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George Dennis

Excerpt

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THE CITIES AND CEMETERIES

OF

ETRURIA.

CHAPTER XXX.

CIVITA VECCHIA.—*CENTUM CELLÆ.*

Ad Centumcellas forti defleximus Austro ;
 Tranquillâ puppes in statione sedent.
 Molibus æquoreum concluditur amphitheatrum,
 Angustosque aditus insula facta tegit ;
 Attollit geminas turres, bifidoque meatu,
 Faucibus aretatis pandit utrumque latus.
 Nec posuisse satis laxo navalia portu,
 Ne vaga vel tutas ventilet aura rates.
 Interior medias sinus invitatus in ædes
 Instabilem fixis aëra nescit aquis.

RUTILIUS.

WHOEVER has approached the Eternal City from the sea must admit the fidelity of the above picture. As Civita Vecchia was 1400 years since, so is it now. The artificial island, with its twin-towers at the mouth of the port ; the long moles stretching out to meet it ; the double passage, narrowed almost to a closing of the jaws ; the amphitheatre of water within, overhung by the houses of the town, and sheltered from every wind—will be at once recognised. It would seem to have remained in *statu quo* ever since it was built by Trajan. Yet the original

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town was almost utterly destroyed by the Saracens in the ninth century ; but when rebuilt, the disposition of the port was preserved, by raising the moles, quay, and fortress on the ancient foundations, which are still visible beneath them.¹

It is possible, in ancient times, when the ruler of the world made it his chosen retreat, and adorned it with his own virtues and the simple graces of his court, that Centum Cellæ may have been, as Pliny found it, “a right pleasant place”—*locus perjucundus*.² Now, it is a paradise to none but *facchini* and *doganieri*. What more wearisome than the dull, dirty town of Civita Vecchia ? and what traveller does not pray for a speedy deliverance from this den of thieves, of whom Gasperoni, though most renowned, is not the most accomplished ? Civita is like “love, war, and hunting,” according to the proverb—it is more easy to find the way in, than the way out. You enter the gates, whether on the land or sea-side, without even a demand for your passport ; but to leave them, you must pass through the hands of a score of custom-house officers—a fingering which tends neither to brighten the countenance nor to smooth the temper. This is owing to Civita being a free port—a privilege which, in conjunction with steam-traffic, renders it the only thriving town in the Papal State, pre-eminently—till the quickening sun of Pius IX. rose upon it—the land of stagnation.

It does not appear that an Etruscan town occupied this site. Yet relics of that antiquity are preserved here, some

¹ There are other remains of the Roman town on the shore without the walls ; and the aqueduct which supplies the town with water is said to be erected, for the most part, on the ruins of that constructed by Trajan. On the shore, at this spot, was discovered that colossal

arm in bronze now in the Gregorian Museum, which, though of the time of Trajan, is said to “surpass perhaps in beauty all ancient works in this metal with which we are acquainted.” Bull. Inst. 1837, p. 5.

² Plin. Epist. VI. 31.

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in the Town-hall, mostly from Corneto,³ and some in the house of Signor Guglielmi, an extensive proprietor of land in the Roman Maremma,⁴ besides a collection of vases, bronzes, and other portable articles in the shop of Signor Bucci, in the Piazza, whom I can highly recommend for his uprightness and moderate charges.

Three miles from Civita Vecchia, on the road to Corneto, at a spot called Cava della Scaglia, Etruscan tombs have been opened,⁵ which seem to have belonged to the neighbouring Algæ, though that place is known to us only as a Roman station.⁶ Its site is marked by Torre Nuova, on the sea shore, three miles from Civita.⁷ The country traversed on the way to Corneto is a desert of undulating heath, overrun with lentiscus, myrtle, and dwarf cork-trees—

³ These have been placed here only since 1843; and consist of sarcophagi of *nenfro* with recumbent figures on the lids, recently found in the Montarozzi; and half a dozen female heads in stone, painted in imitation of life, and very Egyptian in character. Besides these, there are sundry Roman *cippi* and monumental tablets, among which will be found the names of Pompeius and Cæsennius—families of Tarquini, as has been already shown (Vol. I. pp. 307, 368)—*Veturius*, which answers to the *Velthur* in the *Grotta delle Iscrizioni* (Vol. I. p. 340)—and several milestones, probably of the *Via Aurelia*.

⁴ The collection in the house of Signor Guglielmi is composed of articles found upon his own lands. One of the most remarkable objects is an urn of *nenfro*, found near Montalto, in 1840. It is in the form of a little temple, supported on Ionic-like columns, with a moulded doorway at one end, and a male figure, in relief, holding a wand and *patera*, at the other—probably representing the deceased, whose name is inscribed in

Etruscan characters around him. In the opposite tympanum is a human head set in a flower; and the angles of the pediments rest on lions' heads. *Micali*, *Mon. Ined.* pp. 403—7, tav. LIX.

⁵ Excavations were made here in 1830 by Signor Bucci, but with no great success. His attention was drawn to the spot by a *Figaro* of Civita Vecchia, who, fifteen years previous, had found there a shoe of bronze, which he had esteemed of no value, till a foreigner entering his shop, seized upon it and carried it off, leaving a napoleon in the palm of the astonished barber.

⁶ Mentioned in the *Maritime Itinerary*. *Ut supra*, Vol. I. p. 388.

⁷ Three miles to the north-east of Civita Vecchia, on the road to the *Allumiere*, are the *Bagni di Ferrata*, the hot springs lauded by *Rutilius* (I. 249) as the *Thermæ Tauri*, and identical with the "*Aquenses cognomine Taurini*," mentioned by *Pliny* (III. 8) in his catalogue of Roman Colonies in Etruria, which has inconsiderately been referred to *Aequapendente*. See Vol. I. p. 501.

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CIVITA VECCHIA.

[CHAP. XXX.]

the haunt of the wild boar and roe-buck.⁸ Corneto is so easy of access, the thirteen miles from Civita Vecchia are so rapidly accomplished, that the traveller who enters the Papal State by that port, should make a point of visiting the painted tombs of the Montarozzi, which will open to him clearer and more comprehensive views of the early civilization of Italy than he can derive on any other site, and which form an excellent introduction to the works of ancient art in Rome.

⁸ About half-way, or before reaching Le Mole, a little to the right of the road, is a spot called Piano d'Organo, where are *said* to be tombs and fragments of ancient walling; but I have had no opportunity of verifying this report.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER XXX.

THE ancient sites on this coast, between Rome and Centum Cellæ, are thus given, with their distances, by the Itineraries:—

ANTONINE ITINERARY. (<i>Via Aurelia.</i>)		PEUTINGERIAN TABLE. (<i>Via Aurelia.</i>)	
Roma		Roma	
Lorium	XII.	Lorio	XII.
Ad Turres	X.	Bebiana	—
Pyrgos	XII.	Alsium	VI.
Castrum Novum	VIII.	Pyrgos	X.
Centum Cellas	V.	Punicum	V.
		Castro Novo	VIII.
		Centum Cellis	III.
MARITIME ITINERARY.		ANOTHER MARITIME ITINERARY.	
Roma		Portus Augusti	
In Portum	XVIII.	Pyrgos	XXXVIII.
Eregenas	VIII.	Panapionem	III.
Alsium	VIII.	Castrum Novum	VII.
Ad Turres	III.	Centum Cellas	V.
Pyrgos	XII.		
Castrum Novum	VIII.		
Centum Cellas	VIII.		

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CHAPTER XXXI.

SANTA MARINELLA.—*PUNICUM*.

I wandered through the wrecks of days departed,
Far by the desolated shore.

SHELLEY.

FEW roads in Italy are more frequented, and none are more generally uninteresting, than that from Civita Vecchia to Rome. He who approaches the Eternal City for the first time, has his whole soul absorbed in her—in recollections of her ancient glories, or in lively conceptions of her modern magnificence. He heeds not the objects on the road as he winds along the desert shore, or over the more desolate undulations of the Campagna, save when here and there a ruined bridge or crumbling tower, in melancholy loneliness, serves to rivet his attention more fixedly on the past. How should he? He has Coriolanus, Scipio, Cicero, Horace, and a thousand togaed phantoms before his eyes; or the dome of St. Peter's swells in his perspective, and the treasured glories of the Vatican and the Capitol are revealed to his imagination. The scattered towers along the coast, to his view are simply so many preventive stations or forts, and, with the inns by the way-side, are mere mile-stones—indices of the distance he has travelled and has yet to travel, ere he attain the desire of his eyes. And truly, as far as intrinsic beauty is concerned, it would be difficult to find in Italy a road more

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unattractive, more bleak, dreary, and desolate; and to one just making an acquaintance with that land of famed fertility and beauty, as so many do at Civita Vecchia, nothing can be more disappointing. Moreover, it is the road to Rome, and is therefore to be hurried over with all possible speed of *diligence* or *vettura*. Yet are there spots on this road full of interest, both for their history, associated with that of Rome, and for the relics they yet contain of the past; and the traveller whose curiosity has been somewhat allayed, and who can look from the Imperial City to objects around her, will find along this desert sandy shore, or among the low bleak hills inland, sites where he may linger many a delightful hour in contemplation of "the wrecks of days departed."

Two miles and a half from Civita Vecchia, by the roadside, near a tower called Prima Torre, are two large barrows, which, from a slight excavation a few years since, are thought to give promise of valuable sepulchral furniture.

About five miles from Civita Vecchia, the solitary tower of Chiaruccia marks the site of *Castrum Novum*, a Roman station on the Via Aurelia. All we know of it is that it was a colony¹ on this coast,² and that, with other neighbouring colonies, it reluctantly furnished its quota to the fleet which was despatched in the year 563 (B.C. 191)³

¹ Liv. XXXVI. 3; Plin. III. 8; Ptol. Geog. p. 68, ed. Bert.

² Mela. II. 4.

³ Liv. loc. cit. The *Castrum Inui* of Virgil (*Æn.* VI. 776), which was on the coast of Latium, seems to have been confounded by Servius (ad loc.) and by Rutilius (I. 232) with this *Castrum Novum* in Etruria—the former a place of great antiquity, the latter probably only of Roman times. But Müller (*Etrusk.* III. 3, 7) thinks from Rutilius'

mention of an ancient figure of Inuus over a gate at *Castrum* on this coast, that the god may have been worshipped at both sites. Inuus was a pastoral deity, equivalent to Pan, or Faunus, says Servius. Holstenius (*Annot. ad Cluver* p. 35) and Mannert (*Geog.* p. 375) took *Sta Marinella* for *Castrum Novum*, though Cluver (*II.* p. 488) had previously indicated the ruins at *Torre di Chiaruccia* to be the site—an opinion which is now universally admitted to be correct.

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against Antiochus the Great. In the time of Rutilius it was in utter ruin—*absumptum fluctuque et tempore*.⁴

Two miles and a half beyond, the road crosses the shoulder of a low headland, on which stand a few buildings. This promontory half embraces a tiny bay, with some ruins of a Roman mole or breakwater. A few fishing-boats are drawn up on the beach; the half-draped tawny fishermen are sitting beneath their shade, mending their nets; and two or three similar craft, with their latteen sails glistening like snow in the sunbeams, are gliding with swan-like motion over the blue waters. The hamlet is called Santa Marinella, and is supposed to mark the site of Punicum, a station on the Via Aurelia.⁵ A few furlongs beyond, in a field by the road-side, are many traces of Roman habitation, probably marking the site of a villa. Here on the shore are a couple of ancient bridges standing in picturesque ruin near the road, and marking the course of the Via Aurelia along the coast. Excavations have been made of late years in this neighbourhood by the Duchess of Sermoneta, and many remains of Roman magnificence have been brought to light.⁶

Were the traveller now to retrace his steps from Sta Marinella for about a mile towards Civita Vecchia, and cross the heath to the extremity of the range of hills

⁴ Rutil. I. 227.

⁵ Punicum is mentioned only by the Pentingerian Table. Nibby (*Dintorni di Roma*, II. p. 313) thinks it must have taken its name from some pomegranate (*malum punicum*) which flourished here, or from some heraldic device of this character; but it is more likely to have arisen from the association of the place with the Carthaginians, as Lanzi (*Saggio*, II. p. 61) suggests. Cluver (*II. p. 497*) thinks it identical

with the Panapio of the Maritime Itinerary.

⁶ In the winter of 1837, on the shores of the little bay, were found remains of baths and other buildings, with mosaic pavements, together with a singular column, and a beautiful statue of Meleager, now in the Museum of Berlin. *Mon. Ined. Inst. III. tav. LVIII*. For further notices, see *Bull. Inst.* 1838, p. 1; 1839, p. 85; 1840, p. 115; *Ann. Inst.* 1843, p. 237, *et seq.*

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which here rise from the coast, he would find some remains of far prior antiquity to those at Santa Marinella, and which prove the existence of a long-forgotten Etruscan town or fortress on this spot. Let him ask for the "Puntone del Castrato," or "Sito della Guardiola," and he may obtain a guide at the little *osteria* of Santa Marinella.

I know not what induced the Duchess of Sermoneta to commence excavations on this site. No traces of sepulchres are now visible. More than once have I wandered long over the heathy crag-strewn ground at the foot of these hills, vainly seeking vestiges of a necropolis. It is certain, however, that here have been discovered many tombs of a remarkable character, unlike any I have yet described; being rude chambers hollowed in the rock, lined with rough slabs, and roofed in either by a single large cover-stone, or by two slabs resting against each other, gable-wise—extremely similar, as far as I can learn from the description, to those still to be seen at Saturnia. There is some analogy also to the tombs of Magna Græcia, and yet more to the *cromlechs* of our own land, and other parts of Europe and of the East. The Egyptian character of the furniture they contained confirms their high antiquity.⁷

⁷ These tombs were found in 1840. The slabs which lined them were, some calcareous, some volcanic, partly hewn, partly rough, but always put together so as to present a tolerably even surface. A single massive slab often lined each of the three side-walls of the tomb, and a fourth, leaning against the front, closed the doorway. Sometimes the tombs had two chambers, the outer of which served as a vestibule. They contained benches, or sepulchral couches, of rock. Abeken thinks that these gable-roofed tombs, from their resemblance to guard-houses, may have suggested to the peasantry the name of La Guardiola, conferred on

this site. Over every tomb rose a tumulus, of which Abeken saw few or no traces; but he says that the most remarkable feature was a *cuniculus*, or passage, lined with slabs, surrounding one of these tombs; and he thinks it served to separate the sacred space of the sepulchre from the surrounding soil, or to prevent one tomb from interfering with another. It bears great analogy to the trench cut in the rock round the conical tomb at Bieda. See Vol. I. p. 271. Among the sepulchral furniture was found an *alabastrum* with hieroglyphics. Abeken, Bull. Inst. 1840, p. 113, *et seq.*; Ann. Inst. 1841, p. 31;

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Abeken speaks of a huge tumulus rising in the midst of these tombs. This, however, I found to be nothing but the termination of the range of hills which here sink to the coast ; and what he took for a vast sepulchre inclosed by masonry, I perceived to be the *arx* of an ancient town, marked out by a quadrangle of foundations, almost level with the soil ; and what he regarded as an outer circuit of walls to his tumulus, I discovered to be the fortifications of the town itself, extending a considerable way inland, along the brow of the hill, till their vestiges were lost among the crags with which the ground is strewn. Traces of several gates also I clearly observed ; and in more than one spot remains of polygonal masonry.⁸

Mittelitalien, pp. 239, 267. To this description by Abeken, Micali (Mon. Ined. p. 356) adds that the corpses always lay on large slabs of *nenfro*. Tombs of this simple character he considers as the most ancient in style, but not always in construction, as they must have continued in use for ages, and probably never went out among the peasantry. He describes some as built up of many blocks, regularly cut and smoothed, but without cement (p. 386, tav. LV.).

⁸ I have given notices of this site in Bull. Inst. 1847, pp. 51, 93. "On the summit of the mound or tumulus," says Abeken, "is a quadrangular inclosure of wall, about 150 palms one way, and 180 the other, and about 5 palms high, of calcareous blocks, uncemented, topped with a battlemented parapet of *nenfro*. Within this quadrangle rises a second, still higher, at the very summit of the mound ; and though it has lost somewhat of its original height, still measures in parts 8 or 9 palms high. The walls bear traces of red stucco. The ground between the two inclosures is paved with marine breccia. The space

within the upper quadrangle has been excavated, and a sepulchral chamber has been discovered about 14 feet below ground, originally lined with masonry, but now much ruined. The entrance to this tomb is not distinguishable ; but it was probably connected with a corridor or passage above it, hollowed in the rock, bent at right angles, and full of human bones when discovered. It seems clear to me that the whole formed a cemetery, and perhaps the inclosing walls served to support different stories, rising above the sepulchral chamber ; a plan adopted by the Romans in the Mausolea of Augustus and of Hadrian, and in the Septizonium of Severus." Abeken, Bull. Inst. 1840, pp. 113—5 ; and Mittelitalien, p. 242.

Abeken elsewhere (Ann. Inst. 1841, p. 34) suggests that the inner and higher quadrangle of masonry may have marked the *area* of a temple, like that of the Capitol. If so, the presence of bones in the passage, even supposing (which does not appear to me to be necessary) that this was a sepulchre, is explained by the well-known connection between temples and tombs.

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Here, then, stood the town in whose cemetery the Duchess of Sermoneta made excavations. What was its name? We have no mention by ancient authors of any town on this coast between Alsium and Centum Cellæ, whose site has not been determined. That this was of very ancient date, may be inferred from the silence of Roman writers, as well as from the character of the remains, which mark it as Etruscan. Now, on the coast immediately below it stands the Torre di Chiaruccia, the *Castrum Novum* of antiquity; a name which manifestly implies the existence of a more ancient fortress, a *Castrum Vetus*, in the neighbourhood; which, there can be little doubt, is the place whose remains occupy the Puntone del Castrato.⁹ This may have fallen into decay before the domination of the Romans, or it may have been destroyed by them at the conquest, and when a colony was to be established, a fresh site was chosen on the coast below, probably for convenience sake; or it may be, that the entire population of the old town was transferred to the new, for the same reasons that led to the formation of the duplicate cities of Falerii and Volsinii.¹⁰

⁹ This conjecture of mine is confirmed by the actual name of the site, as Dr. Braun suggests (*Bull. Inst.* 1847, p. 94)—*Castrato* being, probably, a mere corruption of the ancient name. I am indebted to the Cav. Canina for the information that a mosaic discovered a few years since at Sta Marinella, bore the representation of a town on a height, which he suggests may have been this on the Puntone del Castrato. In the old fresco maps in the galleries of the Vatican, some ruins are indicated on this height, though no name is attached. This shows that the site was recognised as ancient at the close of the 16th century,

when those maps were executed.

¹⁰ Cramer (*Ancient Italy*, I. p. 203) supposes that the *Castrum Vetus* implied in the *Castrum Novum* was the *Castrum Inui* of the Latin coast, mentioned by Virgil (*Æn.* VI. 776), which Servius (*ad loc.*) and Rutilius (I. 232), on the other hand, seem to confound with *Castrum Novum*. A *Castrum* is mentioned by Paterculus (I. 14) as colonised at the commencement of the First Punic War (*cf.* Liv. *epit.* XI.); but from the context it may be gathered that the *Castrum* in Picenum is here referred to. Cramer, p. 285.