression; and in order to show the individual's right to the envied privilege it was not necessary to open the document—a glance at its outside was sufficient. The lettering of the outside is usually more neatly and carefully executed than that of the interior. The lines of the interior are at right angles to those of the exterior; and more contractions are generally used in the interior copy than in the exterior.

These documents uniformly begin by giving at full length the names, titles, and genealogy of the emperor issuing the decree. Then follow the names of the troops on whom the privilege is conferred; *alæ* or cavalry regiments being first mentioned, and after them *cohortes* or infantry. Both *alæ* and cohorts are usually given in numerical order. Then follows the place where they are serving; and after that comes the important stipulation, that only those receive the citizenship who have honourably completed twenty-five campaigns at least. Along with the rights of citizenship the right of marriage was conferred, thus rendering legal the marriages which had already been contracted or which might afterwards take place. It was further declared that the children which were the fruits of such marriages should also be free; but it was expressly stipulated that each man should have only one wife at a time—“*dumtaxat singuli singulas.*” Next there follows the date of the decree, with the name of the consuls for the year, and after that the name of the person to whom the diploma is specially directed. Then we have a statement of the place, generally some temple in Rome, where the original document

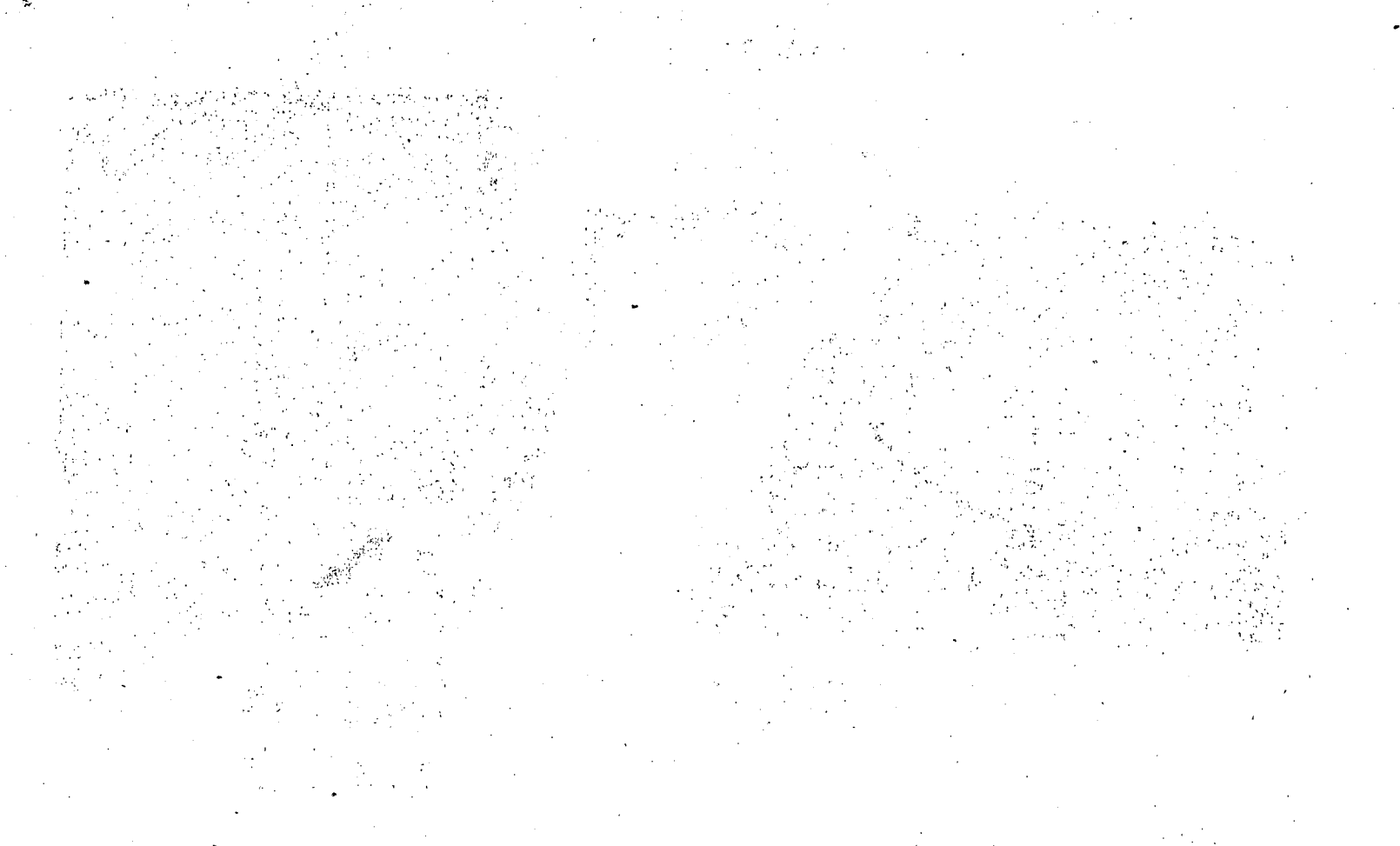
of which this is a copy was deposited for inspection ; and lastly, the names of seven witnesses who bear testimony to the fact that this diploma is a faithful and revised copy of the original. The whole on being folded up was sealed with the seals of the witnesses named in it.

It is the opinion of some antiquaries of eminence that an abridged copy of the decree was sent to every individual interested in it, who would preserve it with care for the benefit of his posterity. Throughout the whole Roman world only about sixty of these documents are known to exist, and these have been amply discussed by that profound scholar Professor Mommsen, in the third volume of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, issued under the auspices of the Royal Academy of Sciences of Prussia. Of these fourteen have been found in Italy; fifteen in Pannonia, which corresponds pretty nearly with the modern Hungary; three in Germany, upper and lower; and six in Dacia, which embraces the modern Wallachia, Transylvania, and Moldavia. Gaul has yielded only one.

The bronze tablet which we are now to examine consists of two pieces; one considerable piece and a small fragment.

When the fragments were delivered by the excavator, William Tailford, to Mr. Clayton, their nature was at once discerned, but only a few of the letters were distinctly legible. As the document promised to be of much importance we did not venture to attempt to remove the oxide of copper and earthy matters which covered the plates, but sought the aid of Mr. Ready, of the British Museum, an operator of great skill and experience. Every letter is now perfectly legible, and though we have only one leaf of the diploma (and some portions of it are wanting), we are able, with a single exception, to make out the names of all the troops mentioned in it. The parts that are wanting are chiefly the formal parts, which we can in a great measure restore from other diplomas belonging to the same reign. The drawing on the opposite page, of the size of the original, accurately represents it.

I shall now give a copy of the inscription, taking that of the exterior as being more complete first, and then that of the interior. In doing this I must mention that in the first place I have had the advantage of the assistance of Mr. Franks, of the British Museum; and we read the inscriptions very nearly as I shall now give them. And further, that I sent a photograph of them to Professor Hübner,





THE CHESTERS DIPLOMA.

of Berlin. He, in reply to my communication, says, "The same day I got your letter of July 21st, with the excellent photographs of the cleaned fragments, I gave the same to Professor Mommsen. He has succeeded, as I expected, in reading it, and I give you the text on the next page."

I now give the Professor's reading, remarking that the letters of the inscription that actually exist on the tablet are given in Roman capitals; those portions which have been supplied on the authority of similar documents are given in small letters.

INSIDE.

imp caes divi HADRIANI f divi trajani part n
divi nervæ PRON T Aelius hadrianus an-
TONINUS avg PIVS pont max tr. pot viiii

IMP II COS IIII P P

EQ ET PED *qui mil in al iii et coh xi q a avg*
 GAL PROC ET I *et i hisp astvr et i*
 CELT ET I HISP ET *i ael dacor et i ael classica*
 ET I FID ET II GALL *et ii et vi nervior et iii*
 BRAC ET IIII LING *et iiiii gallor. et svnt in*
 BRITTAN SVB PAPIRIO *aeliano quinque et vig stip*
 EMERIT M HON MISSIONE *quorum nomina subscripta*
 SVNT C R QVI EORVM *non haberent dedit et*
 CONVB CVM VXORIBUS *quas tunc habuissent*
 CVM EST CIV IIS Data

OUTSIDE.

imp CAESAR DIVI HADRIANI F DIVI
trajani PART NEPOS DIVI NERVAE PRO
nep t aELIVS HADRIANVS ANTONINVS
avg pivs PONT MAX TR POT VIII IMP II COS IIII
p p equit et PEDIT QVI MILITAVER IN ALIS III
et cohort XI quæ APPELL AVG GALL PROCVL ET I
 ET I HISP ASTVR ET I CELTIB
et i hisp et i AELIA DACOR ET I AELIA
 CLASSICA *et i fid vARD ET II GALLOR ET II ET*
 VI NERVior *et iii braC ET IIII LING ET IIII GALL*
 ET SVNT IN BRITANNIA SVB PAPIRIO AELI
 ANO QVINQUE *et viginti STIPEND EMERIT*

Before giving a translation of the inscription, it may be convenient to lay the whole of it before the eye of the reader as it may be made out from both sides of the tablet and from contemporary documents.

IMPERATOR CAESAR, DIVI HADRIANI FILIVS, DIVI TRAJANI PARTHICI NEPOS, DIVI NERVAE PRONEPOS, TITVS AELIVS HADRIANVS ANTONINVS AVGVSTVS PIVS, PONTIFEX MAXIMVS, TRIBVNITIA POTES-TATE VIII, IMPERATOR II., CONSVL III., PATER PATRIAE.

EQVITIBVS ET PEDITIBVS QVI MILITAVERVNT IN ALIS III ET COHORTIBVS XI QVAE APPELLANTVR AVGVSTA GALLORVM PROCV-LEIANA ET I ET I HISPANORVM ASTVRVM ET I CELTIBERORVM ET I HISPANORVM ET I AELIA DACORVM ET I AELIA CLASSICA ET I FIDA [VARDVLLORVM] ET II GALLORVM ET II ET VI NERVIORVM ET III BRACARIORVM ET III LINGONVM ET III GALLORVM ET SVNT IN BRITANNIA SVB PAPIRIO AELIANO QVINQVE ET VIGINTI STIPENDIIS EMERITIS MISSIS HONESTA MISSIONE.

QVORVM NOMINA SVBSCRIPTA SVNT CIVITATEM ROMANAM QVI EORVM NON HABERENT DEDIT ET CONVBIVM CVM VXORIBVS QVAS TVNC HABVSSENT CVM EST CIVITAS IIS DATA [AVT CVM IIS QVAS POSTEA DVXISSENT DVMTAXAT SINGVLIS]

The document may be thus translated:—

The emperor Cæsar (son of the deified Hadrian, grandson of the deified Trajan styled Parthicus, great grandson of the deified Nerva), Titus Ælius Hadrianus Augustus Pius, chief priest, invested with tribunitian power for the ninth time, declared imperator for the second time, consul for the fourth time, the father of his country, to the cavalry and infantry in three alæ and eleven cohorts, which are named the (ala) Augusta Gallorum Proculectiana (the imperial regiment of Gallic cavalry surnamed the Proculectian) and . . . , and the first ala of Celtiberians, and the first cohort of Spaniards and the first of the Dacians styled the Ælian, and the first cohort of Marines styled the Ælian, and the first of the Varduli surnamed the faithful, and the second of the Gauls, and the second and sixth of the Nervii, and the third of the Bracarrians, and the fourth of the Lingones, and the fourth of the Gauls, and are in Britain under Papius Ælianus, who having completed twenty-five campaigns and obtained an honourable discharge, whose names are written below, whoever of them does not already possess it, has granted the rights of Roman citizenship and



Inside



Outside



THE WALCOT DIPLOMA.

And^r Reid Newcomb

marriage with the wives whom they may have when the citizenship is given, or if any of them are unmarried, with those whom they may afterwards take provided each have one only.

Here the document ends. If the remainder of the plate had been found it would have given us the day of the month on which the edict was issued, together with the names of the consuls for the year. We know, however, the year: Antoninus Pius possessed the tribunitian power for the ninth time, was imperator a second time, and consul a fourth time in A.D. 146. The date is absolutely certain, as in the following year he accepted of the tribunitian power for the tenth time.

All the troops mentioned in this tablet we have met with before, either upon other diplomas, in the *Notitia*, or in lapidarian inscriptions, with the exception, perhaps, of the first, the *Ala prima Augusta Gallorum Proculeiana*. We have an *ala Augusta* upon altars found at Old Carlisle, and we have an *Ala Gallorum Sebosiana* in the Malpas diploma, but we have nowhere else an *ala* bearing the designation of the one before us. Doubtless it is a different body of troops from those I have now referred to.

As to the epithet of this *ala*, which is given in our tablet in the abbreviated form of *PROCVL*, we get a little light from the fragment of the Walcot diploma, of which a copy is here given,* where it appears in the more expanded form of *PROCVLEIAN*. This leaves no doubt that the whole word is *Proculeiana*. Occasionally we find that a body of troops in ancient as well as in modern times has taken its secondary denomination from its commander. Who the Proculeius was who gave name to this regiment we do not know. A knight of the name of C. Proculeius flourished in the reign of Augustus. Horace thus refers to him (*Odes II., 2*):—

“ Vivet extento Proculeius ævo,
Notus in fratris animi paterni.”

Thus rendered in English by our late lamented President, the Earl of Ravensworth:—

Let Proculeius' generous name
Survive to everlasting fame,
Who paid with more than father's care
Twice told his needy brethren's share.

* This copy is taken from the rubbing before spoken of. The letters having, however, been traced over by an inexperienced hand, some obvious errors springing from this cause have been corrected.

The circumstance which Horace refers to in these lines is believed to be this—he divided his patrimony with his brothers who were ruined in the civil wars. This person may have given his name to the regiment, but more probably it was a later commander who did so.

Of the troops mentioned in this diploma, as being in Britain in the year A.D. 146, it is worthy of notice that five of them (one *ala* and four cohorts) came from Spain, four (one *ala* and three cohorts) came from Gaul, and two cohorts came from the modern Belgium. One cohort, the Dacian, came from the east of Europe, the country now occupied by the Wallachians and Bulgarians.

In the Rivington diploma, issued by Hadrian in the year A.D. 124, not less than twenty-seven bodies of troops are named, six *alæ* and twenty-one cohorts. In this diploma only fourteen regiments are named. In all probability there never were so many Roman troops in Britain as during the reign of Hadrian. It is true Antoninus Pius carried on war against the Caledonians by the agency of his lieutenant, Lollius Urbicus, and in his reign the wall between the Firths of Clyde and Forth was built; these however seem to have been tasks of inferior difficulty to those which Hadrian achieved. At all events, if we may judge from the evidence of coins, the war in Caledonia was concluded five years before the issuing of the Chesters diploma. Two first brass coins of Antoninus Pius were struck at Rome in the year 141, bearing on the reverse the figure of Britannia and the legend BRITANNIA. We may fairly suppose that these were struck in order to commemorate the emperor's victories in the island, and that the war was then virtually over. The famous second brass Britannic coin, of which such numbers were found in Coventina's well at Procolitia, bears the impress COS IIII; Antoninus Pius became Consul for the fourth time A.D. 145, which is a year before the date of the diploma.

Another fact of interest respecting the troops mentioned in our diploma is that we have proof that one half of them remained in Britain until nearly the close of the Roman occupation of the island. In the list given in the *Notitia Imperii* of the troops in garrison upon the Wall we have the names of seven of those in our diploma. The *Notitia*, as we have it, is believed to have been compiled early in the fifth century. We have thus evidence of these troops having remained in Britain, probably in the same stations, for two centuries

and a half. Nay more; some of them are named in the Malpas diploma of the year A.D. 104; these, therefore, must have been in the island for three centuries.

I have but one more observation to make. The Chesters tablet reveals to us the name of a governor of Britain of which we were ignorant before. Near the close of the inscription we have the words *sub Papirio Æliano*. Before holding the office of legate Papirius Ælianus must have served the office of consul. His name, however, does not occur in any existing list of consuls. In the year A.D. 184 a person named Cneius Papirius Ælianus appears in the consular lists. It is quite possible that this person may have been a descendant of the British legate, but we have no direct information respecting the legate himself beyond what this little fragment of bronze affords us.

In addition to the tablet which we have now discussed a small fragment of another was found at the same time, which is probably part of a duplicate copy of this one. It certainly belongs to the reign of Antoninus Pius, though nothing else can be ascertained respecting it.

I have perhaps extended my narrative to too great a length. The unusual character of the subject has tempted me. I have sometimes had the pleasure of making important communications to the Society, but never, I think, one more important than this. Professor Hübner, of Berlin, in writing to me respecting it, says, "On the whole it is a very important and highly interesting find, upon which I congratulate most heartily Mr. Clayton and yourself."