XXVI.—*THE BELGIC TRIBES IN BRITAIN: Communicated to the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, by* JOHN HODGSON HINDE, Esq.

ALTHOUGH the British Isles are mentioned by two or three Greek authors, the earliest information we possess regarding their inhabitants is derived from Cæsar, who says—

"The *interior* part of Britain is inhabited by a race which is traditionally reported to be indigenous, the *maritime* part by those who have come over from Belgium, for the sake of plunder, and the prosecution of war. The latter have generally retained the names of the states from whence they originally came, and having concluded the war, have remained, and applied themselves to agriculture."

The original inhabitants, who are here described as indigenous, have been generally admitted to have been of Celtic origin, of the same race as the ancient inhabitants of Gaul, and, in the days of Herodotus, of Germany also.

As regards the Belgæ, considerable difference of opinion has prevailed, both as to their descent, and the extent of their settlements in Britain. I propose, in the first instance, to consider the second point, chiefly on the data supplied by Cæsar himself. If we take the statement above quoted in its widest sense, we may assume that the whole of the coasts of Britain were occupied by the Belgæ, and that the Celtæ had been confined altogether to the interior; but we must remember that Cæsar's knowledge of the island was confined to a very limited district, and that even the fact that it was an island, although it was believed as early as the time of Aristotle, was not ascertained till the date of Agricola's conquest. That Cæsar attached to his expression no such extensive meaning is obvious from

another passage, in which he clearly defines his own understanding of the maritime district, which he confines to the country lying between the Channel and the Thames. "The river Thames," he says, "about eighty miles inland, divides the kingdom of Cassibellaunus from the *maritime* states." In another place we are told of four kings in the maritime regions (ad mare—regionibus), one of the kingdoms only, Cantium, or Kent, being mentioned, but the names of all the kings. This omission is supplied by Ptolemy, in whose geography we find exactly four states located between the Channel and the Thames, the most eastern people being, in conformity with Cæsar's account, the Cantii; beyond whom were the Regni, Atrebates, and Belgæ, the names of the two last of whom afford a remarkable confirmation of the previous statement, that the colonists were accustomed to retain the names of the states from which they came. The Regni, probably, in Cæsar's time, as well as the two others, preserved their Belgic appellation, which was afterwards exchanged for Regni, and their capital called Regnum, nor are we altogether without information on which to form a conjecture at least as to the reason of the change. The *Town* of Regnum is not mentioned by Ptolemy, but occurs in the Itinerary of Antoninus, from its position in which it has been identified with the site of modern Chichester. Now in Chichester a very remarkable inscription has been discovered, on which occurs a name which, although the two first letters are wanting, may with reasonable confidence be read Cogidubnus. We know from Tacitus that an individual of this name existed in his time in Britain, in whose favour the Romans had established or maintained the existence of a kingdom, instead of absorbing the territory into the province, which was under their own immediate government. Nothing is more likely than that a kingdom, allowed to exist under circumstances so exceptional, should have been emphatically designated Regnum, and Regni have been substituted for the proper name of its inhabitants. After Cæsar, the British Belgæ are nowhere mentioned, except by Ptolemy, and in the Itinerary of Antoninus, and in both cases the application is restricted to the particular tribe to which the name specifically belonged; the most westerly of the four indicated by Cæsar.

It may be said that admitting Cæsar's acquaintance with the tribes of Belgic origin in Britain to be confined to four, we have no evidence that

others did not exist with which he was unacquainted; but, on the other hand, neither Cæsar nor any other author can be cited as authority for the existence of more extensive settlements of these people. That the immediate neighbours of the four tribes to the north were not Belgians is abundantly evident. These were the subjects of Cassibellaunus, whom, from their position to the north of the Thames, at the point where it first becomes fordable, we may readily indentify with the Cateuellani of Ptolemy. The subjects of Cassibellaunus, as we have already seen, were distinct from the people of the maritime regions, and these last only were known to Cæsar as of Belgic origin.

Again, we have no precise evidence that the two tribes which lay to the extreme south-west of Britain, beyond the four maritime states known to Cæsar, were not Belgic, but circumstances are known to us which render it extremely unlikely. When the invasion of Britain took place in the reign of Claudius, no opposition appears to have been offered by the Belgic states, but when Plautius, the Roman general, got beyond the limits which we have assigned to them, he met with a vigorous resistance. His successor, Ostorius Scapula, deemed it advisable to construct a chain of forts from the Avon to the Severn, in order to separate the Roman province from the hostile Britons. The Avon is a small river in Hampshire, which discharges itself into the British Channel near Christchurch, and a glance at Ptolemy's map of Britain will shew that a direct line drawn from its mouth across the intervening country to the Severn, leaves all the towns of the Belgæ on one side, and those of the two south-western states, the Durotriges and Dumnonii, on the other. If the tribes on either side had been kindred and friendly, it is natural to suppose that this forcible separation would have been resented by the Belgæ, but such was not the case. The Iceni, however, took instant offence, and though they had hitherto been in alliance with the Romans, they headed a formidable confederacy against them. Looking at the geographical position of the Iceni on the east coast, and of the two other tribes in the remotest district of the west, separated by the entire breadth of the island, we can only account for their sudden and energetic resistance on the presumption of a common nationality, which did not exist as a tie between either of them and the intervening Belgæ.

There is one tribe, the Trinovantes, to which the considerations which have been adduced in disproof of a Belgic origin may appear to apply less forcibly than to others. They were certainly a maritime state, although not included in the "maritime district," as defined by Cæsar, and their country was almost as easily accessible from Belgian Gaul as the district on the other side of the Thames. At the time of Cæsar's invasion, the Trinovantes were subject to the Cateuellani, and if they had so remained, the Belgian element north of the Thames must at any rate have been confined to this one subject state, but Cæsar takes credit for having restored their independence, and reinstated their native king Mandubricius. Again, however, we find the Cateuellani and Trinovantes, with their respective capitals Verulam and Camulodunum, under the same government; first, under Cunobellinus, some of whose coins are minted at one city, and some at the other, and secondly, under his son Togodumnus, the predominant British king at the time of the second Roman invasion, in the reign of Claudius. Now, either the Trinovantes must have returned to the yoke of the Cateuellani, from which they had been emancipated by Cæsar, or they must in turn have subjected their old oppressors. On the latter supposition only can we admit the theory of extensive Belgian conquests, even if we concede that the Trinovantes were a Belgic tribe. The opposite assumption, however, is not only intrinsically more probable, but it is alone reconcileable with an intimation of Dion Cassius which seems decisive on this point. Speaking of Plautius, he says, "He overcame first Cataratacus then Togodumnus, the sons of Cunobellinus, who was now dead. These taking to flight, he made terms with part of the Boduni (Dobuni), who were under the dominion of the Cateuellani." If the Dobuni were subject to the Cateuellani, the latter, and not the Trinovantes, must have been the dominant people, and there is no pretence for claiming Cunobellinus as of Belgic race. It is possible that the Trinovantes, in addition to the four tribes south of the Thames, may have been of Belgian lineage, but they were without power or influence, being from our first acquaintance with their name in subjection to their powerful neighbours.

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