

rence of Roman tombstones and altars inserted as building material into walls of Roman construction. When the group of buildings near the centre of the fort, which was excavated this summer, was erected or re-erected, tombstones were brought in from the cemetery outside the fort, probably south of it, and, with stray altars, were used for walling and flooring. This use of tombstones is by no means unparalleled. The examination of the north city wall at Chester (Deva), some years ago, revealed the fact that the interior of the lower courses, which are of Roman construction, was full of Roman sepulchral slabs. Tombstones seem also to have been built into the Roman walls of London and Chichester. As M. Schuermans has told us, they have undoubtedly been utilized for the Roman walls of several continental towns in Gaul, and at Neumagen, near Trier, they have helped to provide material for a fourth-century fortress. Most of these instances belong to the end of the third and of the fourth century, when the barbarians were overrunning the western world; but Deva and Aesica may be earlier. With respect to Deva, epigraphic evidence shows that the use is not earlier than about A.D. 150, and prof. Hübner and myself have, independently assigned it to Septimius Severus. This, of course, is little more than a guess: the one certainty is the *terminus a quo* of *circa* 150. With respect to the Aesica finds, there is even less evidence. The imperial inscription (No. 2) is tantalizingly illegible, as the important parts of inscriptions usually are, and the various indications noted above do little more than suggest that the inscriptions, as a whole, may belong to the second century. For the present, at any rate, it is safest to conclude that the building for which these stones were utilized was erected, or, it may be, re-erected, perhaps at the end of the second century, perhaps in the first half of the third century, for example under Severus Alexander, when building was undoubtedly done at Aesica. A later date, such as the age of Constantine, seems, under the circumstances, to be less probable.

ROMAN INSCRIPTION AT SOUTH SHIELDS.

Mr. Blair has asked me, as an appendix to my notes on the *Aesica* inscriptions, to describe a small inscription lately found at South Shields, of which he has sent me a drawing and a squeeze. It is an

altar, about two feet high and eleven inches wide, apparently perfect at the top and sides, but broken below, with three lines of well-shaped letters two and three-eighths inches high.

It was found last December (1897), at the end of Vespasian avenue, to the south of the fort, and is now in the free library at South Shields. It reads :—

IVLIVS
VERAX
)LEG V[I]

Iulius Verax centurio Legionis
V[I] . . .



2' 0" × 11".

From its shape, I take the stone to be a dedication, with dedicator's name preceding the name of the deity. This is an unusual order; but we have parallels at Ellenborough (*Uxellodunum*), *Helstrius Novellus praefectus numini Volcano* (*Lapid. Sept.* no. 871, *C. I. L.* vii. 398); at Bath, *Peregrinus Secundi filius civis Trever Loucelio Marti*, etc. (*ib.* 36), and elsewhere. It occurs in some of the very earliest known inscriptions of the Roman republic, and instances occur

throughout the republic and the first two or two and a half centuries of the empire. The latest dated example known to me belongs to the reign of Gordian III. (A.D. 238-244). It appears never to have been the custom, but always an admissible alternative for persons who liked, as persons are apt to like, small variations in unimportant things.

NOTE.—The illustrations of the *Aesica* inscriptions are from photographs by Mr. J. P. Gibson of Hexham, that of the South Shields altar by Mr. F. Downey of South Shields.