ILLUSTRATIONS OF ROMAN LONDON.

THE fate of towns and cities closely resembles that of the kingdoms and empires of which they form part. It would, indeed, be out of the natural order and sequence of things, if the mutations and decay to which nations and countries have been subjected, should not be shared by the habitations of the people; and, if our knowledge of the one is very limited, all we can know of the other must be equally confined. The most copious histories of the most civilized states of antiquity afford but scanty information in comparison with their extent. In one year the daily press of a free country prints more than is contained in the entire works of the most voluminous writer. The provincial journals furnish local histories of the places in which they are published, such as are not to be found in any literary legacy bequeathed to us by past ages; and to these may be added the numerous works of collectors of medieval records of towns and countries, frequently illustrated with views of streets and buildings, since destroyed or totally changed in character. The antiquary of the present day has no such materials to work upon as the historical inquirer of a remote futurity will possess in abundance.

Of the most renowned cities of antiquity but few traces can now be discovered, except in the ruins of walls or of remarkable buildings, which, here and there, from their extraordinary stability or extent have escaped the general devastation, or which, from their abundant stores have supplied, without complete exhaustion, the pillagers of many ages. The private dwellings, the workshops of the artisan and manufacturer, and all the various humble structures which make up the bulk of cities and towns, have long since disappeared; and with them almost every clue to their disposition and arrangement. This change is more complete in those towns which, with all the vicissitudes to which they have been subjected, have never succumbed to the worst disasters of war, but have continued to flourish without any permanent check to their commercial

prosperity. In such towns it is often difficult to recognize a vestige of antiquity. But the change is less complete when, at some comparatively remote period, the tide of progress has been impeded, and the towns have declined in trade and in population. In the former class may be instanced London and Paris; in the latter, Treves, Orange, Fréjus, etc. Pompeii stands in a class by itself, in having been preserved to us, in a great measure, in the condition in which it was eighteen hundred years since, by an extraordinary natural catastrophe. As a rule, we shall find, that the prosperity of towns has been the most fatal cause of the loss of their ancient configuration and of their monuments; and, on the contrary, that where remains of antiquity abound, there we may find evidence of some important change having taken place in the middle ages, prejudicial to commerce and to the increase of local population. Paris and London, the capitals of Gaul and of Britain, are good illustrations of this rule. In both, population has for centuries gone on increasing. In spite of temporary mischances, their peculiar situations and other causes have maintained them as the centres of the civilization and commerce of their respective countries; and they have both so outgrown their pristine garb, and every feature of remote antiquity, that scarcely a ruin or relic of their earlier days can be found even by the most plodding antiquary; and the busy multitudes which daily throng their streets, never care to inquire about what does not concern them, or if prompted to inquire, resign themselves to scepticism; for all around them speaks of the present and not of the past.

It is the same with all great commercial cities which have succeeded Roman towns. Population, extending rapidly in successive ages, has demanded new boundaries, and occupied every available rood of ground; and buildings which could not be made applicable to purposes of trade were, from time to time, doomed to destruction. The close packing of ancient streets, and the wooden superstructures of most of the houses, were ever fertile causes in the middle ages of destruction by fires, one of the most fatal instruments in subverting the plans of arrangement of the streets of old towns. The worth of land in flourishing towns caused every spot from which a building had been removed to be reoccupied. Every stone had its value; and the sculptured column and cornice, the inscribed slabs which recorded the building or restoration of temples and other public edifices, were estimated only as quarried material for houses or structures adapted to the wants of generations with habits and feelings totally different from those of their predecessors; and void of that sentiment which, in modern times, among educated persons, tends to the preservation of the monuments of past ages.

So thoroughly is the ancient character of most of our towns effaced, that it is

difficult, if not impossible, to conceive what they may have been. The former boundaries of many can only be traced at the present day by the help of tradition and old plans. We can tell what changes three centuries have produced, from the houses of the sixteenth century which yet remain, and from drawings and engravings; but if the imagination attempt to stretch backwards three centuries further, it will not so readily nor so truly realize a picture of the towns of the thirteenth century; and from the thirteenth to the fourth or third century the interval is long and almost impenetrably obscure. When the traveller approaches cities which have not entirely outgrown their ancient limits, such as Treves, Nismes, Autun, he sees before him evidences of their former greatness, and he admits they must have been grand and noble cities. But in most towns of ancient origin nothing of the kind is presented; and, if he think at all on the subject, he finds it difficult to allow their claim to antiquity. The Londoner, tied for life to his counting-house or his shop, and knowing no London but that which he has threaded to and fro from his boyhood, is incredulous when told of what was the probable condition of the city fifteen hundred years ago: he sees nothing to help him to realize the description; his mind pictures nothing beyond the visible present; and he dwells only upon the scene before him, which comprises his present, his future and his past.

But although war, the various accidents of time, and especially the increase of population and commerce, have tended to denude England of the monuments which attested her greatness as a Roman province, those who would underrate the prosperity of Britain must have studied both history and existing remains to very little purpose. At the lowest computation, when the Roman legions were finally withdrawn, Britain possessed more than fifty walled towns, united by roads upon which, at stated intervals, were stations for resting and relays of horses and carriages, or as they may be called, inns and posts, but which are in no way reflected in our modern establishments bearing those names. Exclusive of the towns, there were numerous military walled stations, to which frequently, in the process of time, had become attached extensive suburbs. These towns and stations possessed public buildings, baths and temples within and without their walls. Many of the towns were of large extent; and even if we may only judge from the remains discovered in our own time, were adorned with edifices of considerable grandeur and of architectural importance, and their public places were often embellished with statues. One bronze equestrian statue, at least, decorated Lincoln; a bronze statue of the tutelary deity of the place, stood in a temple at Bath; a statue in bronze, of Hadrian, of heroic size, was one of the public ornaments of London; one of the temples at Colchester bore an inscription in large letters of bronze; and Verulam possessed a theatre for dramatic representa-

tions, capable of holding some two to three thousand spectators.[1] It is accident alone that, in very recent times, has revealed to us these and other remains which speak of former luxury and magnificence. Verulam now presents to the eye nothing but fields, a church, and a dwelling-house, surrounded by thick walls overgrown with trees: Bath has nothing beyond other large modern cities; and Colchester and Lincoln, however the antiquary may esteem them, would exhibit nothing very impressive to the casual visitor or to the untutored observer: their inhabitants, for the most part, are quite unconscious of the *indicia* of antiquity which yet remain. The spacious villas which were spread over Roman Britain, are only known to us from their splendid pavements casually laid open under cornfields and meadows, from time to time, deprived of the superstructures which would be indispensable in conveying a proper notion of the extensive and commodious edifices of which they once formed the flooring. These are among the most striking remains we possess of the domestic luxury of Roman Britain; and we owe them entirely to the abandonment of the sites by those who succeeded the Romano-British population. It is from these villas a notion may be gained of the character of many of the buildings of the more important cities, in which, from obvious circumstances, they are but seldom found except in a very shattered condition; or when met with cannot be uncovered, owing to the great depth of soil and the superincumbent houses. The plans of rural villas have in some cases been made capable of restoration, as, for instance, that of Bignor. The plans of some of the castra or military towns in the north of Britain have also been partially recovered by careful excavation. This is entirely owing to the absence of the cause which is so obstructive to any systematic investigation of the buried remains of our great cities, the deep accumulation of soil and its covering of modern buildings. The rural villas and the castra referred to, man has for ages ceased to occupy; and what his destroying hand spared nature has preserved. In some towns, which have not greatly increased their old bounds, such as Chichester, Rochester, Colchester, Chester, Lincoln, etc., the original Roman plan can be defined, so far as to ascertain the chief entrances and the courses of the main streets corresponding to them; but beyond this, it is almost impossible to form any reliable idea of the filling up of the angles or quarters intersected by these streets. Even the position of the side entrances or postern gates can seldom be ascertained, and their sites are not to be established from the courses of modern streets.

The modern fortunes of great cities are also made at the sacrifice of another class

[1] See Mr. Grove Lowe's "Description of the Roman Theatre of Verulam," printed for the St. Alban's Architectural Society: London, 1848. This should be perused together with the account given by Matthew Paris of discoveries made at Verulam in the eleventh century.

of antiquities, the most valuable of all, and which must rank next to written history. This is, lapidary inscriptions, or records, public and private, cut upon stone. They are, indeed, so many little histories. Frequently brief, and sometimes formed with words abridged even to obscurity, they nevertheless afford a mass of curious local information unattainable from any other source. They often throw much light upon the civil and political constitution of cities, their government and governors; the observances of religious ceremonies and the forms of worship peculiar to particular places; public games and festivals; the trades and professional occupations of the inhabitants; corporate bodies; military affairs; the erection of public buildings and their restoration; sepulchral memorials; and occasionally they preserve the name of a street or of some other locality. Unfortunately this class of ancient monuments, from its nature, has been the most exposed to mutilation and destruction. Even the Romans themselves did not always spare these records of their ancestors, as is proved by the fact that many of them have been extricated from the masonry of Roman buildings. But, in after ages, all that were above ground and accessible, being valued only for the material, were broken up whenever stone was wanted for any purpose to which it was applicable. The monuments of the latest times, being the more apparent, were less liable to elude the searcher's eye; and this may account for the comparative rarity of Roman inscriptions of a very late date. These important antiquities are also found more plentifully among the ruins of deserted towns and localities, and are but sparingly discovered in our chief towns and cities, where they must have been abundant.

There was yet another cause of destruction of works of art; and one, to some particular classes, especially calamitous. This was the exuberance of religious zeal, which aimed at the annihilation of every object of pagan worship, or which was likely to perpetuate or recall tendencies to paganism. The Christian ministers and missionaries had to encounter a deeply rooted superstition, reflected everywhere in the productions of the sculptor, the engraver and the painter, in the highways, in the byways, in the public temples and in the private dwelling. While they inculcated the worthlessness of the images and the evil nature of the beings these works were supposed to represent, they felt that reason and persuasion were but of little avail while the images and symbols of the popular belief were everywhere familiar to the eye; and they preached and practised the utter destruction of everything that could possibly imply paganism. The choicest productions of renowned sculptors equally with the rude cuttings of the village masons fell before this sweeping extermination. The sepulchral monuments which stood upon the sides of the highways in the suburbs of towns, were similarly condemned as the works of Satan,

especially when, as was often the case, they were accompanied by effigies, or ornamented with mythological representations and scenes illustrative of the profession or avocations of the defunct. Those only who have made the monuments of antiquity a special study, can at all form a notion of the extent to which, in the earlier days of Christianity, iconoclasm was carried. The writings of the old ecclesiastical authors are filled with narratives of this spiritual warfare; and these curious recitals are confirmed by the enormous number of mutilated works of pagan art recovered in modern times in a condition of disfigurement, which proves how systematically and effectually the iconoclasts laboured.

When we consider, lastly, the total absence, in the middle ages, of that feeling for the remains of antiquity which prevails among the better educated of the present day, the general indifference with which they are still regarded, and the natural consequences of this apathy, we have reviewed the main causes which have combined to efface in so many great towns all vestiges of the grander works of antiquity; vestiges which serve to create, when they do exist, an impression of their entirety, and permit the mind to renovate monuments from their ruins and picture them in their days of youth and glory.

London must be placed in the category alluded to in the foregoing remarks. Once the capital of the rich and fertile province of Britain; occupying a larger extent of ground than any other town in the island; and renowned for commerce, even in her early days, the ancient city has not retained the ruins of one of the public edifices which, we may suppose, must have been provided for so important a place; and the sites only of one or two can be reasonably conjectured. Even her walls, usually the last to fall before the levelling spirit of trade, have almost disappeared, reduced to misshapen, huge blocks of masonry, to be found with difficulty here and there, doing service as the walls of warehouses, stables, and cellars. Her citizens have ever been perfectly indifferent, with a very few exceptions, to such matters, so inconvertible to pecuniary profit; and they seem rather pleased to find some daring champion who will decry the glory and honour of Roman London, because he helps to shield them from their share of reproach, under the pretext that what never existed could never have been destroyed. The fragments rescued from the general wreck, which it is the object of this volume to collect together, will be viewed with an additional interest, from the very fact of the vast destruction that has befallen so many of the monuments which would have supplied us with some connective links towards the history of Londinium. If the remains which have been gathered from out of the grave of the ancient city could be seen in connexion with what has passed away, if they could be associated, in a restored view, with the place and its inhabitants,

then they might seem almost insignificant and worthless; but as the imagination alone can form such a picture, they must be accepted in their present condition as valuable evidence on the state of the population, of the arts, the industry, the manners and customs of Roman London.

The ancient writers who have in any way been called upon to speak of Britain, are singularly void of topographical information; and even the professed geographers, with the exception of Ptolemy, do not seem to have considered the remote province demanded more than a brief notice; and special localities are seldom mentioned. To Ptolemy, to the *Itinerary* of Antoninus, and to the *Notitia*, we are indebted for almost all we know respecting the Roman geography of Britain. It is to the historian Tacitus we are indebted for the earliest mention of London. From the invasion of Julius to the period at which Tacitus wrote, occurs an interval of a hundred and fifty years. We are introduced to Londinium, not as being then the capital of Britain, or even as a town endowed with the privileges and political rights of a colony, as Camulodunum, or of a *municipium*, as Verulamium, towns mentioned in connexion with Londinium. These three towns, in the reign of the emperor Nero (A.D. 61), were among the most distinguished in the province of Britain, if not the most eminent. Seventeen years previous, the emperor Claudius had reduced Britain into the condition of a Roman province. Nearly a century had elapsed since the invasion of Julius. During this long period, the island remained as Julius found it, under the government of petty kings or chiefs of tribes; nominally free, but in reality not wholly independent of the Romans who, during the reign of Augustus, had added Gaul to the provinces of the empire; and who, in all probability, derived advantages from Britain, if not in the form of a fixed and certain tribute, at least from mercantile intercourse. The inscription at Angora,[1] in Asia Minor, which is a summary of the public acts of Augustus during his reign, supplies, among other valuable information, that of British kings seeking the protection or countenance of the emperor, and confirms a statement to the same effect made by Strabo. Suetonius[2] relates that Adminius, a son of Cunobeline, on being defeated in an insurrectionary movement, fled to Caligula, then in Belgic Gaul; and on another occasion, Bericus, under similar circumstances, urged the Romans to espouse his cause.[3]

These occurrences, which transpired previous to the invasion of Claudius, prove that the British princes, or reguli, ever at war among themselves, were accustomed to rest upon Roman patronage, and in their domestic quarrels did not hesitate to

[1] For an elaborate account of this inscription consult the Rev. Beale Poste's "Coins of Cunobeline and of the Ancient Britons." London, 1853, J. R. Smith.

[2] Caligula, 44.

[3] Dion Cassius LX, 30.

invoke it as a last resort under difficulties. The treaties and friendship which the British princes readily secured from their powerful ally, contributed to foster Roman influence and civilization, and ultimately led the way to permanent subjugation.

To this period belong the coins, struck by order of the British kings. The importance of these minute but faithful monuments is well appreciated by the numismatic student, but it is not generally taken into proper consideration by the historian. It is a received axiom, that no work of art so fully sets forth the civilization of a country as the coinage; and ancient and modern times can furnish many examples of the truth of this proposition. The British coins are numerous, and many of them bear favourable comparison, in design and execution, with the contemporary productions of the Roman mint. They are, in fact, obviously founded upon Roman models; but at the same time they are by no means slavish imitations, as they evince in many respects originality of conception. A coinage such as the Britons issued during the reigns of Augustus, Tiberius, and Caligula, is a remarkable evidence of the beneficial results of the intercourse which followed the invasion of Julius. In the absence of any historical notices (and there are but few) the coins alone supply materials to enable us to form a conception of the progress made by the Britons in one of the greatest results of civilization. The establishment of a monetary system such as the Britons possessed, and the mechanical and artistic requirements which were indispensable to it, imply a well-founded policy at home and friendly relations with the imperial court at Rome. The British mints were, there is every reason to suppose, superintended by Romans; at all events it would be difficult to suppose the coins were not designed and engraved by Roman artists.

Of the three towns in Britain mentioned by Tacitus, two, namely, Verulamium and Camulodunum, were, as appears by the coins, places of mintage; but Londinium was not thus distinguished: the former were seats of regal power, the latter derived consequence solely from its commercial relations. If from the negative testimony of coins we thus draw conclusions as to the early condition of Londinium, in later times, from the same source, we deduce evidence of an opposite tendency. Before the reduction of Britain into a province, Londinium does not appear to have been dignified by a mint: under the Romans it is the only town in Britain in which this distinction is to be noticed, if we except the reigns of Carausius and Allectus. So far, then, as the evidence of coins goes, it is quite in accordance with the statement of Tacitus, that while in the reign of Nero, Verulamium was entitled a *municipium*, and Camulodunum had the distinction of being a *colonia*, Londinium was eminent as the chief place of trade. In the course of time the advantages of her situation appear to have led the way to her supremacy, not only over her early rivals, but also

over the whole of the towns of the province. The mint established in the reign of Constantine is almost of itself a conclusive proof of her claims to superiority; but other evidence will arise as we proceed.

In estimating the extent and condition of these three towns at the period in which Tacitus introduces them, it will be necessary to consider that in the course of the century which had elapsed since the invasion of Julius, they could not have remained in the state of towns such as those in Gaul and Britain are described to have been when the Romans first became acquainted with these countries. It is quite impossible to conceive that the southern Britons could institute a system of coinage, and engrave and strike elegant coins in huts: the manipulatory processes and the requisite establishments would necessarily demand, among other appliances, that of stone buildings. But a century is a long period of time for a people such as the Britons to advance towards civilization and refinement, unless we may suppose them far inferior in capabilities to the New Zealanders of the present day; and no one will imagine this to have been the case. When the emperor Claudius founded a municipium at Verulamium and a colony at Camulodunum, he must have found the towns of the Trinobantes already of considerable consequence; and it is hardly to be conjectured that Londinium, unless it had already advanced to some degree of consequence, could well have risen, in a comparatively brief space of time, to be spoken of as *copia negotiatorum et commeatuum maxime celebre;* and as contributing, in conjunction with Camulodunum and Verulamium, no less than seventy thousand citizens and allies to the fatal vengeance of the insurgent Britons. The historian divides the slaughtered inhabitants into *cives* and *socii*, or those who possessed the rights and privileges of Roman citizenship, and those who, whether Britons or foreigners, were in friendly alliance, and probably, for the most part, permanently settled, but not in all respects holding the full civic rights of the *cives*. It is probable that among the *socii* were many veterans, military allies, and numerous persons visiting Londinium from the continent for the purposes of trade and commerce.

Ptolemy, the geographer, who lived in the reigns of Trajan, Hadrian, and Antoninus Pius, places Londinium in the region of the Cantii. Recent discoveries have proved that the Roman city extended over what is now known as Southwark. In the time of Ptolemy communication with Britain was accelerated by the great military operations in the north of the province, and it is probable he was assisted in the compilation of his work by maps or surveys recently prepared. A person travelling through the territories of the Cantii, on arriving at the habitations and buildings on the south bank of the Thames might consider he was in Londinium. In the early Saxon period London seems to have been partly dependant on the kingdom of Kent.

The *Itinerary* of Antoninus is a document more satisfactory in relation to our subject, as it shows, in a direct and unquestionable manner, that many of the routes are regulated and arranged with reference to Londinium, either as a starting point or as a terminus. It is made the central or chief station to which the main military roads converge; and a map of Roman Britain based upon this *Itinerary* resembles one of modern England: in both the direction and tendency of the roads reveal the metropolis of the country. The third iter proceeds from Londinium to the Portus Dubræ (Dover); the fourth, from Londinium to the Portus Lemanæ (Lymne); the fifth, from Londinium to Luguvallium (Carlisle); the sixth, from Londinium to Lindum (Lincoln); and in the seventh, eighth, and ninth iters, Londinium is the terminus from Regnum (Chichester); Eburacum (York); and Venta Icenorum (Caister, near Norwich). In the rest of the fifteen iters, Calleva (Silchester) is the only town which is similarly distinguished: twice it commences a route, and twice it occurs as the terminus. The *Itinerary* of Antoninus may be considered to have been drawn up at some period not anterior to the reign of Antoninus Pius nor later than that of Caracalla; and to have received additions in after times.

In the reign of Diocletian and Maximian, Londinium was plundered by the Franks and other foreign mercenaries in the army of Allectus, after its defeat by the generals of Constantius. Eumenius, the orator, who gives a rather circumstantial account of the recovery of Britain after its seven years separation from the Roman empire, terms the city *oppidum Londiniense*.[1] The Franks and other barbarians (as Eumenius designates them), who seem to have constituted the main strength of the military establishment of Allectus, had no difficulty in gaining access to Londinium; when, foreseeing the consequences of the victory gained by the Romans, they loaded themselves with pillage and prepared for flight. Their intention was prevented by the sudden appearance of Constantius himself, who appears to have sailed up the Thames and disembarked under the walls of the city, taking the Franks by surprise and slaughtering them in the streets; thus affording to the citizens, as the writer expresses it, protection and the exhibition of a gladiatorial spectacle.

Under the dominion of Carausius and Allectus, gold, silver, and brass coins were struck in Britain, in great abundance and in a good style of art, with the exception of some which may be regarded as the hastily executed work of less experienced artists in the earliest days of the rebellion of Carausius. The places of mintage appear to have been Londinium (M.L.); Rutupiæ (R.S.R.); and Colonia or Clausentum[2]

[1] Panegr. Constantio. Cæs., cap. xvii.

[2] It is more probable that the coins of Carausius bearing C. or M.C. in the exergue, and those of Allectus with C. and Q.C., belong to Colonia. Those of the latter emperor bearing C. L., may indicate Londinium rather than Clausentum.