

CORNELIUS AND THE ITALIC COHORT.

THE reference in *Acts* x. 1 to an Italic cohort (of which Cornelius was a centurion) has caused some difficulty and discussion in recent years. Dr. Schürer, in his learned work, *Geschichte des Jüd. Volkes u. s. w.*, I. p. 386, suspects that this detail is an anachronism, caused by the intrusion of circumstances that were true at a later time into this early period.¹ Prof. Mommsen pronounces no judgment, but avoids making any positive suggestion about the cohort, in his illuminative paper in the *Berlin. Akad. Sitzungsber.*, 1895, p. 503.² Marquardt, in the work from which all study must always begin in these subjects, *Römische Staatsverwaltung*, II. p. 467, note 5, accepts the words of *Acts* as an ordinary authority, quoting them along with other references to an Italic cohort. A recent discovery confirms the position taken by Marquardt, and will probably be held by most scholars as a sufficient proof that, in our present state of knowledge, the verdict of Dr. Schürer is contrary to the evidence.

Dr. Bormann, in the *Archäol. Epigr. Mittheil. aus Oesterreich*, 1895, p. 218, publishes an inscription found recently at Carnuntum.³ It is the epitaph of a young soldier, Proculus, a subordinate officer (*optio*) in the second Italian cohort, who died at Carnuntum while engaged on detached service from the Syrian army (as an officer in a corps of archers from Syria, temporarily sent on special service and encamped at Carnuntum).⁴ Proculus was born at Phila-

¹ Steht . . . unter dem Verdacht, Verhältnisse einer späteren Zeit in eine frühere zurück verlegt zu haben.

² Mit Sicherheit vermögen wir weder diese cohors Augusta noch die σπέρα Ιταλική . . . zu identificiren.

³ One of the great military stations in Pannonia, on the south bank of the Danube, a little below Vienna.

⁴ *Ex vexil. sagit. exer. Syriaci*, where Bormann's completion of the abbreviations seems beyond question *ex vexillariis sagittariis exercitus Syriaci*.

delphia (doubtless the city of that name beyond Jordan, the old Rabbath-Ammon), and his father bore the Syrian name Rabilus.

As to the date of this epitaph, Bormann and Domaszewski, two of the highest authorities, have come independently to the same conclusion. The epitaph was found with a group of others, stamped by criteria derived both from nomenclature, and from inscriptional and alphabetical character, as belonging to the period of the early emperors. This group belongs to an older cemetery used previous to A.D. 73, when a new camp near Carnuntum was built for the soldiers stationed there. Further, the service on which these Syrian soldiers had come to Carnuntum can be dated with the highest probability.

In A.D. 96 Syrian detachments to the number of 13,000 men swelled the army which Mucianus, governor of Syria, led westwards to support Vespasian in his struggle against Vitellius. But before Mucianus arrived on the scene, the armies of Pannonia and Moesia had declared for Vespasian, marched into Italy, and finished the contest. Their departure had left the northern frontier undefended against the barbarians, Dacians, Germans, etc., beyond the Danube. As Tacitus mentions, the Dacians showed signs of invading Moesia, and Mucianus despatched the Sixth Legion¹ to guard against them on the Lower Danube. Tacitus does not say anything about the Upper Danube; but there was so obvious a danger there also, that an experienced governor like Mucianus could hardly fail to send a guard thither also.² In this way we may conclude that part of the detachments came to Carnuntum; and there Proculus died, perhaps in A.D. 70. The Syrian armies were evidently soon sent back to the East, where the Sixth Legion is

¹ Ferrata, enrolled by Augustus, stationed in Syria, now in Mucianus's army.

² The words of Tacitus (*Hist.*, iii. 46) show that he was fully alive to the danger all along the northern frontier.

shortly afterwards mentioned as engaged in operations in the northern parts of Syria in 73.

There was therefore an Italic cohort stationed in Syria in A.D. 69. It was recruited from the East,¹ and therefore, according to the principle laid down by Mommsen, it belonged to the eastern Roman armies; it is therefore in every way probable that an Italic cohort was stationed in the province Syria, as Dr. Bormann has observed, about A.D. 40, when Cornelius is mentioned as "a centurion of the cohort called Italic," resident in Cæsarea (the Roman governmental centre of Palestine). The new discovery does not prove anything with certainty for the period about A.D. 40; but, taken along with *Acts*, it enables us to fill in some details in a way that is in perfect accordance with our knowledge of Roman military organization.

But Dr. Schürer brings forward a series of objections. He points out, in the first place, that between A.D. 41 and 44, when Judæa was formed into a dependent kingdom ruled by Herod Agrippa, a Roman cohort would not be stationed in Cæsarea. If this were certain, it would merely confirm the view taken by many scholars that the incident of Cornelius occurred earlier than 41. But as a matter of fact we know far too little of the relations between the rule of Agrippa and the provincial administration to be sure that a centurion would not be resident in Cæsarea during his short reign. There is nothing more obscure than the precise terms on which the numerous dependent kingdoms in Asia Minor and Syria were administered. It is practically certain that these subject kingdoms were tributary² from the first, even when they had never before been subject to Rome; and Herod the Great's action was controlled

¹ Proculus was in his seventh year of service when he died, and had probably enlisted in A.D. 64 (when he was 19 years old).

² Appian expressly says that Herod's kingdom was instituted (in 40 or 39 B.C.), along with Pontus and others, ἐπὶ φόροις τεταγμένους, *Bell. Civ.*, v. 75.

by Rome in many important respects, and that his subjects took an oath to be faithful to the Romans.¹ But the kingdom of Agrippa as it existed A.D. 41-44 had long been actually part of a Roman province; and there is great probability that it might retain certain relations with the provincial government, and that officers of the provincial soldiery might be kept resident in the capital, Cæsarea, to maintain these relations. There is much that might be said on this point; but it is not necessary for our main purpose. Moreover, the whole subject is so obscure that a scholar who aims simply at understanding the subject will at present refrain from any dogmatic statement about it, and will certainly be very slow to condemn an ancient author for inaccuracy because he does not confirm the modern scholar's hasty conjecture. All that need be said is that at present we find Dr. Schürer's argument so devoid of force that it does not even afford any presumption in favour of a date for the incident of Cornelius earlier than 41 A.D.

In the next place Dr. Schürer argues that even between A.D. 6 and 41, when Judæa was part of the province Syria, and when Roman auxiliary troops were stationed both at Cæsarea and at Jerusalem, an Italic cohort cannot have been stationed at Cæsarea. This assertion he bases on a series of conjectures as to the Roman forces stationed in Judæa during these years. It is fortunately unnecessary for me to discuss his conjectures: I need only point out (1) that they are in conscious and direct contradiction to the principles laid down by Mommsen, the supreme authority on the subject;² (2) that Mommsen has now considered them and judged them to be "erroneous in

¹ See the references as collected in the many treatises on the subject, *e.g.*, in Dr. Schürer's own work, ii., p. 440.

² See Mommsen in *Hermes*, xix. p. 217. As to one of his estimates of the probable facts, Dr. Schürer says that it is "unmöglich," giving a singularly insufficient reason for this plump condemnation.

every respect.”¹ But even supposing that his conjectures were strong enough to support the conclusion that the Italic cohort was not stationed in Cæsarea, we know far too little to justify the inference that a centurion of that cohort could not be on duty there. The entire subject of detachment service is most obscure; and we are very far from being able to say with certainty that the presence of an auxiliary centurion² in Cæsarea is impossible, unless the cohort in which he was an officer was stationed there.

Since the question of the Roman troops in Palestine is so full of difficulties, that it is hardly possible to make any assertion in the matter, what judgment should be pronounced on the light-heartedness which suspects Luke of inaccuracy, because he does not conform to the conjectures which the distinguished German professor sets forth? It is a matter of interest to observe how slow some very learned New Testament scholars are to appreciate the principle, which is regarded as fundamental by the historical and antiquarian students, that no conjecture which is not founded on clear evidence has any right even to be propounded, if it contradicts the direct statement of an ancient authority: much less ought the ancient authority to be discredited because he disagrees with a modern conjecture. It is specially unfortunate that Dr. Schürer should encumber his pages with such conjectures, for his deservedly high reputation and his immense erudition lead many scholars in England (and probably elsewhere) to take everything printed in his great work as the final statement of the truth.³

It may be remarked in passing that the question of the relation of the dependent kingdom of Judæa to the Roman

¹ *In jeder Hinsicht verfehlt*: Mommsen in *Berlin. Akad. Sitz.*, 1895, p. 501.

² Auxiliary centurions, being of lower rank than legionary, were not employed as *frumentarii*, but there were other ways of detached service

³ Dr. Schürer makes one correct statement on the subject: *directe Nachrichten fehlen uns*.

government which we have touched upon is connected with the great difficulty of the census in that kingdom, when Quirinus was governor of Syria (Luke iii. 1). As I regard that passage of Luke as the result of a careful and elaborate historical inquiry, made when abundant authorities were accessible, and therefore hold it to be trustworthy and one of the most illuminative passages in any ancient author bearing on my own special subject (the history of Roman administration in the eastern provinces), it is clear that I am bound to differ absolutely from Dr. Schürer's elaborate discussion of the subject (ii. pp. 426-455). Particularly his third conclusion, that such a census as Luke describes could not have been held in Judæa while Herod was king, seems to me to be an *exemplar* of erroneous reasoning and erroneous conception from first to last. Here and everywhere that Dr. Schürer touches on my own department of study, I find myself in opposition to his method of investigation. If he is right in regard to that fundamental question, it would be mere waste of time for me to insist on the accuracy of Luke in other and smaller questions, such as the one here treated; and therefore it is necessary here to declare (1) that the view taken by Luke of the relation between the dependent kingdoms and the Roman state is very different from that taken by Dr. Schürer; (2) that, when the investigation of that page of history is completed, Luke's view is likely to be established.¹

The episode of Cornelius in *Acts* is characterized by the same vagueness and want of direct, incisive statement of details which Luke shows in handling the early history of the Church in Palestine. He was not at home in the

¹ A distinction must be made between the fact (as I believe it to be) that such a census occurred, and the historical hypothesis advanced by Luke that the census brought about the effect that Jesus was born in Bethlehem. The hypothesis may be right or wrong; I see no evidence justifying an opinion on the point; but the hypothesis is founded on a careful historical survey, which shows all the signs of good knowledge and trustworthiness.

province of Syria, and the Jewish people in particular he neither understood nor liked. If the narrative of Cornelius showed the same mastery of facts and surroundings as is apparent in Philippi or Ephesus or Cyprus or Athens, we should find it far more instructive than it is as to the way in which an officer of the Roman army of occupation lived. Was he resident in a private house? How was he in such close relations with the Jews throughout Palestine? Many questions suggest themselves, pressing for an answer, which I cannot give. But the tendency of discovery distinctly is, in this as in other cases, to confirm the trustworthiness of the general situation.

I may use this opportunity to beg that a correction be made in my brief discussion of the episode of Cornelius in my *St. Paul*, p. 43, l. 1, by the insertion before "proselyte" of the word "God-fearing." In writing the book, I shrank from using the complete term before it had been defined; but it was wrong to leave the slightest room for misapprehension in regard to such a cardinal point. Some critics, who have touched on this point in reviewing my book, seem inclined to hold that Cornelius was not even a proselyte of the inferior class, and to think that the words "a devout man, and one that feared God" (x. 1) are used only in a vague and general sense, as if equivalent to "a man of naturally religious temperament." It is, however, contrary to the principles which I follow in the interpretation of *Acts* to take such an important term as "fearing God" in any but the strict sense. Moreover Luke was here undoubtedly dependent on Jewish informants, who would not speak of "fearing God" unless they meant the God of Israel. Finally, the other details in the record, that Cornelius gave much alms to the people (x. 2, obviously the Jews), that he prayed to God alway (x. 2), that he was well reported of by all the nation of the Jews (x. 22), that he fell at the feet of a Jew and did obeisance to him (x. 25), seem to me incon-

ceivable in the case of a Roman officer, unless he had come into relations with the synagogue and been impressed with its religious teaching and principles. I cannot doubt that Luke used the term "fearing God" in x. 1, x. 22, x. 35, in its full implication.

W. M. RAMSAY.

SONS OF GOD AND DAUGHTERS OF MEN.

"And it came to pass, that when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of Elohim saw the daughters of Adam that they were fair; and they took them wives of all whom they chose. There were Nephelim¹ in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of Elohim came in unto the daughters of Adam, and they bare to them. The same were Gibborim² which were of old, men of renown."
—GENESIS vi. 1, *et seq.*

THIS remarkable statement follows immediately after what may be called the new Adamic genealogy beginning in chapter v., after Abel has perished, and Cain has become a fugitive, so that it becomes necessary to the continuity of the history to begin the narrative of human descent anew in the line of Seth. It has naturally caused much discussion, and there are few expositors who seem to have very definite views respecting it, except those who regard the whole story as myth or allegory, and by whom it is placed on a level not with history, but with the amours of the Olympian gods in Greek mythology. Yet, in the view of the writer or editor of Genesis, it was evidently a historical event of much importance, as it is made the cause or occasion of that descent of the new Sethite line into evil which led to the Divine determination to destroy the children of men after a short probation of one hundred and twenty years.

¹ Giants, athletes, bullies, or men of violence.

² Heroes, or famous men in war and arts.