

IV.—A ROMAN INSCRIBED SLAB FROM HEXHAM,  
AND THE WORSHIP OF CONCORDIA.

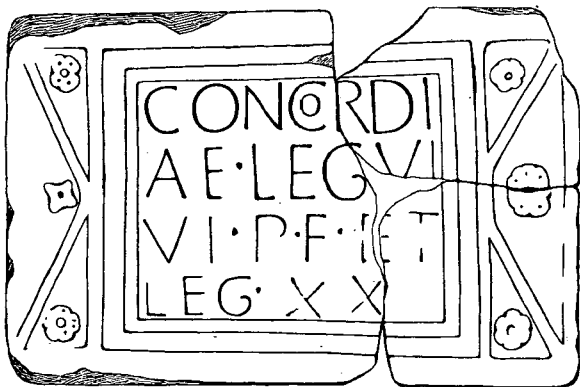
By R. G. COLLINGWOOD, M.A., F.S.A.

[Read on the 28th of February, 1923].

The slab of which an illustration is here reproduced was found about the end of March or beginning of April, 1907, during the restoration of Hexham priory church. The exact place of its discovery was close to the north door of the nave aisle. It was removed to the 'Old Pharmacy' in Fore street, where the late Professor Haverfield saw and partially read it. He did not, however, see it again to revise his reading on the occasion of his last visit to Hexham in 1918, shortly before his death, and it completely escaped the notice of other antiquaries, so that it is not mentioned with the other Roman stones found at the same time in Hodges and Savage's account (*Hexham Record*, p. 46), or in Hodges and Gibson's *Hexham and its Abbey*. It remained at Fore street unnoticed till April, 1922, when our member Mr. John Gibson, F.S.A., showed it to the present writer, and kindly allowed him to make the drawing here reproduced. The foregoing details as to the history of the stone are also due to the kindness of Mr. Gibson.

This stone, like several others at Hexham, was no doubt brought from Corbridge, as material for the building of Wilfrid's church, and is not in any sense evidence of a Roman settlement at Hexham

itself. It is a slab measuring 16 by 24 inches, with an ansate panel surrounded by a moulding and bearing the inscription:—



CONCORDI  
AE LEG VI  
VI P F ET  
LEG XX

which might run, expanded, either *Concordiae, Leg(io) VI. vi(ctrix) p(ia) f(idelis) et Leg(io) XX.*, ' (erected) to Concord by the Victorious, Pious and Faithful Sixth and the Twentieth Legions,' or else *Concordiae Leg(ionis) VI. vi(ctricis) p(iae) f(idelis) et Leg(ionis) XX.*, ' To the Concord (co-operation, fraternisation) between the Sixth and Twentieth Legions.' Either reading is possible, and in sense there is really no difference; the slab evidently commemorates friendly relations between the York and Chester legions, a fact either explicitly stated or clearly implied according as the second or first reading is adopted. For my own part, if it were necessary to choose between the two readings, I should incline to the second as slightly the more natural.

It will be observed that the customary titles of the Twentieth Legion, '*Valeria Victrix*,' are omitted. There is, however, room

for the missing 'V.V.' at the end of the last line, and though I can see no trace of it, I cannot be quite sure that it has never been on the stone.<sup>1</sup> The upper lines of the inscription, protected from the weather to some extent by the moulding, are in fairly good condition, but the lower lines are very much weathered. Haverfield, indeed, only read the first three lines. He published the stone in *Ephemeris Epigraphica* ix, 1155 (1913), reading the last line IECV . . . and adding the comment that the whole was much weathered and difficult to read; and again in his *Account of the Roman Remains in the Parish of Corbridge-on-Tyne (Northumberland County History, Corbridge volume, 1914, p. 505)*, omitting the last line altogether and adding 'the dedication suggests some mutiny or civil strife.' The stone has not been published except in these two places. Had Haverfield seen it again, he would doubtless have read the last line, which proved legible enough when the stone had been carefully cleaned and put in a good light.

Haverfield's comment on the significance of the inscription seems to admit of some small expansion. In order more fully to understand the meaning of the dedication, it is necessary to remind ourselves of the main facts about the worship of Concordia and its epigraphic remains.

The worship of Concord is a well-known institution of Roman religion. Concordia, the goddess of civil peace as opposed to civil strife or party dissension, is one of a number of deified abstractions introduced into Roman religion about the middle of the third century before Christ (W. Warde Fowler, *Religious Experience of the Roman People*, p. 258, coupling Concordia with Spes, Honos, Virtus, Mens; *Roman Festivals*, p. 190); coins were struck bearing the word, as the name of the deity to whom they

<sup>1</sup> Lt.-Col. Spain suggests to me that the v.v. may have been interlaced. This would suit the spacing well, and occurs more than once, e.g. on tombstones of this legion at Chester.

were dedicated, and a temple was built in honour of the same goddess, whose festivals were inserted in the sacred calendar.

It is not unnatural that the cult of Concord became popular when the principate of Augustus put an end to the civil wars, and in fact Concordia Augusta, the civil peace which was the Emperor's special achievement—*deus nobis haec otia fecit*—becomes then an object of general worship. In Rome and various parts of Italy, in Sicily, in Cisalpine Gaul, in Spain and in Africa—the oldest and most highly-civilised provinces of the west—inscriptions reveal the existence of temples to Concord during the early Empire, and others, bringing us a step nearer the Hexham slab, commemorate what may be called a special Concord, such as '*Concordia populi et ordinis*,' the harmonious relations, as we might put it, between the citizens and the town council, at Timgad in Africa (CIL. viii, 2342), the Concord of the *decuriones* at a Spanish town (CIL. ii, 3424), or that between the people of Lilybaeum in Sicily and their neighbours of Agrigentum (CIL. x, 7192). Our slab evidently commemorates a special Concord like these; and so far it is in line with precedents. But dedications to Concord are wholly absent outside the provinces named above. Even in Gaul proper they never appear; never in the Danubian provinces or in Germany, never in Britain.<sup>2</sup> In fact there is no previous instance of such a dedication with a military significance, and the cult of Concordia does not figure at all in Von Domaszewski's exhaustive book *Die Religion des römischen Heeres*. The title of that book rightly suggests that the Roman army had a religious system of its own, distinct in many ways from that of civil life; and hitherto the worship of Concord might well have been quoted as a good instance of the cleavage. As a military inscription, then, the Hexham slab is unique. The only analogy, and that a remote one,

<sup>2</sup> A gold ring of doubtful origin in the British Museum, bearing the legend FIDES—CONCORDIA, is beside the mark.



is the common coin-type of a pair of clasped hands with the legend *CONCORDIA MILITVM* or *CONCORDIA EXERCITIVVM*, which first appears in the time of Vespasian and is no doubt intended to declare the unanimity of the legions in supporting the Emperor whose power actually rested on their support. But a coin-type is not a lapidary inscription, and the legend here quoted clearly belongs not to the religion of the army but to the civil religion of the state; it was the civilians who thanked Concord for a loyal and tractable army, not the soldiers who invoked Concord to keep them from mutiny and riot.

But the legions that dedicated the Hexham slab evidently meant to commemorate and if possible to perpetuate a concord between themselves. The uniqueness of the dedication is not its only interest. It is not an altar but a slab; it has no doubt been built into a wall, and this wall can hardly have been anything else than a shrine to the goddess Concord, and not Concord in general, like the temple at Rome, nor yet Augustan Concord, like various sanctuaries of civil religion, but to the specific Concord between these two legions. The presence of such a building at Corbridge demands an explanation. Corbridge was not an ordinary fort, held by an ordinary unit, and in a fort of that kind a shrine such as we are supposing to have existed would have served no purpose. Corbridge was a supply depot, it would seem, for the Wall and regions north of the Wall, and as such its administration would hardly come within the scope of an auxiliary cohort's duties. This inscription suggests—one can hardly say it proves—what might have been guessed even without its help, that the Corbridge depot was manned by a force composed of detachments from the two legions whose fortresses formed the double base of operations for this northern district, that is, by a vexillation<sup>3</sup> of

<sup>3</sup> It is worth noticing that most of the Corbridge inscriptions which mention any military unit mention a vexillation.

the York and Chester legions, the Sixth and Twentieth. If so, we may hazard the further guess that regimental rivalry was either a permanent problem, or at least felt to be a permanent danger, and that the officers in charge of the station had recourse, for the inculcation of a spirit of comradeship, to the unprecedented plan of building a little official temple to the Concord of the two legions.

We may perhaps add that the style of the inscription would suit the second or early third century, which is precisely the period when Corbridge was at its height as a depot of supplies. To attempt an identification of the actual shrine among the buildings hitherto excavated at Corbridge, however, would be passing beyond the limits of reasonable conjecture.

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