

RETROSPECTIONS.

STROOD.

THE town of Strood is separated from the city of Rochester by the river Medway, a bridge over which connects it now, precisely where a bridge did connect it under the Romans; and like that, in a straight line. The fine substantial stone bridge of the time of Richard the Second, destroyed some thirty years since, swerved from the straight line, and crossed the river a little higher up, towards the west. The ruins of the chapel, which stood opposite on the Rochester side, indicate the direction. The Roman bridge was of wood; the piling of which, sound and strong, was taken up under the direction of the late Mr. Ball.

Although the present level of the High Street of Strood is from two to three feet higher than that of the Roman *Strata*, it was not then, as now, subjected to overflowings of the Medway; for, on the western side was a cemetery which would never have been thus situated had not the land been high and dry. There may have been dwelling-houses on the sides of the *Strata*; but if so, no traces have been noticed when, by chance, excavations have been made; so that it is probable that the cemetery was used chiefly by the inhabitants of *Durobrivis*, on the other side of the river. In my preceding volume, page 239, I have written on the discoveries made here in the Roman cemetery, and in a contiguous Saxon burial-place; so that I need do no more than refer my readers to this volume, and to a more extended account in the first volume of my *Collectanea Antiqua*.

Previous to the reign of King John we find that an extensive trade in fishing was carried on in the Thames and Medway; and the master fishermen of Strood (Strode) in the liberty of the Temple, were often summoned to London and fined for using unlawful means for taking the fish, such as kidels and wears, as well as nets with small meshes, which captured the young fry. The Knights Templars held much property here; one of their chief establishments being what is now the Temple farm-house, the lower portions of which show traces of its old importance. The late Thomas Wright, when on a visit to me at Temple Place, remarked that in writing on the possessions of the Knights Templars he had certainly confounded Strood in Kent with Stroud in Gloucestershire.

Strood, when I came to reside near it, had houses of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, which have since been destroyed. A long row which projected over the pavement, and had shutters for the lower stories and no glass windows, Mr. Spence used always to speak of as having seen Henry the Fifth ride by. Some of the inns carry their origin in their names, as the Crispin and Crispianus, the Angel, and the Pelican. It is not at all improbable that the first of these was founded by some veteran who had fought in the battle of Agincourt, won on St. Crispin's day. All around Strood, in every direction, are places stored with memories of the long past, for all who have been trained to think. There is the public-house called "The Three Cruches", erroneously corrected by some to "Three Crosses"; the village of Singlewell, which, I suggest, if it means anything, means the Well of Saint Gall; Cobham Hall; and its *oppidum* (discovered by me and Mr. Charles Warne); and the Roman road which skirts the park. In another direction is Halling; its remains of the episcopal-palace; and its fine tythe-barn; sites of vineyards there; at Cobham; on the Temple Farm and other places; Frindsbury, its church and wall-paintings. From Frindsbury run

roads to Cliffe and to Hoo, places of high antiquarian interest.

Of Strood Church, deeply in debt, something may be said. It was originally good, and architecturally pleasing, with old monuments, among which was a very finely-incised slab of the fourteenth century. But, within the memory of man, there arose a conspiracy to pull it down; the monuments were destroyed or transferred to the vault, and an unsightly structure was erected instead, with a debt upon the parish of some thousands of pounds. In Shorne Church, worth a visit, the funereal slabs upon the pavement have, of late years, been paved over; so that they are safe; but invisible to all who may care to see them; the all being a very few of the relatives of the departed.

On the left of the high road from Strood to Cuxton, in cutting for the railway in 1859, was brought to light the very interesting interment which is recorded in Plate X, p. 129 of the fifth volume of my *Collectanea Antiqua*, to which I refer for a full account of the *Angon*, which formed the most remarkable feature in the funereal deposit. The *Angon* was peculiarly a Frankish weapon, and therefore has been but seldom found in this country, though its presence here and there is not to be wondered at.

At Cuxton, in 1860, while excavations were being made for the White Hart Inn, a Roman sepulchral deposit was discovered, comprising a large variety of fictile vessels, which found a fresh resting-place in Cobham Hall. Beyond, on the right of the road to Halling, I have noticed in the upper part of the bank and hedge, Roman masonry, which has never yet been properly examined.

Rochester, which occupies the site of *Durobrivis*, a walled station on the main military road from Dover, Richborough, and Lymne, is almost destitute of visible Roman masonry in its walls. Only near the Grammar School and on the side of the river have I been able to detect portions of the core of the walls, and, in the

latter place, a few of the lowermost courses of the small squared stones. Here it is apparent that long before the Conquest this wall was deprived of its facing stones for some edifices, probably ecclesiastical, the Normans building upon the core of the wall. Though it is probable the medieval walls followed the course of the Roman, yet this has never been demonstrated by excavations. Four Archæological Societies have held Congresses in Rochester without attempting a research which should have been a primary object. In the street opposite Mr. Essell's office, I saw, during some excavations, at the depth of about three feet, a well-constructed, thick, Roman wall which seemed to point towards the cloisters of the Cathedral. It was soon covered in again. What remains of Roman Rochester is beneath the ground. As yet not an inscription has been found; no trace of the public buildings; not even the vestiges of villas and their contents and surroundings. Yet *Durobrivis* was a halting-place for the legions and cohorts landed at Dover, Lymne, and Richborough, and must have been provided with establishments of various kinds for their accommodation, such as barracks, stabling, stores of provisions; and, at all times, horses and conveyances for the great postal communication from Gaul and Italy to all parts of the province of Britain.

We were soon settled in our new residence, Temple Place, in the Cuxton Road. Though knowing no one in the place but Mr. Humphrey Wickham and his family, and Mr. Stephen Steele; and although we had no calls from strangers, our relations and friends were so numerous that we were seldom without visitors, and seldom without one or more of our family staying with us. For us it was fortunate that the people were not social, provided as we were by such an extensive circle of friends. Soon, however, I renewed acquaintance with Mr. Henry Coulter of Chatham, whom I have briefly mentioned in my first volume; and through him I became acquainted with Mr. Winkworth and his

family of Rede Court, and with Mr. Henry Latter of Harbourne House, near High Halden. Through him Mr. James Hulkes's yacht was always at my service for the archæological explorations. Mr. Coulter's gig was ever free to me, though I seldom required it. We made excursions together; he attended all of my "Readings", as they were called; and once when I had walked to Cliffe for an Entertainment, and saw no other prospect than a walk back; he and his gig were at the inn ready for me. He managed Mr. Hulkes's brewery at Chatham; and was much respected by the families of Hulkes and Winkworth, who called him by the familiar and honourable title of *Pater*. He was equally a favourite with Mr. Latter; and delightful were the days in advanced spring when he, I, and Mr. Wildish used to set out from Chatham in a van laden with shrubs and flowers for Harbourne House, the garden and grounds of which were being laid out with the assistance of Mr. Wildish. We were nearly a day in reaching Harbourne; where we always stayed a day or two. On the opposite side of the Chatham Brewery, Mr. Coulter had extensive garden grounds. He supplied us yearly with the choicest annuals; and with manure; and he was equally generous with flowers to other friends. To see his garden-house, and the long bench covered with annuals just potted, and others in preparation, a stranger might suppose him a professional instead of an amateur gardener. In the walled garden was a large fountain; and in it might be seen disporting varieties of wild fowl which he had captured when shooting. Among them were sea-gulls, a pair of which made a nest, laid eggs, and hatched. While the female was on the nest the male kept watch, and no other bird dared to come near. Mr. Coulter was fond of shooting; and also of fishing; and somehow he yearly made time to be away for days with Lord Alfred Paget engaged in deep-sea fishing; and also in shooting on land.

Passionately fond of music and the stage, after

dancing all night, he walked to London to hear the opera of "Oberon" on the first night of its production; and walked home afterwards. It was an extraordinary feat. As he approached Strood, he fell asleep while walking; and in waking found himself standing upright in a hedge. He induced me to go up to hear Fechter, the Frenchman, in "Hamlet". It was a delightful excursion. We commenced by finding out along the banks of the Thames opposite or not far from the Adelphi, places which Fairholt had sketched; some were altered; some with difficulty to be recognised from alterations. We took tea with Mr. Latter, who occupied the house in the Adelphi which Mrs. Garrick had, and also Hannah More. The ceiling of the room in which we took tea was painted by Angelica Kauffman; and upon the tea-table, with other luxuries, was *caviare*, which I had only known from its being mentioned in "Hamlet", as a dish not for the many. For the first, and possibly for the last time, I tasted it. Mr. Latter accompanied us to the play. The house was full; the pit in which we were, crowded. Fechter had been much talked about, from his mastery of the English tongue and from his acting in English plays. In this point of view he was worth hearing; but whoever had tutored him as "Hamlet", was not a first-rate Shakespearean scholar. Mr. Fechter showed this continually in false readings of particular passages; and in exaggerated by-play; as for instance, when Hamlet discovers it is Ophelia who is to be buried, he fainted in the arms of Horatio. His costume was novel and inelegant. By the pit he was received with exuberant fervour. Knowing that our friend Mr. Latter had shares in the theatre; and highly approved of the foreigner who was filling it, I did not say fully what I thought; but Coulter, in reply to Mr. Latter's inquiry, very frankly and bluntly said, "if he had been at the Rochester Theatre he would have been hissed off."

When Russell, the great popular singer and com-

poser (yet living, I believe), first came to Rochester, there were only a very few to receive him. He said that they could not expect him to go through the programme; but he would return them their money and sing two songs. They were so pleased that, at Coulter's suggestion, they invited him to supper; and said that if he would try Rochester once more, they would engage to procure him a full hall. This was done; and henceforward, whenever he came, he was sure of a crowded audience. The pianoforte which he used became the property of Mrs. Coulter, who ceded it to the Strood Workmen's Institute, where it now is, in constant use by the Elocution Class.

One of the Medway floods, so long tolerated by the Corporation, led to Mr. Coulter's untimely death. He had been hard at work all night with his men striving to repel the inundation; but instead of resting, on the following morning he drove to Stoke; and there, while conversing with the landlady of the Ship Inn, on flowers, he suddenly fell and expired.

It was now a novelty to me to receive an invitation to dinner; but one did come. It was from a stranger to the place, Mr. Malleeson of London, who had taken the Upper Hermitage, at Higham. For this courtesy I was indebted to Mr. Stephen Steele, whom I accompanied. There I met, for the first time, the Rev. Robert Whiston, Master of the Grammar School of Rochester, the funds of which he had, a few years before, augmented by a successful action at law against the Dean and Chapter. I found that he had been at Cambridge with my friend Thomas Wright, then eminent as a historical and literary writer. The Upper Hermitage was built by Sir Francis Head, who is buried in Lower Higham, 1768. In my earliest days of Strood I was attracted to it by the Roman altars and inscriptions in marble, preserved in the garden. No doubt they had been brought there from Italy by Sir Francis Head, thus dissociating them from the place to which they belonged and to its history.

There they were of value, but about worthless when transferred to Higham. This bad taste was once very prevalent; but Italy is now awakened to the historical value of its monuments; and aimless collectors find it difficult to procure them. These at the Upper Hermitage have been published in the *Journal* of the British Archæological Association,¹ by Mr. Thomas Morgan, F.S.A. The name of Head gives interest to the Upper Hermitage; as that of Dickens does to his residence of Gad's Hill. Between the two places, on a rising ground, is the monument to Mr. Larking, a politician of Rochester, whose admirers considered him worthy of a lasting memorial; but they selected a perishable stone, the surface of which has so crumbled away that the inscription has become illegible.

Bryant's place at Strood should have a memory; but I doubt if any one person knows that it takes its name from one of the collateral descendants of Jacob Bryant of Chatham, author of *A New System of Mythology*, in six volumes, a work replete with profound learning, and valuable although many of his conclusions may be erroneous. He was born in 1715, and died in 1804.

Of the great Hospital which, in the middle ages, extended from the upper part of Strood on the east to the Medway, with its orchard and garden, scarcely a fragment remains, and only scraps of its history; but it is left to me, by the help of Mr. Henry Sweet, to record an institution of a humbler kind, which, in its day, served an educational purpose of an extended scope. It has been swept away, with others of the same kind, by advanced education. It was a *depôt* for the printing and sale of popular ballads, carols, proclamations, and other belongings to fugitive literature, established by the father and uncle of Mr. Henry Sweet in the house which he occupies, now transformed from what it was. It was much resorted to from all parts; and it was no unusual sight to see six or seven

¹ Vol. xxxvii, p. 285.

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Excerpt

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THE STORY OF LORD COLERAINE.

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customers seated upon the curbstone opposite, waiting their turn to be served. The establishment was only exceeded by that of the well-known Catnach of Seven Dials. In those days ballads were the chief part of the popular literature ; they found their way into the granaries, barns, and stables of farm-houses, and were pasted upon the walls. They were usually surmounted by woodcuts, some of which had done like duty for centuries ; and very curious many of them are. Mr. H. Sweet has kindly given me impressions from full two hundred blocks in his possession. Besides serving for proclamations, public events, and carols, some are illustrations of Æsop's Fables, a valuable book which has been supplanted by comparatively worthless substitutes: it should be in every boy's hands. *See Appendix.*

All places, no doubt, have had tales of strange events ; of remarkable characters, good and bad ; but they soon get swallowed up unrecorded, and are forgotten. This would have been the fate of the following story had I not pressed my friend Mr. Humphrey Wickham to allow me to print it ; and he has consented to tell it himself, at my earnest entreaty, in the following words :—

“ I commenced practice here on the 5th July 1830. On the 17th September 1830 I received a message requesting my immediate attendance at The Crispin. I attended there accordingly ; and was introduced by the landlady to her lodger, whom she called Charley Roberts. He had lived in the neighbourhood about twenty years, known by that name. The greater part of that time he had lived as ostler at different houses where coach-horses were stabled. At that time a large number of stage-coaches and four passed through Strood. He had been in the Militia ; and, in the latter part of his time, travelled the adjacent country selling thread, laces, tape, and other small ware, (ballads probably included) ; and on Sundays he shaved labourers.

“ When I was introduced to him he was in bed in a nice clean room. He said, ‘ I am not what I appear to be : I am Lord Coleraine ; and I want you to make my Will. I have very little to dispense of, having made off with all I could ; and have only a reversionary interest in £500 Bank Stock, on the death of a Mrs. Whyte who is now ninety-seven years old.’ I asked him what relations he had ; and he told me he had a son who was then serving an apprenticeship

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under Messrs. Guest Saddlers, ironmongers at Birmingham, whom he left with his wife, after she had been confined a fortnight only; that she was dead, and that none of her or his family knew what had become of his son. Then I asked him what he wished me to do; and I suggested that he should leave all he had in trust for his son; to which he answered that he would first ask me a few questions, and then instruct me. His questions were, first, whether I would consent to be his executor? To this I assented. Next, whether I would see him properly taken care of during what little time he had to live; adding, you need not fear doing so, as my landlady I know will do that; for she has kept me in comfort during my illness, and has taken as much care of me as if I had been her son. That and the third question, would I see him decently buried? being answered in the affirmative, he said, 'Then I will leave all my property to you.' This I strongly objected to; telling him he should leave it as I had suggested, to his son. We had a long argument; and as he remained obstinate I told him I would not make his Will, and left him.

"In about an hour afterwards he sent for me again. On my arrival he said I was to do what I thought fit; and he informed me that his name was Charles Parrott Hanger; and that he was the nephew of Colonel Hanger, an intimate friend of the Prince Regent, afterwards George the Fourth. I then prepared his Will, bequeathing 19 guineas to myself; £50 to his landlady; and all the rest to his son, Charles Henry Hanger; and in order that I might be able to identify him, he told me that the calf of his leg had been cut through in a hayfield when he was a child.

"He died on the 20th September; and I had his son up to attend the funeral. He expressed great gratitude to me; and said that when he got the money he would reward me substantially. Mrs. Whyte died in 1835; and considerable correspondence took place between me and some gentlemen who endeavoured to obtain the settlement of the business which I, at the request of Charles Henry Hanger, (who stated that if I did not yield to them I should save the money for him twice), persisted in preventing; and eventually, on the 3rd June 1836, met C. H. Hauger in London by appointment and handed him £1,000 11s. 7d. the balance of what I had received, after paying the legacies of £50; and nineteen guineas, the costs of proving the Will, including probate duty and legacy; and then left him; his alleged gratitude having oozed out and evaporated; and I never saw, or heard from him, afterwards!"

Here was rare and chivalric honour on the one side, and common baseness on the other! In my view of the case Mr. Wickham should have done as the father, at first, wished; and have allowed the son, who was, no doubt, of a low, senseless type, an allowance per quarter. But thus stands the case, to Mr. Wickham's