ARCHAEOLOGIA:
OR,
MISCELLANEOUS TRACTS,
&c.

I.—*On the Forum of the Roman Station at Cilurnum.* By the Rev. JOHN
COLLINGWOOD BRUCE, LL.D. F.S.A.

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THE station of *Cilurnum*, containing five acres and a quarter, is the largest but one on the line of Hadrian's Wall. It guarded the bridge which connects the traffic on the two sides of the North Tyne, and it commanded the woody defile along which that river flows from the north to the south. It is situated in a fertile district, which would at all times attract a numerous population. During the period of Roman domination the forum of Cilurnum would be the resort of many seeking justice at the hands of the prefect, and of others who brought their wares to supply the wants of the garrison and the suburban population.

There is little doubt that Cilurnum formed one of the forts which Agricola erected, about the year 80, to protect his rear, when he advanced northwards against the Caledonians. It was one of those fortresses which Tacitus, the biographer of Agricola, describes as having been so placed and so constructed that they were never taken by storm nor relinquished by treaty. Hadrian afterwards adopted it as one of his mural stations, the sixth *per lineam valli* of the Notitia, garrisoned by the Ala secunda Asturum.

About the beginning of this century (1803) a vaulted chamber was accidentally discovered near the middle of the station. A tradition existed in the country, no doubt extending down from Roman times, that the force which

originally occupied the fort was a cavalry regiment, and that the stables were underground. The labourers, coming unexpectedly upon this vault, thought that the tradition was about to be verified, and that they had now found the entrance into the stables. They were, however, disappointed.

The masonry of this vault is of rude workmanship, indicating a later period of construction than that of Agricola, or Hadrian, or Severus. When discovered, the entrance into the vault was closed by a strong oaken door studded with iron, and on the floor of it were found a number of denarii, chiefly false, being made of brass plated with silver, for circulation amongst the Britons. These circumstances led to the supposition that the chamber had been the *Ærarium* of the station.

Since this discovery was made other parts of the station have been cleared, with most interesting results, but until recently no further exploration was made in the neighbourhood of the vault. It having been suggested to the proprietor of the station, John Clayton, Esq. F.S.A., that the vault had assumed an underground appearance more from the heaping up of *débris* about it than from original construction, he resolved to ascertain the fact, and find out its exact relationship with the contiguous buildings of the camp. In the early part of the year 1870 he proceeded to do so.

On clearing the ground on both sides of it, a range of apartments was found, having no entrance from the south, but having three entrances from the north, each of these entrances being precisely 13 ft. 2 in. wide. These apertures had evidently been arched over, as some springers and some of the *voussoirs* were found amongst the *débris*. In excavating the middle apartment an unusual number of coins was discovered, many of them in excellent preservation. Amongst the denarii were some of the Consular period, others of Vespasian, Nerva, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, and Julia Domna, the second wife of Severus. Among the brass coins were very fine first brass coins of Trajan and Hadrian, and a particularly fine second brass of Faustina Junior, and coins of Commodus and Constantine. The unusual number of coins found in this chamber suggested the idea that it had been the treasury of the station. It will be observed that this use had been ascribed to the vault which had been discovered many years before. The entrance into this vault is from near the centre of the apartment we are now discussing. It would seem, therefore, that when, towards the close of the Roman occupation of Britain, the garrison became weakened in numbers they found it necessary to put themselves more on the defensive than before, and to take special

PLAN OF THE FORUM AT CILURNUM, OCT. 1875.

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means for the protection of such treasure as they possessed. One of these apartments that we are now referring to has been provided with a stone hearth, which is still complete, though much acted on by fire. About a cartload of coals was found near it.

We must next inquire into the original use of this range of apartments. As already stated, the central one was probably the treasury. On each side of it are two public halls, and each of these halls has a more secluded chamber communicating with it. On viewing the scene before him, when first excavated, Mr. Clayton was struck with the resemblance which these apartments bore to the halls which he had seen at Pompeii at the southern end of the forum of that famous city. There, as here, are three halls, the central one being regarded by antiquaries as the treasury or bank, those on each side of it as *curiæ*, or courts for the administration of justice, for which purpose the lateral chambers would be of great advantage; they might be used as waiting-rooms, places for private consultation, or for the custody of prisoners awaiting trial.

Having identified, as he supposed, these halls with those on the south extremity of the forum at Pompeii, Mr. Clayton came to the conclusion that, by excavating the ground in front of them to the north, he ought to find some remains of the market-place of Cilurnum. Walls running north from the east and west sides of these apartments showed that they did not stand alone, but formed a part of some important structure. However, as the ground to the north was very much depressed, it was feared that the remains of the forum, if such it was, would be very scanty. An excavation was determined upon, and notwithstanding previous forebodings the most satisfactory results were obtained. The remains of the buildings were found standing higher than was expected, inasmuch as some of them rose nearly to the level of the present surface of the ground. I need not further attempt to describe the progress of discovery, but will at once proceed to give an account of the whole structure as it now appears. The plan with which I have been furnished by Mr. Clayton exhibits all the arrangements very accurately. (See Plate I.)

And first, with regard to the position of the forum. In the centre of the northern rampart of the station is a gateway, and in the centre of the southern rampart is another gateway. The forum lies about midway between these. There are two gateways in both the western and eastern ramparts, and these are connected by streets crossing from one side of the station to the other. Now the forum is placed immediately on the south of the road leading through

the station from the principal gateway in the eastern rampart to the principal gateway in the western rampart, and it occupies the whole of the space lying between the two streets connected with the lateral gateways.

Next as to the size and general arrangements of the forum. A stone wall 2 ft. 6 in. thick incloses the whole of the structures. The length of the forum from north to south is 122 ft. 6 in. and the breadth 84 ft. inside measurement.

There are three entrances to the forum. One of these (the principal entrance) is in the centre of the northern boundary wall of the forum, being for horses and carriages as well as foot-passengers, and is 9 ft. 9 in. in width. Another, in the centre of the eastern boundary wall of the forum, has also been for the passage of horses and carriages as well as foot-passengers, and is 8 ft. in width; ruts of Roman wheels are visible in the sill of this gateway, and show that the space between the wheels of Roman carriages used here was 4 ft. only, whilst the space between the wheels of modern carts is 6 ft. The third gate is in the west wall of the forum, precisely opposite to that in the east wall; this entrance is by stone steps descending from a higher level, so that it has been used by foot-passengers only. It also is 8 feet wide.

From the description given of the position of the forum it will be seen that the main streets of the station lead directly to it: in addition to these there are other streets on its east and west sides of the same width as the others, namely, 18 feet. The forum therefore formed an isolated block, with every facility for approach.

The buildings forming the south end of the forum (the treasury and the two *curiæ*) have already been described. In front of these buildings is an open space or court-yard, about 27 feet in width, and extending in length 84 feet (being the whole breadth of the forum), which was probably used for the assembly and passage of persons resorting to the *Ærarium*, the courts of justice, and the market. On the west side of this open space are the remains of a building which evidently has not been contemporaneous with the other buildings of the forum; its masonry is somewhat different, and its walls are not quite parallel with those of the original buildings; it is, however, clearly a Roman work, and some fine specimens of Samian ware were found in it. In a corresponding position on the east side of this open space is the concrete floor of a building of somewhat larger dimensions.

On the north side of this open space, or court-yard, which we have now described, is found a row of pillars standing in a line drawn between the southern pillars of the eastern and western gateways of the forum. These pillars are four

in number, and are separated 15 ft. 6 in. from each other and from the southern pillars of the eastern and western gateways, and immediately beyond this row of pillars is the road, 8 ft. 6 in. wide, running between the eastern and western entrances into the forum.

After crossing this road, which was probably covered by a roof, and looking to the north, you see before you an open market-place 54 feet square, having on the east and west sides a covered colonnade about 15 feet wide, the roof of which has been supported in front on each side by six columns; a stone gutter being carried in front of the columns to receive the water falling from the roof of the colonnade. These pillars are 1 ft. 11 in. square, and some part of each of them remains in its place. Along the south, and also along the north, side of the square market-place, is a wall of superior masonry, through each of which have been five apertures, two of them being entrances into the colonnade and three of them entrances into the open market. These walls have been much damaged by time and the hand of man, but the knowledge of what is wanting in the one is supplied by the other, so that a correct notion of both may be attained. The southern wall adjoins the road above described, between the eastern and western gateways of the forum, and the northern wall abuts upon a passage 8 ft. 6 in. wide, crossing the forum at its northern extremity

Some of the slates that had been used in the roofs of the colonnades were found among the *débris* of the colonnade; they consist of thin layers of sandstone, pierced for a nail. The market-place and the floors of the colonnade have been paved with large flag-stones, some of which remain, though in a broken and battered condition. The foundations of the columns, particularly on the west side, are about a foot deeper than the general floor of the forum. This is in conformity with what is seen in every station, and every building connected with the Wall. Every structure has been once at least, often twice or thrice, exposed to the devastations of the enemy. When the imperial army has again got possession of their own they have restored their buildings hastily, without stopping to remove the whole of the *débris*, consequently at a higher level than the original.

Such is a general description of the forum of Cilurnum. This is the first time that a structure of this kind has been traced in a Mural garrison, and the discovery may be considered as of importance as it throws new light upon the nature of the Roman occupation. It is not to be supposed that buildings of this elaborate nature would exist in the smaller stations, but only in those of large size and situated in populous and important places.

In the course of excavating the forum a fragment of an important inscribed slab was found, which is shown in the accompanying woodcut.^a

INSCRIBED TABLET FOUND AT CILURNUM.

On a label are the well-executed letters,

[S]ALVIS . AVGG
[F]ELIX . ALA . II . ASTVR
[ANTONINIAN]A ?

and under the label is the head of a standard-bearer, holding a vexillum, on which is inscribed—

VIRTVS
AVGG

It is greatly to be regretted that the rest of the stone has not been discovered ; it would probably have given us the figure of the standard-bearer complete. The first letter on the first two lines has also been broken off.

The inscription is an interesting one. It, no doubt, is to be expanded thus : “Salvis Augustis felix ala secunda Asturum Antoniniana”—“The emperors being safe, the second ala of Asturians styled Antoniniana is happy.” This expression of goodwill on the part of the regiment forming the garrison of Cilurnum seems not to have been very genuine or very permanent. The second G of AVGG at the end of the first line, importing the plural number, has been purposely but not

^a This woodcut, which was prepared for the *Lapidarium Septentrionale*, has been kindly lent by John Clayton, Esq. F.S.A.

effectually erased; the word ANTONINIANA has been completely erased with the exception of the last letter, of which a portion remains; and the second G of the AVGG on the standard has also been partially obliterated. No doubt one of the emperors had fallen into disgrace and been deposed, and the regiment, sympathizing with the Prætorian guard at Rome, treated their former favourite with contumely and obliterated his name.

The question is, who were the emperors referred to? Another large slab found at this station^a has borne the names of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, the name assumed by Elagabalus, and of Severus Alexander. This stone, like that which we are discussing, has extensive obliterations on it. The lettering on both stones is of precisely the same character, and the ligatures are identical. We know that when Elagabalus, or Heliogabalus, as he is sometimes called, was murdered and tossed into the Tiber, his name was obliterated from inscriptions. The difficulty in ascribing the newly-found inscription to the short reign of Elagabalus is, that, so far as we know, Severus Alexander did not in the lifetime of his predecessor enjoy the title of Augustus. On the slab that we are comparing with the present one he is styled NOBILIS CAESAR . IMPER[II] [HERES]. Notwithstanding this objection I cannot help thinking that the potentates referred to are Elagabalus and Severus Alexander. As the inscription is a short one, and there was not space on the stone for making the distinction between the recognised emperor and one who was only heir to the empire—the device of making the duplication of the G in the contraction of AUGUSTI represent them both may have been allowed. If this conjecture be correct the inscription will belong to about A.D. 221. Dr. McCaul,^b on the ground that there is no evidence that Elagabalus and Alexander were united under the title of *Augusti*, thinks it highly probable that the emperors were Caracalla and Geta, that the date is A.D. 211, after the death of Severus, and that the second G was erased after the murder of Geta in A.D. 212. The objection to this supposition is, that, as Publius Septimius Geta did not bear the name of Antoninus (which his brother did), the epithet *Antoniniana*, which we presume to have been the nearly obliterated word in the last line, cannot have had reference to him. Our reason for supposing that the word has been *Antoniniana* is that it will just fill the space, and that a trace of the last letter, A, still exists.

It may be some corroboration of the opinion thus expressed to observe that

^a *Lapidarium Septentrionale*, No. 121, p. 67, and the works there cited.

^b *Canadian Journal*, 1873.

the like liberty, no doubt for the sake of brevity, is taken in the coinage of the Empire. Thus on the reverse of some of the coins of Maximinus, whose son Maximus never attained the rank of Augustus, we have the legend VICTORIA AUGUSTORUM; the same legend also occurs on the reverse of coins of Maximus, though on the obverse he is only styled CAES. GERM. These examples have the more force, as the personages Elagabalus, Alexander Severus, Maximinus, and Maximus were nearly contemporaneous. Alexander was slain A.D. 235, and Maximinus and his son A.D. 238.

One incidental circumstance I cannot help mentioning before I conclude. Whenever an excavation is made in any of the stations on the Wall, a large quantity of the bones of animals are exhumed. These consist chiefly of those of a small species of ox. Amongst them are portions of the horns of deer and the teeth of the boar. How did they come there? Can the occupants of the camp, when partaking of their food, have cast the bones, after having picked them, on the ground, and allowed them to remain there? The bones seldom or never show marks of the saw, so that the "joints," if such they be, must have been separated in accordance with the natural structure of the animal. The antlers of the deer have been sawn—probably for the purpose of forming handles for knives and kindred purposes.

If I am right in the conjecture I have hazarded as to the origin of these bones, it is probable that a custom so insalubrious only obtained in the latest period of Roman occupation. In consequence of the quantity of animal matter and of lime which is mingled with the *débris* which encumbers the Roman stations in the North of England the soil obtained from them is very valuable for agricultural purposes.

These excavations show how thoroughly the Romans occupied the country; how systematically they proceeded to bring the whole population under the influence of Roman law and Roman civilization; and they give us a clearer insight than we had before into the every-day life of Roman Britain as exhibited in the region of the Northern Barrier.