

ROMAN LONDON.

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I HAVE attempted in the following notes to sum up the present state of our information with regard to the history and remains of our city as it was before the coming of the English and Saxons. The task is not an easy one; too much, rather than too little has been written about the early history of London: and the accumulation of literature resembles that of the made earth above the old level. Full fathom five is it buried, and modern London, standing on the accumulated ruins of a succession of cities, can but peer down into the darkness of twenty centuries, and dimly discern a few broad facts, while all else is obscured by mystery, fable, and ingenious but embarrassing conjecture. Just as the city of the present day must be cleared away, so to speak, before we can find the older city, so the early history must be sought by sweeping at once out of sight all, or almost all, that we find in the mediæval and even in the recent works of historians, and an attempt be made to reconstruct for ourselves a new view of the subject, founded upon the few real facts which we can find. Lud and Belin, Troy-Novant, and Llyn Dinas must disappear, with St. Helena and her wall, Lucius and his church, and the Temple of Diana on the site of St. Paul's. We must cast aside tradition and everything built upon it. We must use theories and conjectures with the utmost caution, if at all, and go to work untrammelled and very much as if we have never heard of the place before. A very few documentary facts are beyond dis-

pute, and as we proceed it will be easy to bring them in where they come.

Upon looking at a map¹ we observe that a great many of the early roads pass through a point on the northern or left bank of the Thames. We observe further that some of these roads, contrary to the usual practice, do not come straight to the point, but seem to go out of their way to reach it. It strikes us at once that there must be a reason for this deflection, and a moment's observation of the geographical features of the district gives us the reason.

The narrowest place on the Thames for many miles above and below is at a little wharf adjoining Thames Street, and just opposite St. Olave's church, on the other bank. If the roads had to cross the Thames, it is but natural to suppose they would cross it there, and that a great city would be likely to grow at the crossing. But such a supposition would not be strictly correct, because, as we have seen, the roads went out of their way to get to this crossing.

Let us take the most remarkable example. The Watling Street is still traversed daily by thousands of people who have not the slightest idea that what they call Edgware Road was a highway at so remote a period that it may have been old in the days of Julius Cæsar. Now if, as we walk down Edgware Road towards the site of Tyburn Turnpike and the Marble Arch, we cast our eyes forward, we observe that the line of the houses in Park Lane runs on, so to speak, with that of the houses in Edgware Road. And if we follow the line thus given we find it reaches the Thames at a point in Westminster close to the Houses of Parliament, and nearly opposite St. Thomas's Hospital. There is an ancient road from that point, which traverses Surrey, and which possibly connected itself with the southern branch of the Watling Street from Dover to Canterbury. The point where that old road left the bank of the river is still called the Stan, or Stane, gate, as the road beyond was once called the Stane Street. But we are going too far afield, for it is worth remarking that all traces of the Watling Street

¹ There is such a map in the fourteenth volume of the *Archæological Journal*, made by Dr. Guest, to illustrate a learned paper on the old roads.

cease at the Marble Arch, and that instead we have a road which we name Oxford Street, running due east, called in the oldest document in which it is mentioned the "military way." It runs eastward until it comes to a stream called the Fleet, there it ascends a hill, winding a little on the slope, for the convenience of traffic, and then, turning a little to the south, it reaches the Thames at the place of which I have spoken, namely, Botolph's Wharf, opposite St. Olave's Church. If we look at a map of modern London, we see the only part of the old Watling Street which retains its original appellation, and observe that it runs along part of a line drawn from the crossing of the Fleet below Newgate to the narrow part of the Thames at Botolph's Wharf, and that on the opposite shore a lane still bears the name of Stony Street. Keeping these things, which are not conjectures, but facts, in our minds, we must conclude that the Watling Street and the Stone Street met across the river at the place of which I have spoken, that they formerly met at Westminster, but that, at some very remote period, a reason came into existence which made it convenient to cross the Thames at Botolph's Wharf rather than at Westminster. This reason must have been the building of a bridge. It has often been pointed out that, instead of being narrow opposite London, the Thames was once a lagoon or tidal lake, stretching from the base of the line of hills on which the city now stands to Nunhead. In process of time this lagoon was drained and embanked, the shallowest places were selected for driving piles, causeways were made from islet to islet, until the lagoon became an archipelago, and the archipelago firm ground. Then it was that the roads were diverted, the bridge built, and a Roman city founded on the south as well as on the north side of the Thames. When was this?

We are going a little too fast. It must be evident, if only from the course of the Watling Street, that in its earliest infancy London was not a place of much consideration. From a mere fishing village by the side of the Walbrook it may have grown by commerce—maritime commerce only—into a populous little town. It can have had no communication, except by ship, with the opposite side of the Thames, and must have been quite apart from

the course of either the northern or the southern end of the Watling Street.

Just here we come upon our first piece of historical evidence. We learn from Tacitus² that in A.D. 61 it was full of merchants and their wares, but was undefended by ramparts, and a place, except for its comparatively large population, of little military importance. It is evident that this could not have been said of a place which was the terminus of several roads, and at which the Thames could be easily crossed.

We are driven thus to the conclusion that there was a British town, as indeed its British name, still retained, proves, at some place not far from the modern site of London, and we learn concerning it that, though it was full of merchants and a great mart, it was not a colony, and was not worth the risk of defending it against Boadicea. When I call it a British town, I do so because of its name, and because, although it may have been largely occupied by Roman merchants, it had not grown up exclusively under Roman care.

As to its size at this time, it is as well to acknowledge that we know nothing, except that it must have been very small. Tacitus speaks of the massacre of seventy thousand people by Boadicea in the three towns of Camulodunum, Verulam, and London; and it has often been assumed that this expression points to a population of about 30,000. But it is impossible to draw any such conclusion from the text, and it is only certain that London was the least important of the three towns.

From the time of Tacitus history gives us no information about London for more than two centuries, and we are left to conjecture, from diggings and other investigations of the kind, what became of it. That such a place existed, in fact, is only proved by the remains which have been found. They are of various kinds, and for the most part give us few chronological data, for the discoveries have seldom been made by people who were not either ignorant of the subject or else biased by some preconceived theory of their own. If I purposely omit references to authorities it is because they are too many rather than too few, and

² *Annal.* lib. xiv. c. 33.

almost every line I write has been, at one time or another, the subject of fierce controversy.

All that appears certain, then, is that London very soon recovered from the ravages of the Iceni, and became a place of greater wealth than ever before. It is evident that a strong fortification surrounded it, and that it possessed extensive suburbs—that, in fact, it consisted of a fort, a harbour outside the fort, and the villas of the rich merchants.

It was still a very little place, and the best way of realising its features will be to walk round its site, which may be done within an hour at most. Let the perambulator take it for granted that London Stone marks the site of a gate in the western rampart; for though it has been removed from the middle of the roadway, it is still not very far from its original place. Let him then, with such a place as Richborough in his mind's eye, ascend from the valley of the Walbrook to the level of the ground above. Turning his face towards the Thames, he finds himself in an oblong walled space, extending along the brow of a line of bluffs from what is now Dowgate Hill on the west, to the place where Little Tower Street and Great Tower Street meet with a bend on the east. A great semi-circular bastion is at the south-western corner, extending from Scot's Yard beside the Cannon Street terminus, to Laurence Pountney Lane. Here the level ground seems to approach nearer the river, and the lanes leading down to Thames Street to be shorter and steeper. To the east there would be a strong wall, to the north another, defended by a wide and deep ditch full of water. Traces of this ditch remained for a thousand years or more in the neighbourhood of Lombard Street, and they were often looked upon as forming the bed of a stream which ran into the Walbrook. Streams do not flow up-hill, and though the English called this ditch a "bourne," and the ward which it traversed Langbourne, we can have little doubt in thus identifying it. The long bourn or ditch ran from the eastern end of the city to the declivity of Walbrook, all along the northern front, cutting it off from Fenchurch Street and Lombard Street, and turning south just behind the Mansion House, where Wren's beautiful little church of St. Stephen stands now. On the west side the ram-

part overlooked the valley of the Walbrook and the harbour at Dowgate. The whole oblong space was traversed by two great streets and a number of smaller ones. The main street ran along the line of Cannon Street; there was probably a market place in the centre, where Great Eastcheap was formerly, nearly on the site of King William's statue, and it was crossed at right angles at the eastern end of the market-place by the line of the present Gracechurch Street, which led up from the river, where there may have been a ferry—possibly even a bridge—but it is absolutely uncertain when the bridge was made.

As the town grew, the original fortified position became relatively smaller; the whole surrounding district was covered with villas, pavements were laid down, and hypocausts made as far out as Camomile Street on the north and Paternoster Row on the west. All kinds of remains have been dug up within the boundaries of the fortifications—all kinds except one. No interments were made within that space; no urns containing ashes, no coffins or bones are to be found, for the obvious reason that under Roman rule it was unlawful to bury within the walls of a city. The moment we get outside those walls we find sepulchral remains. They occur at St. Dunstan's Church on the east, they are frequent in Lombard Street, and the western bank of the Walbrook had several. In some places these graves have been covered with a mosaic pavement, or a roadway has been made across them; and when the present circuit of the city walls took in a space so much greater than that surrounded by the previous wall, numerous cemeteries were included. It is evident that the Roman or British inhabitants kept the law only in the letter and broke it in the spirit. It was probably just as hard to enforce sanitary regulations in the third century as it is in the nineteenth. The great size of the suburbs, their irregularity, the heterogeneous population gathered in them, must have been difficult elements to regulate. The Roman citadel frowned from the eastern hill, but diggings make it likely that opposite to it, on the western side of the Walbrook, were the huts of the aboriginal natives, who probably formed a troublesome class, excitable and fierce, and long in coming to that pitch of civilization of which the Roman boasted.

There are many traditions as to public buildings in this earlier Roman London, but we may safely set them all aside. We do not know where any great temple stood, and we may conclude from the absence of an amphitheatre coupled with other reasons, that the military element in the population was not great, and probably kept itself very much apart and within its fortifications. A great bath was near the river-side, and may have been a public institution, but no forum, no basilica, has been identified. Where the main street and that which led from the bridge, if there was a bridge, intersected each other, there may, as we have seen, have been a market-place. It has been observed that the Churches now or lately standing within this area bear the names of saints of the British and Roman Churches. But these names are common all over the later and larger London, and it would not be safe to conclude that they indicate the presence of a Christian community. That there were a few fine buildings is, however, proved. In the remains of the later Roman wall sculptured fragments are often found, indicating not only the existence, but the early destruction of the buildings for which they were originally executed. One reason for the disappearance of almost all vestiges of this kind must be sought in the universal use of wood for houses, and another in the probable use of brick only for buildings of a more permanent character. Whenever we find Roman remains in the city a layer of black ashes is above them, and sometimes there are two such layers. Fires frequently raged, and even without supposing that London was ever burnt like Canterbury or Anderida by the English invader, it is easy to understand that wooden houses would gradually disappear; while in a place devoid of building-stone brickwork would be constantly pulled down, and the old bricks used again in fresh buildings, until by degrees the older bricks would disappear, or be pounded up to make the new.

London up to the third century, then, like London at the present day, was essentially a city of suburbs. The long security of Roman rule had made it unnecessary to live within fortifications, and in this respect London has almost always differed from the great cities of the Continent. It is needful to bear this fact in mind if we would

understand the second historical fact which we have about it.

Before we go on to notice this fact, it may be worth while to attempt, if we can, to realise what London looked like at the end of the third century.

The two hills, of which the western is now crowned by St. Paul's, and the eastern by the Exchange, were then covered with houses, not so thickly set as now, but low villas of one story in height, surrounded by trees and gardens; on the eastern hill was the citadel, and close to it, and within its walls, the nucleus of the Roman city, with its market-place. On the western hill, and down the slopes of the Walbrook, were the fishing and ship-building part of the population; a poor quarter, probably using the little creek at Dowgate, while the greater merchants had their quays below the bridge and at Billingsgate. To the north, Cornhill and Threadneedle Street contained the better sort of houses, some being placed by the side of the great road which is now Bishopsgate Street, though not exactly on the same site, and some more irregularly on the two banks of the upper course of the Walbrook, which here wound through a deep ravine.

We may picture the Roman maidens tripping down the steps to the water's edge to fill great jars of Kentish pottery with their woollen skirts tucked close about them, where nowadays bank clerks hurriedly descend from Threadneedle Street to Broad Street and never think of the reason which makes the steps necessary. We may visit the market-place and see, at the point where now the Sailor King's granite pedestal forms a refuge from the wheels, some foreign slave merchant higgling with the driver who has brought a gang of wretched children from beyond the northern forests. We may perhaps be witnesses to a dispute between the merchants from Gaul and the Frankish mercenaries who were now frequent in the Roman service, and the guard may be called out, and the ringleaders of the disturbance taken before the centurion or the proprætor, who perhaps sends them on to York for trial, and writes with them such a letter as Claudius Lysias wrote to Felix. Or we may go on towards the river and get our money ready to pay the toll. The bridge is made of great beams, supported on piles, and we

must be careful lest our coin slips from our fingers as it will fall through the gaping boards into the stream. At the Southwark side we shall find fresh fortifications, a few houses, and the road to Canterbury banked up at both sides and defended by wooden walls against the inundations and the marshes.

Such was probably Roman London during a full half of the period of its existence. It is not the picture usually drawn: for we are accustomed to talk as if Roman London was always the same, and to forget that it underwent many changes, and only acquired the walls which still in part survive towards the end of the Roman occupation. That the bridge crossed the river very early and long before the greater circuit of the wall was completed there can, I think, be little doubt. When the foundations of the old bridge were taken up a complete line of coins, ranging from the republican period to Honorius were found in the bed of the river. Some of them may have been thrown in as a kind of religious ceremony, but many must have been dropped much in the way I have indicated above, and the completeness of the series found, comprising as it does, specimens elsewhere scarce, can only be accounted for on the supposition that the bridge, preceded perhaps by a rope or chain ferry, was very early thrown across the Thames.

And now we find London once more upon the page of history. And it is characteristic of the place that the mention of a great fog is the means of removing the mist which has so long hung over it. It was almost at the close of the third century, and Diocletian was emperor, and had associated Maximian with him in his government. Britain had long been under the power of Carausius who called himself "emperor," and trusted in the fleet which he had constructed at Boulogne, and with which he controlled Southampton, where his pier still exists, and other Channel ports. But the lieutenant of the emperors, the Cæsar Constantius, laid siege to the dockyards at Boulogne, and Carausius fled with his ships into Britain. There he was murdered by one of his officers, Allectus, who with an army formed from various sources, and comprising some Franks, endeavoured to defend his claims to the empire. But the general under Constantius, Asclepi-

odotus by name, eluded the vigilance of the fleet of Allectus by going to sea in a fog, landed in the west, and marched to meet the usurper. Allectus, thinking Asclepiodotus, if he came at all, must come through Kent, was waiting near London, and when he heard of the landing had only time to assemble some of his troops before Asclepiodotus was upon him. He was defeated and killed, and his Franks were driven back upon London. Had we any idea given us where the battle took place, it might help us to determine several questions as to the condition of London at the time. But we are in the dark, and can only conjecture as usual. Conjecture, then, leads us to suppose that if Allectus watched for the coming of Asclepiodotus through Kent, and if he had London open behind him, he must have been somewhere in Surrey, or along the line of the Old Kent Road, and must have marched westward, perhaps as far as one of the fords, Wallingford, or some other. There are remains of "Cæsar's Camp" on several hills west of London which would point to such occupation, and just as Belgium has been called the battlefield of Europe, so the country between London and Windsor merited at an early period the name of the battlefield of England.

When the Franks in the pay of Allectus found themselves free on his death, they made for London: and some historians have been surprised to find that they broke into the city easily and plundered the inhabitants. But we need not feel any surprise in the matter, if we remember, first that Allectus was in fact emperor till his defeat, and had London in his power, possibly in his occupation; and that, even if the citadel held out against him, which is very improbable, the whole of the vast suburbs were undefended, and lay open as a prey to the barbarous Franks. They amused themselves plundering and burning in mere wantonness, for they could have but little hope of ultimate escape from Asclepiodotus and Constantius, though it is asserted that they proposed to sail away with their spoils. However, the Roman general overtook them in the streets of London,—another fact which indicates its defenceless state,—and slew the most of them; no wonder that we read of the joyful reception given by the citizens to Constantius and his army, for order and strong govern-

ment must have been necessary to the mere existence of such a city. But Constantius did not stay. York was a place of much greater importance than London, and the Picts and Scots had begun to be troublesome. So of London we hear little or nothing in history for a second long interval. It is not so long as the first, but about half a century elapsed before the journey of Lupicinus, the lieutenant of Julian, who came over to repel an invasion of the northern barbarians. He started from Boulogne, landed at Richborough, and marched to London, but what he did further we do not know.

And now, once more, we must return to the diggings for our information: and they offer us one of the greatest of all the great puzzles which beset the early history of London. What is the age of the outer wall? Is it true that the wall and gates which came down to recent times accurately represented those of Roman London?

To both of these questions very positive answers may be found in most of the London histories; but if we say that the wall was built by Constantine, we say what may or may not be true; while if we say that the mediæval wall represented, in its situation, the Roman wall, we may be still nearer the fact; but if we go on, thirdly, to say that the gates, and the roads through them, were the same under the Romans and under Edward the Fourth, we shall be almost certainly mistaken.

To save time I will refer you for what has been said and may be said on these questions, to the papers of Sir William Tite, Mr. Taylor, Mr. Wright, Mr. Roach Smith, and the late Mr. Black, all of which are in the *Archæologia*, as well as to some separate tracts by Mr. Smith and Sir William, and will myself pass on to give my own conclusions without making further reference to the grounds on which they are founded.

We may, I think, assume with tolerable certainty that the present line of the wall was marked out about the time of Constantine and his family; and about the same time the name of the city, which must, after the building of the wall, have been one of the greatest in Britain, was changed to Augusta. In other words, London became for the first time an important Roman station, a centre of the civil and military organization inaugurated by Con-

stantine, and possibly, but not certainly, the occasional residence of the Vicar of the Emperor. We find a mint and money coined in London, and although the name Augusta hardly appears in history, and never without a reference to the older name, its existence proves at least that a great change had suddenly taken place in the estimation of the city. It is not likely that a new name would be given to an old city unless it had in some way been renewed; and if we could get the exact date at which the name was conferred, we might be able to assign an approximate one to the wall. This we cannot do, but by a comparison of two passages in Ammianus, it seems to have been somewhere between 350 and 369, that is to say, between the reigns of Julian II and Valentinian. This date answers very well to the coins found in and near the wall, which we may safely place, therefore, in the second half of the fourth century. In places where the foundations of the wall have been disturbed, as at Camomile Street, remains of a more ancient kind have been discovered underneath. Interments and pavements occur not only under the wall itself, but in many places within its circuit; and all must be attributed to a period before the wall was built and the city boundaries extended.

It is only by looking at a map that the great increase in the size of the city, since the building of the inner wall, can be estimated. The modern boundaries are almost precisely those which existed in the fourth century; for it is only by courtesy that Fleet Street can be reckoned in the city. This remarkable fact can be accounted for on one of two suppositions; either that the wall took in a great deal of ground not then covered by buildings; or else, that already the population to be protected was so large as to make London one of the greatest cities in Britain. But we must remember that the houses were probably only one storey in height, and that they may have spread over a large space of ground, especially as many of them partook rather of the character of villas than of town houses, and that some were no doubt surrounded by gardens and other grounds.

The wall commenced at Billingsgate, where probably there was a dock or water gate, for the ground on which the Tower now stands must then, and for long after, have

been under water. Signs of a wall have been seen along the edge of the Thames to the bridge, from the bridge to Dowgate at the mouth of the Walbrook, and thence to Blackfriars, or rather Ludgate; which, as its name imports, was then and long afterwards, a water gate. No Roman remains have ever been found along the line of Fleet Street and the Strand. A great fen extended from the mouth of the Fleet river to the site of the new Holborn Viaduct, and was not crossed by any Roman road. The only road to the west, that which, as I have said, was called afterwards the "military way," emerged from the city somewhere near Newgate, descended the deep (Snow) hill, crossed the river by the Holborn bridge, and ascended the opposite (Holborn) bill. The road may have early assumed that zigzag character which it long retained, but the exact site of the gate cannot now be determined. Until lately, indeed, its existence was denied; but remains, found a year ago, make it certain that somewhere between what is now Newgate Prison and the site of the old Compter in Giltspur Street stood the principal, perhaps the sole, western gate. Through it the Watling Street entered London, and made its way towards the bridge.

From the bridge also another great road took its way to the north. Whether the northern gate of London was at Bishopsgate, or a little to the south-east, it is impossible to say. The extensive remains found on several occasions in Camomile Street, make it very possible but by no means certain, that when the wall was repaired in the middle ages, as it was on more than one occasion, the Roman gate was abandoned and Bishopsgate built instead. The opening of Aldgate may have been a sufficient reason for this alteration. Let us, however, for convenience, speak of Bishopsgate as the northern entrance, and we shall see that two country roads came up to it, and meeting there passed on to the bridge through Bishopsgate Street and Gracechurch Street, or a little to the eastward to suit what was then the position of the bridge.

One of these two roads, when it left Bishopsgate, took its way nearly due north to Lincoln and York. The other tending eastward, crossed the Lea at Old Ford, which at that period was the lowest point at which a ford was safe,

and went onward towards Colchester. The modern road runs almost over the same ground, but shortens the way by crossing a little lower down at Stratford.

All round about this ancient gate was the great cemetery of the later Roman London. Graves have been found in the Minories, in Mile End Road, and in Spital Fields. One or two which have been discovered on Holborn Hill show that the Romans passed that way, but the passage of the Fleet probably made it inconvenient to carry their dead so far, and they are comparatively rare. But in Houndsditch, Finsbury, Shoreditch, Moorfields, Goodmans Fields, Whitechapel, and especially just outside the wall in Eldon Street, Liverpool Street, and Bloomfield Street, interments of all kinds have been discovered.

This may be the proper place to inquire as to the Christian Church in London under the Romans. A great deal of legend and invention has been spent on this as on other subjects connected with the early history of our city. But it is important to note that among the hundreds—I might, perhaps, correctly say, thousands—of interments found in and about London, not one bears distinct marks of being the burial of a Christian; and that among all the remains of other kinds, only a few bone pins with cruciform ornaments and a stamp or seal, found in the Thames, can be classed as having Christian emblems on them. A British bishop, Restitutus, said to be from the city of London, was at the council of Arles, in 314. But if there were Christians in London, they can hardly have been either numerous or influential. St. Peter's upon Cornhill is traditionally said to have been the seat of Bishop Restitutus, and the fifteen predecessors and successors assigned to him by the mediæval historians; but I am here endeavouring to deal only with what has been ascertained to be true, and it is remarkable that of the sixteen names alluded to above, not one occurs as the titular patron of a church. The existence of a church in Roman London, is therefore, a thing to be classed among those unproved possibilities, perhaps it would be safe to say probabilities, about which nothing positive can be recorded.

And now we come to the last documentary mention of

London by the Roman historians. In 368, Theodosius was sent into Britain to repel the Picts and Scots, who had begun to threaten London, and were plundering the surrounding country. Theodosius landed at Richborough, and finding the barbarians scattered about, defeated them in detail, restored the booty they had taken to its owners, and, reaching London, was joyfully received by the citizens who opened their gates to him. He rested his troops in the city for a short time, and then marched northward to complete the destruction of the savage invaders. These events took place in the reign of Valentinian. Theodosius was father to the emperor of the same name, who died in 395; and it was in the time of his successor Honorius, that the Roman legions, the second, posted at Caerleon, the sixth—which with the ninth—was at York, and the twentieth, which had its head-quarters at Chester, were withdrawn. The feeble emperor wrote a letter to the cities of Britain, exhorting them to guard themselves as best they could; and we have no further information. Although it is likely that until the last a very strong force was constantly in London, we know little for certain, and cannot even tell from which of the legions the troops of the proprætor were supplied.

London is not heard of again in history until after the arrival of Augustine, if we except a passage in the *English Chronicle* which makes it the refuge of the Britons defeated by Hengest at Crayford.

How the city fared during the great Anglo-Saxon invasion, we have little evidence, and that of a negative kind. That it enjoyed some years of comparative security after the departure of the Romans, we may perhaps conclude; but the history of its fate has yet to be written.

Although I have endeavoured to piece together the historical and monumental history so far, I fear that my attempt has been chiefly of a destructive character. If I have succeeded at all, it is only in showing that we know very little beyond the mere existence of the place. That it was ever the capital of Britain, as so many have asserted, can only be doubtfully proved for the period succeeding the reorganisation of the empire under Constantine and his successors. The remains discovered, plenty as they are, tell us very little in comparison with

what we know of other Roman towns. But we know enough to show us that far beneath the feet of the busy throng which presses every day the pavements of modern London, there exist the traces of an ancient city, buried in places to the depth of a dozen yards below the present surface ; and if a conjecture may be hazarded, it is that, from the days of Tacitus until now, there has been no cessation of that concourse of merchants, that crowd of foreign peoples, that activity and bustle, which have made it during nearly two thousand years a thriving commercial city, and rendered it at length, in the words of a foreign poet of the seventeenth century,

“ Cunctas celebrata per oras,
Cor mundi, mundique oculus, mundique theatrum,
Annulus Europes, præsignis adorea terræ.”

— *Wenceslai Clementis Trinobantiades*, lib. 1.