

RICHBOROUGH—LAMBÈSE.

BY C. W. KNOX.

It seems that there is no longer any hope that we shall ever know with any certainty what that building was which stood on the great concrete foundation at Richborough. So long as there was a possibility that expert examination of the site might reveal some evidence as to its nature, it behoved amateurs with fanciful suggestions to keep quiet. But now, when we are told that the site itself has nothing more to say, it may be permissible to draw attention to a very interesting building which tells us, as plainly as any written document could do, that early in the second century—possibly at the end of the first—there existed in Rome, in what would correspond to our Office of Works, the plans for a monumental gateway suitable for such a site as that at Richborough, which would require a foundation measuring 126 by 81 feet. This is the exact size of the foundation at Richborough.

Now supposing the facts are as stated, it proves nothing ; we are still unable to say that these were the plans of the Richborough building. But the facts are interesting in themselves, and the coincidence is remarkable.

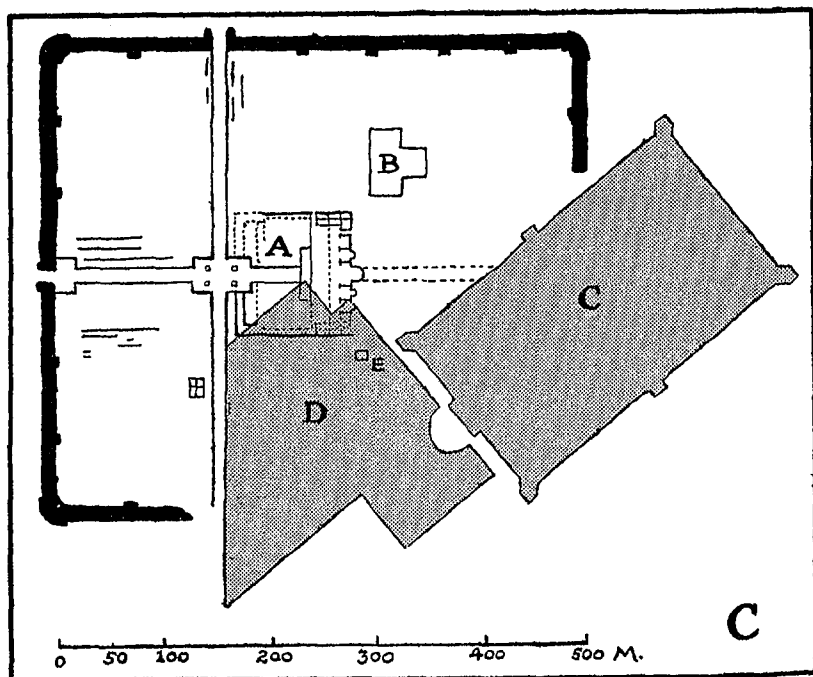
In 1901 Stephane Gsell published *Les Monuments Antiques de l'Algérie*, in which he describes the Roman station Lambæsis. The following is a brief summary of his remarks :

About A.D. 40 Rome established a chain of military posts along the south of Algeria. This line of defence was placed under the charge of Legion III Augusta, which had its first permanent camp at Theveste. Towards the beginning of the second century, probably under Trajan, it established itself at Lambèse where it remained for over two hundred years. There are remains of two camps at Lambèse. The most important of these was the large



PRAETORIUM OF THE ROMAN CAMP AT LAMBÈSE, ALGERIA.
From Gsell: *Les Monuments Antiques de l'Algérie.*

permanent camp attached to the Third Legion. Inscriptions show that it existed already in A.D. 146 and that parts of it were repaired a few years later, under Marcus Aurelius. The camp is a rectangle, with rounded corners, measuring 500 by 420 metres (Plan C). Two paved roads at right angles lead to the four gates, and at their intersection stands

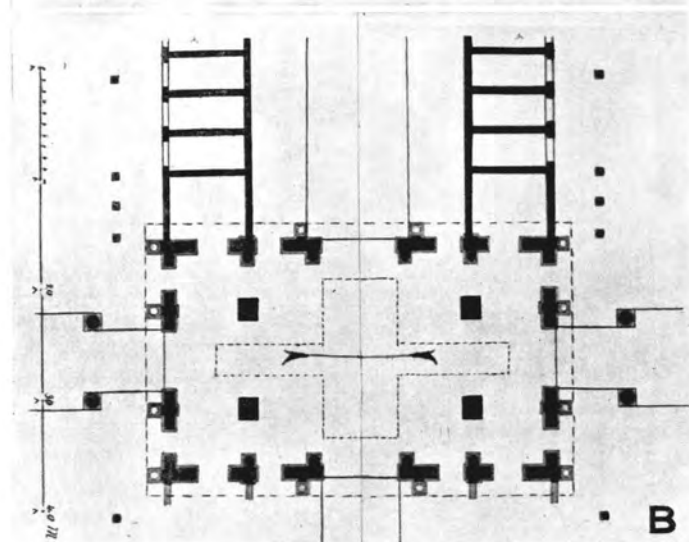
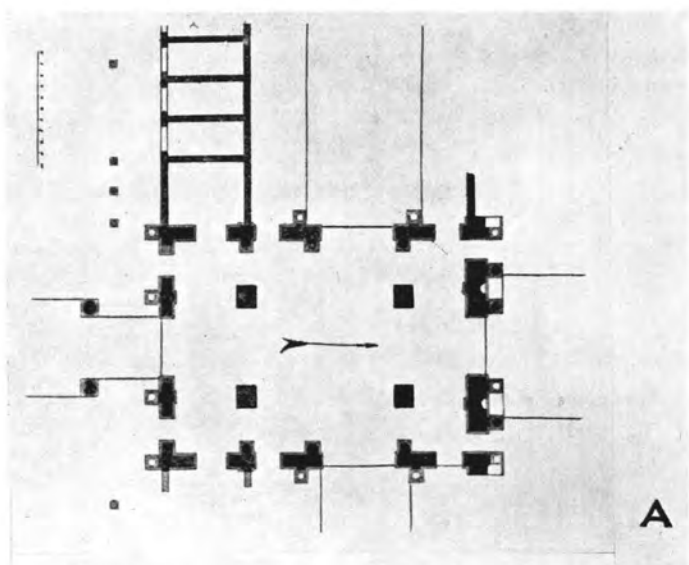


PLAN OF THE CAMP AT LAMBÈSE (after Gsell).

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| A. Prætorium. | B. Baths. |
| C. Modern building. | D. Garden. |

an imposing ruin, which was a part of the Prætorium. It is a rectangular building measuring 30.60 by 23.30 metres. It is of two storeys, decorated with pilasters and Corinthian columns.

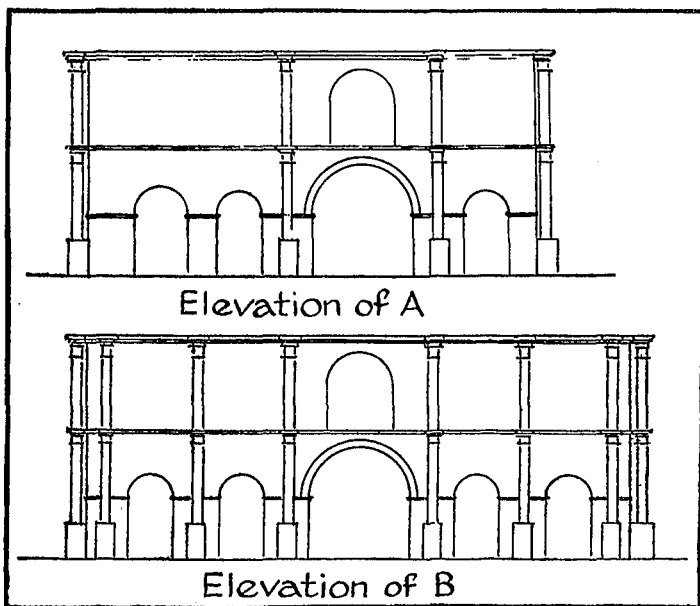
Gsell's description of Lambèse is illustrated with two photographs of the building (see Plate opposite page 165), a scale plan (A) and a plan of the camp (C). These are



- A. Plan of the Praetorium at Lambèse (after Gsell).
 B. Conjectural completion of the original plan, with the Richborough Cross and Platform inserted to scale.

here reproduced, and it is in these that the evidence is found for the main contention of these notes.

But before stating the evidence I must ask for the reader's assent to the following proposition. Hitherto, a competent architect, in designing a triumphal arch, has always designed a symmetrical building. This implies, as a corollary that, if we find a lop-sided triumphal arch like that at Lambèse, we must attribute its lopsidedness to the builder and not to the architect. Now, consider the plan A,



and the corresponding elevation in outline. Obviously the architect did not design these just so. No competent architect could do it. It is, I think, equally obvious that the plan shown in B and the corresponding elevation (obtained by duplicating the southern half of the present building) fairly represent the original design of the Lambèse building as intended by the architect. If we restore to this elevation the facing columns corresponding to those seen at the ends—and, not to labour the point, this is a necessary concept—we

see that each pier is faced with a column standing on a square base. Now if we have to erect this building we shall require a foundation represented by the dotted line surrounding the plan in B. If the reader will take a pair of dividers and measure this foundation with Gsell's scale, he will find that it measures exactly 126 by 81 feet.

But the building tells us a great deal more than this. To begin with, it was the gateway of the Prætorium. Plan C tells us that the Prætorium consisted of a group of buildings surrounding a courtyard, the whole covering some three acres. When we come to examine this plan we notice a very curious detail—the gateway has been built into the Prætorium endways on. There can be no question about it that the architect intended the large archways to be in the principal fronts of the building, and the smaller ones to be in the ends. How, then, did it come about that the building was erected in this extraordinary way? I think that plans A and C answer this question with reasonable certainty. The Prætorium was in course of erection when those in authority decided that the situation demanded a really fine gateway: something more elaborate than local talent could provide. Accordingly, application was made to headquarters—to the "Office of Works" at Rome—for the necessary plans. It is certain that the plans for a building of such magnificence would be submitted to the Emperor for his approval, and that copies of them would be kept at headquarters for reference. In due course the plans for the B building arrived at Lambèse. It was a magnificent building, an architectural triumph, entirely suitable to stand in the centre of the camp, a credit to the Legion and a witness to the majesty of Rome, but, unfortunately, unsuitable as a gateway to the Prætorium. Other considerations apart, the Prætorium, as the headquarters of the general and his staff, must be capable of defence. In this case, at any rate, it was a walled enclosure in the centre of the camp. For such a place it would be absurd to build a gateway with five entrances, one of them being 23 feet wide. In times of danger a considerable force would be required

to guard it. However, the plans were used, great ingenuity being displayed in adapting them to the site. By building it as they did, the frontage of 126 feet with five openings was reduced to one of 81 feet with three openings. Guard rooms, 20 feet square, were built up against it, the openings into them being widened so that the guard could turn out with the least possible delay. Next, the north bay was cut out, leaving a fairly symmetrical square building projecting beyond the Prætorium wall. This was further improved (?) by substituting for the original simple end, the elaborate façade which we see today. I think that most architects will agree that this front is designed by a different hand from that which designed the rest of the building. Whether others will interpret this architectural document in the same way remains to be seen. Some will perhaps see much more than I see, but I think that they cannot see less.

Let me repeat my main conclusions. The date of the building is about A.D. 100. It is an adaptation of a symmetrical building (B), the plans of which were sent to Lambèse from Rome. This was not designed for Lambèse, but for another site, and the plans had been preserved at Rome. The foundation required for this building measured 126 by 81 feet, the same as that at Richborough.

Now, if this hypothetical building is the Richborough building, there is a certain detail which is worthy of notice. At Lambèse the building is a gateway and a thoroughfare, and its floor is naturally level with the roadway. But at Richborough the building is something different. Here it is Rome's Ceremonial Entrance into Britain; here the Emperor comes in state, and receives and is received by the assembled notables. This fact implies a raised floor approached by steps. When we consider the wrongness of the alternative—*i.e.* the Emperor standing in the archway on the same level as the crowd—a raised floor is a necessary concept. If, then, we take the cross at Richborough and mark it on our plan B, to scale, we find that it fits exactly. The official figures for the cross are—long arms 86 ft. by 8 ft. 6 in., short arms 47 ft. by 22 ft., height 4 ft. 6 in. If there was

such a raised floor, it would probably take this form, the retaining walls being carried up to support the roof.

Again, where there is so little evidence, we cannot afford to ignore the merest hint. If the surrounding columns were approximately as shown, by Gsell's scale they would be about 17 feet high. In the Cathedral precincts at Canterbury are two oolite columns which came from Reculver. These are 17 feet high. But where did Reculver get them from? In the official guide to Richborough we read about the great building there, "Within a hundred years of its erection [A.D. 85] it was beginning to fall into decay and by the second half of the third century little more than a ruinous core could have existed." This implies that the columns surrounding our building would have been available for Reculver about A.D. 200. It is, then, at least possible that these columns at Canterbury came from our imaginary building B. For it is most unlikely that new oolite columns would be imported from the continent whilst these were lying unused at Richborough.

Lastly, there is some local evidence as to the nature of the Richborough building, which appears to me to be both obvious and valuable. There was a road from Richborough to Canterbury. I find evidence in the 6 inch Ordnance Survey that this road ran straight to Upstreet, where it joined the main road from Canterbury to the harbour—*i.e.* the anchorage extending from Reculver to Richborough. It is tempting to stop and give the evidence for this assertion, but that is another story. But, however this road went to Canterbury, this much is certain, it went as far as Fleet Farm in a straight line, over the Causeway which is still to be seen in the marsh a few hundred yards east of the Farm. This length of road is just under one mile, and may be marked on the map as being beyond dispute. Next, we are told by Major Bushe-Fox in the official guide, that "The earlier main east and west road was *cut through when the foundation was laid down*. . . ." The road, then, was there before the building, and was continued eastwards. Lately, traces of the east gate of the Fort have been found in the marsh

by the railway. So the road ran still farther eastwards than this gate. The natural inference is that it went down to a landing stage which would be protected by the Stonor peninsula. Now, whatever the Richborough building may have been, *it was built symmetrically astride this road at its highest point.* The direction of the road determined its orientation, and the building was of a character to which this treatment was appropriate. These considerations add weight to the words of the official guide: "An Imperial Monument, perhaps commemorating the conquest of Britain, might well have stood in such a position overlooking the port, and at the beginning of the great road to London and the North." The reader must judge for himself as to the probability of our B building being this very Monument.