XXVIa.—LATER DISCOVERIES AT THE LAWE, SOUTH SHIELDS.

By the Rev. Dr. Bruce, V.P.

Read on Wednesday, the 28th of January, 1885.

It is the happy fortune of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle-upon-Tyne to have at most of its meetings a freshly-discovered stone, sculptured and inscribed by the early governors of the world, submitted to it for consideration. At a late meeting I had the satisfaction to read a paper upon the recent excavations on the Lawe, at South Shields, and I thought I had then told all that it was of importance for us to know or that we were ever likely to learn, respecting the transactions of the Roman garrison on the south of the estuary of the Tyne. Right glad am I now, through the favour of Mr. Blair, your excellent junior Secretary, to be able to call your attention to another sculptured stone, which was discovered in the burying-ground of the camp on Thursday, January 8th inst. Some workmen were removing the sand and other loose material which encumbered the ground at the intersection of James Mather Street and Cleveland Street, with a view to its being paved, when the larger portion of the slab which we are now to examine presented itself. Curiously enough, the upper portion of the monument was found about three years ago at the east end of Cleveland Street, at a distance of perhaps 100 yards from the site of the present find. This upper fragment is mentioned in the paper which I last read before this Society in the following terms:—"The stone shown in the next woodcut was found in Cleveland Street, which traverses the site of the Roman Cemetery. This circumstance, as well as its form, induces us to suppose that it is the upper portion of a gravestone. The busts

in the angles are probably representations of the deceased persons. The lower part, which is wanting, would contain the inscription." Happily this conjecture has proved correct, and still more happily the lower part, with its elegant carving as well as the inscription, is no longer wanting. We now proceed to describe the stone.

The entire slab (both portions being put together) measures 3 feet 4 inches by 1 foot 11 inches.

Its carved face consists of three compartments. The chief or central one contains the figure of a man, intended no doubt to represent the deceased. He rests upon a couch, in a semi-recumbent position. The design of the figure is decidedly classical, and the carving is exceedingly good. It was not an uncommon thing to give on tomb-stones a representation of the last scene in the history of the departed one. A good example of this, from Kirkby-Thore, may be seen in the *Lapidarium*, No. 752, and is also given in the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, Vol. VII., No. 303*a*. Other specimens of it occur at Chester (*Collectanea Antiqua*, Vol. VI., p. 34, *C. I. L.*, Vol. VII., No. 175), at York (*C. I. L.*, Vol. VII., No. 1343), and other parts of Britain, and the Roman world. The sick man raises the upper part of his body, resting his left elbow upon the pillow of his bed; he holds a cup in his left hand, whilst in his right, which rests upon his knee, he holds an object which to all appearance is a fir-cone. The fir-cone is seen upon Assyrian monuments. It is often met with in Etruscan and Roman grave-yards. A bronze fir-cone, eleven feet high, now in the Vatican Gardens, originally stood upon the summit of Hadrian's mausoleum (the Castle of St. Angelo) at Rome. An engraving of one with a stem attached to it, which was found in the burial ground of the South Shields Station, has already been given, p. 250. This ornament is supposed to have been symbolic of life after death. Unhappily, the greater part of the man's face has been violently knocked off. This was the case also in the fine monument found here dedicated to the memory of Regina (see page 239). The face of the juvenile figure at the bottom of the bed has also been purposely destroyed. A portion of the hair at one side of the head of the recumbent figure is, however, left, and its woolly character corresponds with the statement in the inscription that the deceased was a Moor. The dying man wears a tunic or shirt, whilst

over him is loosely thrown the pallium; it covers his left shoulder and the lower half of the body. The graceful folds of the tunic and pallium are well shown by the sculptor. The pallium or cloak has an ornamental border and a tassel at its extremity. The creases and the bandages of the mattress are also elegantly shown; the fringe which ornaments the pillow will be noticed. In the background of this scene scrolls of graceful form are incised. Under the principal figure is a diminutive form presenting a cup to the sick man; he wears simply a tunic which is bound round his waist. The smallness of his size is probably intended to represent his inferior position in life; he is only a menial waiting upon his master. On the floor is a vessel of good design, with two handles, and reed ornaments. The sides of this, the central compartment of the sculpture, are ornamented by fluted columns, having moulded and beaded capitals.

The upper part, or pedimented top of the stone forms a fitting coping, as it were, to the principal compartment immediately below it. In the angles above the pediment are busts, but whether they are representative of particular persons, or are mere ornaments, we have no means of knowing with certainty; it is most probable, however, that they represent the deceased and his patron. The face of one of them is broken off, and that of the other is injured beyond recognition. In the centre, underneath the pediment, is a lion's head having in its mouth a ring—the model so often followed in after times, in the formation of knockers to the doors of our castles, churches, and houses.* At each side of the lion's head are incised scrolls.

We now come to the lowest compartment of the sculpture which contains the inscription. The bottom of the tablet is injured, but as part of the moulding remains we have the assurance that the inscription is entire. Three or four of the letters have been broken off, but they can with certainty be supplied. The letters are well formed and clearly cut. No ligatures are introduced. Judging from the style of the letters alone, we would suppose that the monument belonged to the latter part of the second or the earlier part of the third century; but as only one name of each of the two persons is indicated, it most probably belongs to the middle or latter end of the third century;

* See the observations at the end of this article.

down to the end of the second century the three names, or at least two, would be given.

The inscription reads as follows, the supplied letters being placed within brackets:—

D M VICTORIS NATIONE, MAVRVM
ANNORVM · XX · LIBERTVS·NVMERIANI
[E]QITIS ALA · I · ASTVRVM · QVI
PIANTISSIME PROSEQVTVS EST

Here it is evident that there are some errors in grammar and spelling. At this early period the schoolmaster had not yet reached South Shields. It is quite possible that Numerianus, who erected this monument to his former servant, may have been neither an Italian nor a Spaniard, but an African, like his friend, and so but imperfectly acquainted with the Latin language. It will be remembered, also, that the Palmyrene inscription found at this station had in it several grammatical errors. The word MAVRVM at the end of the first line is in the accusative case, but there is nothing to govern it. It may have been intended for MAVRORVM, but this is hardly likely. It seems best to put a full stop after VICTORIS, and beginning a new sentence at NATIONE, put MAVRVS in the nominative case agreeing with LIBERTVS. We must put V after Q in EQITIS at the beginning of the third line, though other examples of a similar omission are to be met with. If we suppose ALA to be in the ablative case it is not incorrect, but it will be better to read it in the genitive, ALAE, and for PIANTISSIME in the fourth line we must read PIENTISSIME. The reading of the inscription will then be—*Diis Manibus Victoris. Natione Maurus annorum XX, libertus Numeriani equitis alae primae Asturum qui[eum] pientissime prosequtus est.* "To the divine shades of Victor. He was by nation a Moor, he lived twenty years, and was the freed man of Numerianus, a horseman of the first ala of Asturians, who most affectionately followed (his former servant to the grave.)"

The only peculiarity in this inscription is the use of the word *prosequtus est.* We have not before met with it in the inscriptions of the North of England; but it is found elsewhere. The following is the latter part of an epitaph, found at Urbisaglia, in Central Italy,


D·M·VICTORIS·NATIONE·MAVRVM
NNORVM·XX·LIBERTVS·NVMERIANI
OTTALATASTVRVMOVIX
PIANTISSIMEPR OVTVSEST

to a young man named Caius Turpidius Severus, who died at the age of sixteen. It is No. 4830 in *Orellius*, and No. 1422 in the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (Vol. I.):—

. . . . . .
PARENTIBVS PRAESIDIVM AMICEIS GAVDIVM
POLLICITA PVERI VIRTVS INDIGNE OCCIDIT
QVOIVS FATVM ACERBVM POPVLVS INDIGNE TVLIT
MAGNOQVE FLETV FVNVS PROSECVTVS EST.

The inscription may be translated:—"The virtue of the youth having given promise of protection to his parents, joy to his friends, he was undeservedly cut off; whose bitter fate the people bore impatiently, and with much weeping attended his funeral." Here the use of *prosecutus est* is perfectly plain, and supplies sufficient authority for the translation which we have given of it in the South Shields inscription.

In my former paper I had occasion to remark that the position of the camp on the Lawe was one which was calculated to gather round it traders having commerce with distant parts of the earth. Regina's tomb-stone tells us of a native of Palmyra; here we learn that a native of Africa was one of its residents. As we notice our gallant ships leave the magnificent estuary of the Tyne, and others seeking its shelter, we may almost make sure of this, that in the days of Agricola, and downwards, similar scenes were witnessed by the people of those days, and that even then the produce of both banks of the Tyne were taken far hence to be exchanged for the riches and elegancies of sunnier lands. The first ala of the Asturians, to which Numerianus belonged, was in garrison at CONDERCUM, Benwell; he was thus within easy reach of South Shields, where he could at once enjoy the sea breezes of that salubrious spot and the society of his young friend.

I may mention that the valuable monument which we have been discussing is in the possession of our Secretary, Mr. Blair, in whose hands it is perfectly safe.

As the inscription had in it the peculiarity to which I have referred, I took the precaution before writing this paper of ascertaining what were the views of Professor Hübner of Berlin, respecting it. He kindly satisfied my inquiries. I cannot omit this occasion of saying

how greatly I value the friendship of Dr. Hübner, and how highly I estimate his scholarship and great skill and experience as an epigraphist. By his work the *Inscriptiones Britanniae Latinae*, which forms the seventh volume of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, he has laid English antiquaries under the greatest obligations. He does not profess personally to have examined every inscription, but in all cases he gives the authorities by which he was guided. He is not to be blamed for the faults of others, neither are we to be surprised if in every case he did not anticipate the results of subsequent investigation. He has accomplished a task which no Englishman since the days of Horsley has attempted, and given us a complete view of epigraphic science in Britain up to the date of the publication of his great work, and for it we ought to be grateful to him.

After the reading of the paper, the following remarks were made by the Rev. Professor Beal:—"I was much impressed on seeing the photograph of this monument with its resemblance to some of the Phrygian tombs, recently visited by Mr. Ramsay, under the direction of the Phil-Hellenic Society, especially in respect of the pediment surmounting the human figure. This pediment, with the lion's head and knocker enclosed in it, is in exact keeping with the Phrygian type of tomb. The idea seems to have been that the tomb, or, rather, the monument in front of the tomb, was a *doorway* leading to the other world, the narrow gate, in fact, of death; and on this doorway was sculptured the lion's head symbolical of Cybele,* the great Mother, who was waiting to receive her children *within* the dreary precincts, and a *knocker* as if to ask for admission. Mr. Ramsay, in his remarks on 'Sepulchral Customs in Ancient Phrygia,' pp. 10–14, has some pertinent observations on this point, and I think they justify the inference I would draw in respect of this newly discovered monument."

The following are the passages in Mr. Ramsay's pamphlet referred to by Mr. Beal:—

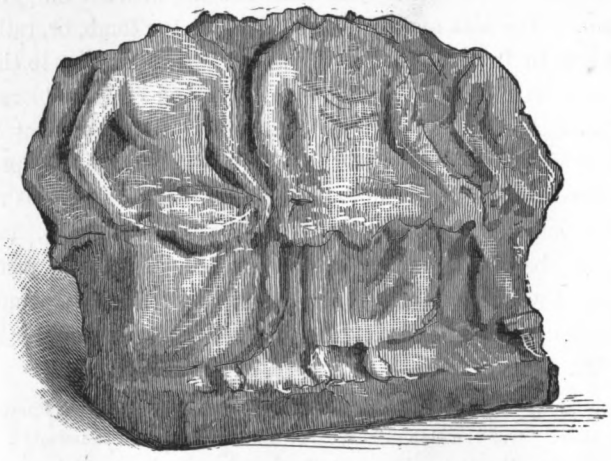
"Two kinds of sepulchral monument were commonly used in Phrygia in the Roman time. One is a slab of marble or other stone carved to imitate a doorway. The door-posts, the two valves, the lintel, and generally a pointed or rounded

* The chariot of Cybele was drawn by lions.

pediment above, are all indicated; one or two knockers are usually carved on the door, and symbols referring to the ordinary life of the deceased person are often represented on the panels, a basket, a strigil, a mirror, or something of the kind. The door is often surmounted by a pediment, triangular or semicircular, which is sometimes plain, sometimes sculptured. In the Tembris valley the sculptural decoration, as has just been stated, is almost always the ancient heraldic device—a pair of lions. The inscription is placed sometimes above the pediment, sometimes beneath it, rarely on the door itself. I have seen many hundred gravestones of this kind in every part of Phrygia, in Galatia, and in Pisidia. This class of tombstones recalls to mind the ancient monuments in which a door is a prominent part."—p. 10.

"The four inscriptions published above are all engraved on simple **Βωμοί**, yet in one case the monument is called ὁ Βωμὸς καὶ ἡ θύρα, and in the others the name **θύρα** is placed on the monument, apart from the regular inscription, as if to specify a point that was not clear to the beholder.

"The last inscription explains the others. The son of Gellius places the altar and the door for his dead wife. It appears then that, according to Phrygian ideas, there were two necessary elements in the sepulchral monument—an altar and a door. When a plain altar was placed as a tombstone, it was sometimes thought necessary to add expressly the word "door." Even where only the one name is given we may understand that the fundamental idea was the same. The door was the passage of communication between the world of life and the world of death: the altar was the place on which the living placed the offerings due to the dead."—p. 14.



DEAE MATRES FROM SOUTH SHIELDS (see p. 249).