



XII.—ON A ROMAN TOMBSTONE IN THE CARLISLE MUSEUM.

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ON the short visit I paid last year to the City Museum, Fenkle Street, Carlisle, I noticed, amongst other objects of interest to an antiquary, a large tombstone, described by Dr. Bruce in the third edition of his *Handbook to the Roman Wall* in these words¹:—"One of the latest acquisitions is a tombstone, which was found in the western suburbs of the city. The deceased lady, sitting in her chair, holds in her hand a fan of a form still in use in the island of Malta and elsewhere. Her left hand is lovingly placed upon the shoulder of her child, who strokes the back of a dove upon her lap. At the top of the slab are two lions with a human head in their claws, and a sphinx also holding a human head. The figures allude to the destruction of human life and the riddle (as it appears to the heathen) of death. The lower part of the inscription, which, we doubt not, gave the name of the lady, is lost."

Mr. R. S. Ferguson has been so kind as to provide me with a good photographic representation of the interesting object, by Messrs. Scott & Son, Carlisle, which, I hope, will enable me to make some observations on the monument. It represents a kind of niche, not uncommon on tombstones, flanked by two channelled pilasters, surmounted by plain capitals. On the top of the niche we see the upper part of a winged human figure of which the head has been destroyed, holding a human head; it is represented front-faced, and flanked by two lions, turned, one to the right and one to the left, each preparing to devour something—according to Dr. Bruce, a human head—but which, owing to the mutilated condition of the stone, is not clear on the photograph. In the niche is placed a chair (*solium*) furnished with a cushion, in which is seated a stately lady, dressed in a long robe (*stola*) with a kind of strip (*instita*) and wide sleeves; the upper part of the body is wrapped

¹ P. 229.

in an *amiculum*, covering the left arm; the right hand holds a large fan, the left rests upon the shoulder of a child clothed in two long shirts, the upper one with sleeves (*tunica manicata*), standing to the left of the lady, and either stroking the back or pointing with the finger of the extended right hand to a dove sitting on the lady's lap. I cannot make out whether the child is holding anything in its left hand. The lady's face (very much mutilated, alas!) is turned to the child, while she is cooling it with the expanded fan in her right hand. The part of the stone containing the feet of the child and of the lady, and perhaps a footstool (*scabellum*), with the inscription, is lost. Let us hope that some day it may be found, and teach us the name of the noble matron who is so graciously represented in one of the most delightful and happy moments of her everyday life. As Dr. Bruce remarks, the lions and sphinx allude to the destruction of human life. Lions often appear on tombstones; *e.g.*, on the Stanwix stone, dedicated to her husband, Marcus Troianus, by his dear wife Aelia Ammillusima.² On tombstones they have, no doubt, a symbolical meaning, and cannot be taken as merely ornamental. In the mysteries of Mithras and Attis, the beloved of the Magna Mater, the origin of the symbolical use of lions on tombstones may be hidden. Mithras, according to Lactantius, the scholiast of Statius,³ was represented in a cave dressed as a Persian, with a lion's face and a tiara, pressing down with both his hands the horns of a bull (*in spelaeo, Persico habitu, leonis vultu cum tiara utrisque manibus bovis cornua comprimens*). In the same action Attis is sometimes represented. As to the sphinx, I only observe that it is represented on the grave of Calventius at Pompeii. Here it is seen sitting on a rock; opposite to it is Oedipus meditating on the sphinx riddle, as appears from the finger put to the forehead. A body of one of those who have been killed by the monster appears from beneath the rock. Mystery and destruction are both indicated here.

It is indeed very curious to see in the same monument combined the representation of a most simple and ingenuous scene of domestic life and the symbolism of the syncretic religion of Hadrian and his successors' times—a kind of twilight between the materialism of earlier religion and the spiritualism of Christian faith and hope that was then conquering the old world.

² *Handbook*, p. 223.

³ *Thebais*, Lib. I., v. 717, sqq.

As in every matter of art, Rome followed Greece in sepulchral decoration, which commonly represented the dead on their graves in some act of daily life. The noble character of Attic art shows itself on many grave monuments, excavated in recent years in an ancient cemetery before the Dipylon at Athens.⁴ On one of them a beautiful young woman is represented sitting in a chair, with a servant opposite to her, who reaches her a little box, from which she seems to take something resembling a necklace. On the architrave of the small temple, in which the scene is represented, are the names of the two, Hegeso and Proxeno; on another the daughters of a Milesian, Hilara and Zozarion, are represented reaching each other the right hand. One of them must be the deceased.

Banqueting scenes are often represented, especially on Roman stones. Some of that kind can be seen in the Wallraf-Richartz Museum in Cologne. One of them, representing a legionary soldier from Virunum in Noricum, resting on a *lectus tricliniarius*, with napkin (*mappa*) in one, and drinking vessel in the other hand, attended by two servants standing at the foot of the *lectus*, is particularly interesting, on account of the lions' heads in both upper corners of the stone. A similar scene is very rudely represented on a stone from Corchester, in the Black Gate Museum at Newcastle, where a man and a woman are represented sitting on the *lectus tricliniarius*; ⁵ and on the monument of Aelia Aeliana, in the Museum of the Yorkshire Philosophical Society, where a man and a woman are represented sitting on a *lectus*, in a similar niche or alcove as the Carlisle lady, and a young girl standing at one end of the couch.⁶ With this the very interesting tombstone of Victor, found at South Shields, now in the possession of Mr. R. Blair, where the attendant is represented on a very small scale, may also be compared.⁷

The lady represented in our monument may be fancied sitting in her garden, in a kind of recess which can be compared to our bowers. The Romans had what they called *hemicyclia*—small structures of a semi-circular form, provided with benches as resting places—in their

⁴ C. Curtius. *Der attische Friedhof vor dem Dipylon*. — *Archäologische Zeitung*, 1872.

⁵ *Catalogue*, p. 72, No. 150.

⁶ *Descriptive Account of the Antiquities*, p. 38, No. 33 (6th edition). The object in the hand of the man, indicated in the account as something of uncertain character, may be the *mappa*.

⁷ *Handbook*, p. 240; *Arch. Ael.*, X., 311-18.

parks and towns. Outside the Herculanean gate at Pompeii, next to the "Tomba del vaso di vetro blu," is still standing a structure of that kind. It is a hot day, for she is cooling her face with a fan; a dove, the favourite of the house, sits on her lap, and her child, playing in the garden, now stands at her knees to play with the pet.

Fans (*flabella*) are often represented on Greek vases and other objects. Some of the vases, exposed in the fourth vase-room of the British Museum, represent ladies provided with that luxurious article. They are very different in form. Sometimes they seem to be only a leaf of large size—a lotus leaf, for instance; sometimes they resemble more the fans now used; at other times they seem to be made of thin painted boards; often they were composed of feathers. They are usually stiff, and have a long handle, which was more convenient than a small one, because they were commonly handled by slaves to cool their mistresses. So Plautus, in his *Trinummus*,⁸ amongst the servants of a lady, enumerates fan-bearers (*flabelliferae*); and the supposed eunuch in the *Eunuchus*⁹ of Terentius receives his orders, when in attendance on a lady, thus:—"Take this fan; give her, in this manner, a little refrigeration whilst we are taking a bath" (*cape hoc flabellum, ventulum huic sic facito, dum lavamur*). Propertius, in one of his elegies,¹⁰ speaks of fans of the superb tail of a peacock (*pavonis caudae flabella superbae*) which were sometimes used in driving off flies, as appears from an epigram of Martial,¹¹ where a *muscarium pavoninum* is mentioned. A myrtle branch to drive off flies, and a green fan applied to cool a sensualist at his dinner, are spoken of by the same in another epigram¹²:—*Et aestuanti tenue ventilat frigus supina prasino concubina flabello fugatque muscas myrtea puer virga*. The same service was rendered to a lady by Eutropius, the unworthy favourite of Arcadius, as Claudianus testifies¹³ in these words:—*Et quum se rapido sessam proiecerat aestu, patricius roseis pavonum ventilat alis*.

Amongst the terra-cotta statuettes, placed in the fourth vase-room of the British Museum, some from Tanagra, in Boeotia, "remarkable for grace and refinement," represent ladies with fans of the form of a leaf; one has, moreover, a dove pressed to her bosom.

I did not observe on the monuments in the British Museum or

⁸ V. 251.

⁹ III., 5, 47.

¹⁰ III., 24, 11.

¹¹ *Apophoreta*, 67.

¹² *Epigr.* III., 82.

¹³ *In Eutropium*, I., 109.

elsewhere a fan of a form like that of the Carlisle lady. I asked in a shop in this town, if they had any fans of the same form, and was told, that they were no longer used, but that they were in use fifty years ago. I saw there a little pliable object of green silk, having precisely the same form as the fan in question, and adapted to be placed on a small standard, to serve as a kind of screen on a table against a too strong light of a lamp. The fan of our lady was probably made of a similar material, and could be folded, like our fans.

Pet animals are often represented on ancient works of art. Poets made them the object of their songs. On painted vases sometimes birds are seen sitting on the knees of their mistresses. Dogs occur on tombstones as the faithful companions of their masters. Generally known are Catullus's two poems¹⁴ on Lesbia's pet sparrow; the third and fourth verses of the first of them—

*Passer, deliciae meae puellae, quicum ludere, quem in sinu tenere,
Quoi primum digitum dare adpetenti et acres solet incitare morsus,*

might serve as an illustration of our monument; but here the mother has the bird on her lap, and the boy stretches the top of his finger to the pecking bird and incites the pecking. The second, on the death of the *misellus passer*, was famous, as appears from Martial¹⁵ and Juvenal;¹⁶ it speaks of Lesbia as one whose bright eyes the dead sparrow had troubled (*turbavit nitidos extinctus passer ocellos*). One of Martial's friends, Aruntius Stella, who celebrated his wife Violantilla under the name of Ianthia, had made a poem on the pet dove of his wife,¹⁷ *cuius*, as he says in another epigram,¹⁸ *in Elysio nigra columba volat*. The same poet speaks in his *Xenia* of a magpie as a saturnalian gift, and of an ivory bird's cage. Ovid has made an elegy¹⁹ on the death of the favoured parrot of his "Corinna;" and Statius has sung, in one of his *Silvae*,²⁰ the parrot of Atedius Melior, *domini facunda voluptas*. The son of Regulus had many ponies, which served partly as draught animals, partly as riding horses, large and small dogs, nightingales, parrots, and blackbirds, which were all slaughtered at his pile by his father.²¹ The *Anthologia Palatina* contains several epigrams of Greek poets of the same kind; so on the death of a partridge, whose head was bitten off by a cat, and even on the death of favoured locusts and crickets.²²

¹⁴ 2 and 3.

¹⁵ *Ep.* VII., 14, 3.

¹⁶ *Sat.* VI., 7.

¹⁷ *Ep.* I., 7.

¹⁸ VII., 14.

¹⁹ *Amorum*, II., 6.

²⁰ II., 4.

²¹ Plinius, *Ep.* IV., 2.

²² *Anth. Pal.* Nos. 189, 190, 197, and 204.