## BRITAIN A PROVINCE OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE AS TREATED IN THE HISTORY OF ROME BY THEODOR MOMMSEN.[1]

"*The provinces, from Cæsar to Diocletian.*" *Part* I., *chap.* V.

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This subject, from the pen of an authority so well-known and so eminent as the great German historian, must be of special interest to every English student, and claims particular attention from those who have directed their studies to the Roman remains in Britain, and to its history in the Roman period. It may therefore fitly occupy the attention of any learned body, and deserves very careful consideration from every antiquary, so that no apology is needed in bringing it before this meeting.

The learned writer begins by considering the cause of Cæsar's first landing in the island, and observes that "the bloody feud between the Prince Cassivellaunus and the princely house of Camulodunum (Colchester), had been the immediate cause of the Roman invasion; to reinstate this house Cæsar had landed, and the object was for the moment obtained." This, however, is not the only or the chief cause alleged by Cæsar himself, who states that it was in consequence of the aid which Britain had afforded to the Gauls in their contests against the Roman power "quod omnibus fere Gallicis bellis hostibus nostris inde subministrata auxilia intelligebat" (B. G. Lib. iv. 20.) The point next touched upon is the event in the Reign of Augustus, when King Dubnovellaunus came as a refugee to Rome, and sought the protection of Augustus, as recorded in the Monumentum Ancyranum (see also Strabo v. 5, 3, and Tac. Ann. ii. 24), and "one of the princes of the same house came to Caius Cæsar." These princes held rule in Essex, the country of the Trinobantes, and

[1] Read in the Historical Section at the Salisbury Meeting, August 5th, 1887.

Professor Mommsen regards these relations with Rome, as arising out of the guarantee of that principality given by Julius Cæsar (B. G. V. 20.)

The expedition to Britain in the time of Claudius (he observes) was a necessary part of the heritage left by Cæsar.

When the Monarchy had been consolidated in the days of Augustus, "all Rome expected that the Britannic expedition would take place," allusions to this may be seen in the classic poets of the Augustan age. But Augustus postponed the attempts, and it was not carried out in his time nor in that of his successor, but in the time of the Emperor Claudius. Mommsen enters fully into the probable circumstances of the delay, but he does not throw more light on the subject than can readily be gleaned from the expressions in Tacitus.

The conquest of the South and West of Britain previous to the coming of Claudius is very briefly dwelt upon, and no mention is made of Vespasian, who commanded the Second Legion, yet it is stated by Tacitus that no less than thirty encounters took place with the Britons, and the troops, under the command of Aulus Plautius, amounted to about 40,000.

A statement is made (p. 178) that Camulodunum, after the capture of the British City so named, was destined to be the capital of the province, when a colony of veterans was brought thither, but this is a mere supposition. There were towns of equal importance which sprung up about the same time.

Glevum or Gloster, was a colony which must have been planted not many years after, at the conclusion of the war with Caractacus. These "coloniæ" are on the opposite sides of Britain and nearly parallel, and within these limits were several important cities, such as Silchester (Calleva), which is shewn by the walls to have been of considerable extent. Recent excavations have opened out the entire forum, and shew the arrangements of all the public buildings. Houses within the limit of the city wall have also had their foundations laid bare, and the line of the streets and roads clearly ascertained. Cirencester (Corinium) is another city of importance, the walls being a mile-and-a-half in circuit. Here pavements

of extraordinary beauty have been laid open, and are still preserved.

Of these cities Aquæ Solis, or Bath, is the only one mentioned by Mommsen, the area of which (a mile) is less than the two just mentioned. Verulamium and Londinium are of course mentioned in reference to the revolt under Boadicea. The name of this heroine is written Boudicca, which seems to have been the true reading. A name somewhat similar appears in a stone of Roman date, preserved in the Museum at Aix les Bains, in Savoy, which leads to the supposition that it was a common female name among the Celts.[1]

Professor Mommsen remarks upon the early working of the British mines for lead. "Immediately after the Claudian Conquest began the profitable working of the British mines, particularly of the production of lead mines; there are British leaden bars from the sixth year after the Claudian invasion." It seems not at all improbable that these mines were in actual work when the Romans landed, and were only put by them under tribute. Along the whole line of the Mendip hills there exist a series of ancient or *pre-Roman camps* in the district of these mines, and although Roman camps and a Roman road are also remaining, and a great variety of Roman articles have been uncovered at the workings, yet it seems probable that as tin was worked in Cornwall in *pre-Roman times*, so lead was worked in other parts of Britain, but not to the same extent as under Roman rule. There are instances of British camps adapted to Roman use. There can, however, be little doubt that in the words of the Professor, "The stream of Roman merchants and artizans poured itself over the field newly opened up; and if Camulodunum received Roman colonists, Roman townships, which soon obtained formally urban organiza-

[1] The name usually written as *Boadicea* is probably *Bodicca*. It occurs in a Roman Inscription found in Africa. (Corp. In. Lat. Vol. viii, No. 2877). Also *Bodiccus*, on an inscription to a man of a cohort of *Brittones* in Pannonia (Vol. iii, No. 3256).

Boudicas, or Boudica, occurs in a Roman Inscription found in Spain (II, No. 455), and the name *Budic*, according to Professor Rys, was not an unusual one formerly in Brittany.

Bodvae, or Ubodvae, occurs on a dedication preserved in the Museum at Aix-les-Bains, in Savoy.

The first letters are difficult to read, but it seems to be

DEÆ VBODVAE
AVG
SERVILLA TEREN
TIA
S. L. M.

tion, were formed elsewhere in the south of the island, as a mere result of the freedom of traffic and of immigration."

Judging from the remains of Roman villas, from the extent and number of the towns, from the vestiges of ancient roads, and from remains of embankments against the encroaches of the sea—the south and west of Britain enjoyed security and repose in Roman times; but such was not the case with Wales and Northern Britain. The Silures and the Ordovices, in Wales, and the Brigantes in the north (Yorkshire), were not easily to be brought under Roman rule. Mona, or Anglesea, adjacent to Wales, was (as described by Professor Mommsen) the *true focus* of national and religious resistance.

What Britain had been to Gaul in Cæsar's subjection of that province, that Mona and Ibernia (or IVERNIA) became to Britain. As the Roman arms advanced, they afforded a refuge to those who sought independence. Mona was after much effort brought under Roman dominion, and so was Wales, but Ibernia (Ireland) remained untouched, a refuge for all who cared for Celtic freedom.

We owe the probable rise of one of the largest Romano-British cities to the long war waged against the Silures and Ordovices.

*Uriconium* (Wroxeter), once a city *three miles in circuit*, now reduced to a small village on the bank of the river Severn, near the point where the river Tern flows into it, manifests by its extent, and the remains found wherever its site has been excavated, the importance and the prosperity of the town. The mountain called the Wrekin, two miles distant, preserved the remains of an important British stronghold, which had preceded the Roman town, and may still have existed as a British settlement in Roman times. Professor Mommsen rightly designates the site of Uriconium, "the English Pompeii."

Excavations made there some twenty-five years ago, and recorded by Mr. Wright in his "Historical Account,"[1] and in the volumes of the *Archæological Journal*, amply justify the term, but the same interest which has unearthed the Forum at Silchester, and the same persevering spirit of enquiry, was

[1] See *Uriconium*, or the Ancient Roman City, by Thos. Wright, M.A., &c., &c.

wanting at Wroxeter; the greater part of the superficial area remains unexplored, but what has been laid bare seems to correspond with the plan and arrangement of buildings found at Silchester.

Professor Mommsen supposes this city to have originated in the camp of the fourteenth Legion. His words are, "Under the successor of Plautius, the camp of the fourteenth Legion was laid out at the confluence of the Tern with the Severn, at Uriconium (Wroxeter), not far from Shrewsbury, presumably about the same time that the camp of Isca (Caerleon) for the second, and to the North, Deva (Chester) for the twentieth Legion. These three camps shut off the region of Wales towards the south, north, and west, and protected thus the pacified land against the mountains which remained free." The only proof that Uriconium was occupied by the fourteenth Legion is the slender fact of a monumental stone to a soldier of that Legion being found there. This is very slight evidence, yet it may, nevertheless, be admitted as very probable, and rests much upon the same basis as a conjecture made by the late Dr. Guest, that London owes its rise to a camp of Aulus Plautius, the general of the Emperor Claudius. The extension of the city of Uriconium probably effaced the traces of the first Roman camp, as none at present appear; or the station may have been abandoned on the formation of camps at Caerleon and Chester. The fortifications of Uriconium are very irregular, and what remain appear to have been done at a late period.

It is interesting to an English student of Roman Britain, to ascertain the opinion of a learned German respecting the much controverted passage of Tacitus (Ann. xii, 31), (P. Ostorius) . . . Cuncta Castris ad . . ntonam et Sabrinam fluvios cohibere parat. (Some MSS. read castris antoam), and some, I believe, Antonam, and this has been supposed to be the river *Nen*, in Northamptonshire, or the river *Avon* in Warwickshire, or the *Bristol Avon*, or the *Avon* in Hampshire, so widely do all authorities differ; but it is certainly a new idea to assign it to the Tern!

The Tern is supposed to be the *Tren* of the Welsh Bard Llywarc Hèn, and to have given name to a city that stood on its bank and which was destroyed, as pictured

by the Welsh Poet, and Dr. Guest in his paper on "The English Conquest of the Severn Valley" regards the valley of the Tern, which was well populated and had a stronghold called "Bury Walls," near Hawkstone, as the country invaded by Ceawlin in later times. The only camp I know of in the course of that river (beyond Uriconium, which Ceawlin is supposed to have sacked), is the strong camp near Hawkstone, which seems of Roman construction, and is placed midway between the Tern and the Roden. Having spent some years of my life in that part of Shropshire, and devoted some attention to its camps and earthworks, I do not think that the *two* camps at Wroxeter and Bury Walls quite satisfy the description of Tacitus.

The account of Caractacus, and the noble defence of his Country, as well as his undaunted bearing before the Emperor Claudius when led captive in the triumphal procession at Rome, is hardly treated by Mommsen with the energy which it deserves; he seems to have expended more effort upon the details of the revolt under Boadicea. He pictures faithfully the injustice of the government of Nero, and the misconduct of the veterans of Camulodunum.

"Roman ministers who trafficked in money, drove the Britannic communities one after another, to bankruptcy," and opportunity of revolt was taken while the Roman Governor Paullinus was absent in Mona, and "his attack on the most sacred seat of the national religion exasperated men's minds, and helped to pave the way to insurrection. The old vehement Celtic faith, which had given the Romans so much trouble, burst forth once more, for the last time, in a mighty flame."

The Professor observes in a note that "a worse narrative than that of Tacitus concerning this war (Ann. xiv, 31—39) is hardly to be found even in the most unmilitary of all authors . . . . . The important facts mentioned in the life of Agricola (31) are wanting in the main narrative, especially the storming of the camp.

"That Paullinus coming from Mona should think not of saving the Romans in the south-east, but of uniting his troops is intelligible, but not why, if he wished to

sacrifice Londinium, he should march thither on that account."

In examining the position of the Roman forces at the time of the outbreak, it seems most probable that Paullinus, returning from Mona, desired to concentrate his forces at Uriconium, to unite there the Legion stationed at Isca (Caer Leon) with that stationed at Deva (Chester).

The second Legion did not obey the call. He was left, therefore, to begin his march with 10,000 men, composed of two Legions, stationed at Deva and Uriconium, the fourteenth and twentieth being incomplete. The Roman road across the island points direct to London. There is no direct Roman road to Camolodunum (Colchester). The route taken by Paullinus must have been the marching road by which he had passed to Uriconium. This, on his return, would bring him straight to Verulamium, thence to Londinium, both of which were important points, but not capable of easy defence with the force at his command, nor could he afford to weaken that force by leaving garrisons there. From Londinium he passed to the chief seat of rebellion, along the marching road from Londinium to Camulodunum. The country here is much more suitable for the operations of a small body of men than the open plain. There is a ridge of high land along which the Roman road now passes. It was on the side of this ridge that the battle was fought, and the ground selected with much care by the Roman general. It was the selection of the ground which decided the victory.

The exact site of the battle has not yet been ascertained for want of careful investigation ; but it might probably, by further examination, be discovered.

In the earlier period of Roman Conquest the marching roads of the Legions must have followed, for the most part, the old British trackways, which were chiefly determined by the features of the district.

The country, at present, being cleared of forest and much better drained, we cannot but wonder at the skill that planned and executed the Roman lines of military road. If an accurate plan of all the Roman roads which can be traced could be laid down, it would help us greatly in determining the exact position of places

mentioned in the Itinera. Hitherto this has only been done piecemeal.

We must now pass on to consider a statement which, I think, shews but a superficial acquaintance with the subject treated of, and this is the assertion that "the *complete absence of Roman traces in the interior of Wales*, and the Celtic nationality maintaining itself there up to the present day, tell in favour of this view," viz., that the Welsh retained much of their national independence by reason of their contiguity to Ireland.

That a race of mountaineers inhabiting a poor country are subjugated with more difficulty than a rich and fertile land, is very true; but when we look to Wales, we find a Roman road from Isca Silurum following the sea coast of South Wales till it comes to Muridunum (Caermarthen), and thence passing on direct to St. David's Head (Prom. Octapitarum). From Muridunum a Roman road passes. all along the western portion, not far from the sea, to Conovium (Caerehun), on the Conway, and another passes through that station from Segontium (Caer Segont) (Carnarvon) to Deva.

On the east there is a well ascertained road from Isca to Uriconium, and another through Bovium (Bangor) to Deva. There are five roads passing into the interior, and one penetrating through it. It is only of late years that attention has been paid to their traces, and the stations have been examined, but there is no country which will reward the labour of investigation better than Wales, because the traces of the roads and stations have been less interfered with by agricultural improvements, and are there more distinctly shewn than elsewhere.

The members of the Cambrian Archæological Society would do well to enlighten learned foreigners on this subject, and also to shew what traces of Roman influence still remain in the Celtic language. A curious instance of defective information in respect to the language of England occurs at the conclusion of Professor Mommsen's article. He says that "in Modern England, apart from *Wales* and *Cumberland*, the old native language has disappeared," thus supposing that the Celtic tongue still survives in *Cumberland* as well as in *Wales*! I am not aware that in the Cumberland mountains any trace of it

exists *as a spoken language*, though mountains and rivers retain their Celtic names. The original language, like the Old Cornish, has entirely died out. The Cumbrian dialect, like other dialects in England, has its peculiarities, but it is essentially English.

I do not know upon what authority the Professor places the camp of the Ninth Legion at *Lincoln*—the Roman colony of *Lindum*. That it was an important point of Roman occupation cannot be doubted, and ran parallel with Deva (Chester), securing the eastern side of the island, as Deva the western, and marking a further advance of Roman power in the island; but there is very little proof that it was occupied by the Ninth Legion. Two memorials of this Legion have been found at Lincoln and one at Leicester, and we trace it further north at Aldborough and at York; and again with Agricola in his campaign against the Caledonii, but it seems doubtful if Lindum was its location.

The campaigns of Agricola, and the part which he accomplished in Britain are only briefly sketched in the history of the Roman province of Britain, but the interesting question as to *why* the Roman government did not wholly subdue the Caledonii is debated at length. "In a military point of view the occupation was capable of being carried out, as Agricola had conceived it, beyond doubt without material difficulty. But the consideration might turn the scale, that the Romanizing of the regions still free would have to encounter great difficulty on account of *diversity of race*. The Celts, in England proper, belonged throughout to those on the continent; national name, faith, language were common to both . . . the natives of Ireland and Scotland belonged to another stock, and spoke another language . . . . the Caledonians and the Iverni, with whom the Romans hardly came into contact, are described as barbarians of the wildest type."

The reason why conquest was not pushed beyond the boundary of the Tay, seems to have been that the country and the people were not accounted worth the effort.

In a note, is a quotation given from Appian (proem. 5), in which it is stated that "the imperial finance-official

under Pius, remarks that the Romans had occupied the best part of the British Islands."

The researches of our northern antiquaries on the line of the wall, and the district between the wall of Hadrian and the earthwork of Antoninus Pius, have enabled the German historian to speak very circumstantially on these points, and his observations will be read with much interest. It would be too long to enter upon a critique of this part of his treatise, or his observations on the wars in Britain in the second and third centuries.

He remarks that, "Under Hadrian a severe disaster occurred in the north, and to all appearance a sudden attack on the camp of Eburacum, and the annihilation of the Legion (the Ninth) stationed there, the same which had fought so unsuccessfully in the war with Boadicea. Probably this was occasioned, *not by a hostile inroad*, but by the revolt of the northern tribes that passed as subjects of the Empire, especially the Brigantes."[1] To this he ascribes the probable reason that the "wall," or continuous line of defensive works between Newcastle and Carlisle, is fortified on *both sides*, presenting a front to the south as well as the north, and was evidently intended to keep in check the imperfectly subjugated population of the north of Britain, dwelling to the south of the wall, as well as those on the north of it.

A mystery has always hung over the disappearance of the Ninth Legion after the year A.D. 108, and it is generally believed to have been incorporated into the Sixth, if not wholly annihilated. Allusions are made to a rising in Britain in the time of the Emperor Antoninus Pius (138—161), who is stated[2] (Pausanias VIII, 43-4) to have deprived the Brigantes of a great portion of their land, because they had begun to over-run the territory of the Genuni, tributaries of the Romans. By the name Genuni is probably meant the Gadeni, a tribe bordering on the wall of Hadrian to the north, and between the rampart of Hadrian and that of Antoninus Pius. The

[1] M. Aurel. *Antoninus* succeeded to the Empire 161. (Britain's Conquest).
The seat of war seems to have been between the two walls. The Caledonii broke through the first. (Glasgow and Edinburgh).
Disturbances under Commodus. Barbarians broke through the barrier and attacked the Romans.

[2] See note p. 188. Mommsen, H. R. Prov. 1.

name of the Selgovæ, another adjoining tribe, still survives in the Solway Firth.

The value of the great northern barriers is fully recognized by Professor Mommsen, for, while he regrets the paucity of historical information, he gathers sufficient to confirm the assertion that, "although in the region lying between the two walls of Antoninus Pius and Hadrian," the Roman system never gained a firm footing; yet, at least, the wall of Hadrian seems to have rendered the *service for which it was intended*, and the foreign civilization seems to have developed in security behind it. In the time of Diocletian we find the district between the two walls evacuated, but the Hadrianic wall occupied still as before, and the rest of the Roman army in cantonments between it and the head quarters at Eburacum (York), to ward off the predatory expeditions of the Caledonii, or, as they are now usually called, the Picti (tattooed), and the Scoti streaming in from Ivernia."

In treating of the campaign of Severus against the Caledonii, Professor Mommsen, in a note, questions the assertion of Dio Cassius (lxxvi, 13), that the Romans lost 50,000 men in the expedition, or that Severus had the design of bringing the whole north under the Roman power; he regards it incompatible with the building of the wall and the elaborate fortifications at each of the "pretentura." It seems certain that Severus fully intended to revenge the wrongs suffered by the Roman captives and allies at the hands of the northern people, and dealt out his threatenings with no sparing hand, but (he observes) had lasting occupation of Caledonia been intended, the policy of Rome would never have allowed his sons to form so hasty a treaty with the enemy after the death of the Emperor A.D. 211.

The Professor estimates the army of occupation in Britain, in the days of Trajan and Hadrian, at about 30,000 soldiers. "Three legions must have been indispensible, as no attempt was made to shift them," and to these must be added the auxiliaries.

In the time of the Emperors mentioned, *six* alæ and *twenty-one* cohorts were stationed in Britain besides the Legionary soldiers. "Britain (he observes) was from the outset a field of command of the first rank; inferior to

the two Rhemish commands and to the Syrian, perhaps in rank but not in importance, and towards the end of the second century probably the most highly esteemed of all the Governorships."

The division between the upper and lower provinces of Britain is a point not quite agreed upon by students of Roman-British history. Mommsen considers that the Emperor Severus divided the governorship, and that the two legions of Isca Silurum and Deva were placed under the Legate of the *upper province*, and the troops at the walls and the main body of the auxiliaries under the Legate of the lower province.

For this division his authority is Dion Cassius (iv, 23),[1] The *upper province* was, therefore, the district of Wales, and the country bordering the Severn—*the lower*—was the southern, eastern, and northern portion of the island.

The internal development of Britain, under the Romans, is a matter of much interest, and has been fairly and impartially handled, but it appears defective, and much more might be gathered up if a better examination of sites occupied in Roman times could be undertaken. He observes that " the internal condition of Britain must, in spite of the general faults of the Imperial Government, have been, when compared with other regions, not unfavourable. If the people in the north knew only hunting and pasturing, and the inhabitants there were always ready for feud and rapine, the south developed itself in an undisturbed state of peace, especially by means of agriculture, cattle rearing, and working of mines.

The Gallic orators of Diocletian's time praise the wealth of the fertile island, and often the Rhine Legions received their corn from Britain. The network of roads (he observes) was uncommonly developed, except in Wales; but I have already observed that in this idea he is mistaken, as traces remain in most accessible parts of Wales. He regards the financial cost of maintaining the army in Britain to have been greater than the revenue derived from it, but that the military strength of the

[1] Dion Cassius, Lib., lv., s. 23, speaks of the second Augustan Legion as wintering in *Upper* Britain, and of the Sixth Legion, called Victrix, as in *Lower* Britain; and the Twentieth, Valeriana Victrix, in *Upper* Britain.

Empire was much benefited. "The balance of proportion between taxation and levy must have had its application to the island, and the British troops were reckoned alongside of the Illyrian as the flower of the Roman army at the very beginning. Seven cohorts were raised from the natives, and were constantly increased onward to the time of Hadrian . . . . There was an earnest and brave spirit in the people; they bore willingly the taxes and the levy, but not the arrogance and brutality of the officials."

With respect to mental culture, and advancement in learning and social cultivation, as well as progress in arts, such as building and the Ceramic art, there can be little doubt—enough of the latter remain to our time from which we can infer the progress—though, alas, too much has perished!

Mommsen observes that, "If Agricola exerted himself to transplant municipal emulation in the embellishment of native cities by buildings and monuments in Britain, and induce the Islanders to adorn their markets, to erect temples, and palaces, he was only partially successful," but the recent discoveries made in Bath, the excavations made at Wroxeter and at Silchester, the remains that have been exposed at Cirencester, Lincoln, Caerleon, and other cities of importance, put a very different face on this matter. Could systematic investigations be made in those portions of the sites of Roman cities which to a great extent remain untouched, much truer information as to their former condition and civilization might be acquired.

We must be thankful that so learned a scholar, and a hand so competent, should have been found to treat of the early history of our Island, and if the information provided is but imperfect, and the means of obtaining more is encompassed with difficulty, still the result is very valuable. It certainly suggests that *more may be done*, but it classifies and well arranges what is known, and points out to those who come after the way to more perfect knowledge.

We can at this present day, however, compare Britain as a Roman province with Britain as an empire. We can see the work of development that 1700 years has brought about. If Roman colonies, then planted in

Britain, became the first step towards England's greatness, we see how successive changes have ripened it into a great empire, founding colonies in every portion of the habitable world, and daily extending a power and influence far beyond any exercised by Imperial Rome.

We see above all the *difference of principle* by means of which power and influence have been extended, and can look forward to a still greater extension of those principles of liberty and justice, on which any permanent empire must be based.