

## IV.

NOTICE OF A STONE, BEARING A ROMAN INSCRIPTION, BUILT INTO A STAIRCASE IN JEDBURGH ABBEY. BY J. COLLINGWOOD BRUCE, D.C.L., LL.D., HON. MEM. S.A. SCOT. COMMUNICATED BY THE MOST HON. THE MARQUIS OF LOTHIAN, PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY.

The stone which bears the following inscription forms the lintel over the entrance to the north turret stair at the west end of Jedburgh Abbey. The inscription is on the under side, and covers about half the stone, the lower portion of which is rougher than the inscribed part, and appears to have been buried in the earth. As will be seen from the following letter by Dr Collingwood Bruce, the stone appears to have originally formed part of a Roman altar:—

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE, *June 8, 1885.*

MY LORD,—Through your kindness, I have been supplied with a cast of a stone, bearing a Roman inscription, which has been built into a staircase of Jedburgh Abbey. You ask for my views as to the reading of the inscription, which I have great pleasure in giving you. (A representation of the inscription<sup>1</sup> is given in fig. 1.)

The stone no doubt forms the largest part of a Roman altar, but probably a portion of it has been removed by the masons of the abbey to fit it for its place in the structure. As represented by the cast, it measures 21 by 15 inches.

The letters are well formed, and though one or two of them have been purposely obliterated, and one or two others are slightly obscure, I have no doubt that the inscription has originally stood thus:—

IOM VEXI  
LLATIO RETO  
RVM GAESA  
Q ' C ' A ' IVL  
SEVER TRIB

<sup>1</sup> The Society is indebted to the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle, through Dr Collingwood Bruce, for the use of the illustrations in this paper.

and may be thus expanded?—*Joci optimo maximo, vexillatio Raetorum Gaesatorum quorum curam agit Julius Severinus tribunus*; and may be thus translated:—"To Jupiter the best and greatest the vexillation of Rhaetian spearmen under the command of Julius Severinus the tribune . . . [erected this]."

I believe a "vexillation" was a body of men selected from various cohorts or even legions for some special expedition, but all fighting under one common standard or *vexillum*.

I need hardly say that *Raetorum* is a rustic spelling for *Rhaetorum*. It is interesting to find in Jedburgh at the present day traces of men



Fig. 1. Stone with Roman Inscription in Jedburgh Abbey (21 by 15 inches).

who in the infancy of our country's history had travelled all the way from Rhaetia, the country of the Grisons on the Alps, near the Hercynian forest.

The word *Gaesatorum* is somewhat peculiar and of rare occurrence. I have only met with it once before. The word *gaesum* seems to have been the name of a peculiarly formed javelin or spear. This weapon was at first only used by savage tribes, but it was eventually adopted by some Roman troops, who hence took the name of *Gaesati*. Wherein the peculiarity of this weapon consisted we have no means of knowing.

In the Roman station of *HABITANCUM*, the modern Risingham, in the



north of Northumberland, we meet with a much fractured inscription (fig. 2) in which the *Raeti Gaesati* are mentioned. The last line of the inscription is as follows :—

[COH I VAN]GIONVM ITEM RAETI GAESATI ET EXPL[ORATORES] . . .  
POSERVNT.

There can be little doubt that the *Raeti Gaesati* on this Risingham stone are the same troops as carved the Jedburgh stone. Risingham is on the Watling Street, and a march of a comparatively few miles would bring them to the Jedburgh of the present day. The inscribed stone to which I here refer to is given and figured in the *Lapidarium Septentrionale*, No. 628. It is also given in the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, vol. vii. No. 1002. The stone itself is preserved in the Museum of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle.

The letters Q, C, A in the fourth line are each followed by a leaf stop. When we moderns contract a word we put a full stop after it. Two other inscriptions have been found at Risingham with these letters upon them. I follow Professor Hübner of Berlin, one of the most learned of epigraphists, in reading them “*quorum curam agebat or apit.*”

There is one more stone from Risingham (fig. 3) now in the Museum at Newcastle, which throws light upon the Jedburgh inscription. It is an altar to *Fortuna Redux*—“Fortune which brings back in safety.” It is figured in the *Lapidarium Septentrionale*, and is also given in the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, vol. vii. No. 984. It reads thus :—

FORTVNAE REDVCI  
IVLIVS SEVERINVS  
TRIB. EXPLICITO  
BALINEO · V · S · L · M.

“Julius Severinus the tribune erects this altar on the occasion of the completion of a bath to Fortune who brings back in safety, in discharge of a vow, most willingly, and to a most deserving object.”

The value of this inscription on the present occasion is to give us the name in full of the tribune who dedicates to Jupiter the altar in the

walls of the Abbey of Jedburgh. I was disposed at first to read the name of the dedicator as Julius Severus ; there can be no doubt, however, that the SEVER of the Jedburgh stone is but a contraction for the SEVERINVS of the Risingham stone.



Fig. 3. Roman Altar, from Risingham.

Probably a line or two of the Abbey stone is wanting. As the first cohort of Vangiones was quartered at *Habitancum*, Risingham, our

tribune Severinus may have, when on home duty, ranked as their commander. There may therefore have been in the last line of our inscription

COH · I · VANGIONVM

and perhaps also yet another bearing the letters

V · S · L · M

*Votum solvit libens merito.* These, however, are doubtful points.

I trust the explanation which I have ventured to give may on the whole be approved of. I have communicated my views to Professor Hübner, and I am glad to say he agrees with me.

I have the honour to be,

Yours faithfully,

J. COLLINGWOOD BRUCE.

To the Most Hon. the Marquis of Lothian,  
President, Soc. Antiq. Scot.