

## RECENT ARCHÆOLOGICAL PUBLICATION.

[*The Editor will be glad to publish under this heading notices or reviews of new books either directly relating to the County or of general Archaeological interest: communications may be addressed to him at the Castle Arch, Guildford.*]

*The Stane Street.* A Monograph. By Hilaire Belloc. London: Constable & Co., Ltd. 1913. 7s. 6d.

The picturesqueness of Surrey, and of Sussex, has led to the multiplication of books about them in all their aspects. They are counties which it is pleasant and easy to explore, and they lend themselves to artistic treatment by pencil and pen. This is pre-eminently a picturesque book. The illustrations are very pretty, even if some of them have little or nothing to do with the subject. The skill of Mr. Hyde, who illustrates it, is well enough known. Nor does the matter lag behind. Mr. Belloc is a practised and a pleasant writer. His knowledge, and his varied experiences, enable him to treat every subject in an interesting manner. His dissertation flows on easily from page to page, and in a region of conjectures the reader is not likely to resent if he discovers that the hypothesis of one chapter becomes the firm foundation for the suppositions of the next. A vivid description is given of the course of the road where it is visible, and valuable suggestions are thrown out to explain the constant diversion of an ancient way at those very critical points where a hasty observer would suppose that they are most likely to remain in use. An ancient road-maker bridged a stream or threw a causeway across a marsh. His more barbarous successors were not clever at making bridges and causeways, yet at these very points they have abandoned the old line. The causeway sank in the marsh, and the bridge fell down. The engineering skill of Anglo-Saxons was not sufficient to restore them. There was no great through traffic left, and the rustics who wanted to go from farm to farm sought out divergent passages of marsh and river, where some hard bits of soil, or big stones, enabled them to pick their way, or jump, on foot or on horseback. The road was no doubt engineered originally by means of marks upon hills, as Mr. Belloc describes. Chichester was at one end of it and London was at the other. But it seems to us an assumption that it was a Roman way made independently of any previously existing British track through Surrey. Through the Weald there is nothing to show that it was not a new road. But over the Downs, from Juniper Hill to Epsom Racecourse, it has very much the appearance of an ancient British track following the higher part of a hill, and curving to the east with the curve of the

high ground. There is no reason for disconnecting the origin of the straight bit south of Thirty Acres Barn from the origin of the part north of that point which bends to the east. We do not say that the Romans did or did not connect up an old track-way and make it a hard and a straighter road. But appearances suggest that they may have done so. Mr. Belloe candidly admits that if the road went straight on by Cheam, and Morden Park, and Merton, evidence of it does not remain. But he is quite sure that it did. It may have done so, or it may have gone elsewhere. Possibly many Roman roads existed which are now lost, for the various houses and settlements were presumably made accessible by roads of some kind. Streatham has a good claim to having been on a Roman "street." The Roman remains at Ashtead, which are quite as good a *mansio* as the enclosure at Hardham, or as the one which was at Aldfold Dean, or as the one which this book describes, but no remains, nor memory, suggest as having been at Dorking, are quite away from the existing road called Pebble Lane. It is a supposition that the road was made solely for military purposes. There is no record of Chichester being a military port, nor of London being a garrison. The former had walls, the latter apparently had not, during the greater part of the Roman occupation. But there were several roads through the Weald, for the most part recoverable in only short sections here and there, which may have usefully linked up the ports on the Sussex coast with the Thames Valley and the crossings of the river. We are not in possession of sufficient evidence to pronounce certainly upon their purpose.

For the members of an Archeological Society, as distinct from seekers of a pleasing narrative, we may point out that this sufficient evidence is the thing to be desired, and that at present it is not complete. It is still being collected. But some is in existence, and makes some of the suggestions here advanced quite untenable. For instance, the Roman road continues in use north of Ockley till near Buckinghill Farm. Here we are given an explanation for the divergence of the later road. People, we are told, went off to the right because the old line went up hill to about 460 to 470 feet above the sea, and they preferred to turn the hill by going out to Beare Green and the Holmwood road eastwards. But they did nothing of the kind till the Act of 1755 made two miles of turnpike road connecting the Stane Street and Beare Green. There may have been a track in the clay here before, but it was not the high road. That turned off to the left, to the westward of the Stane Street, and it went very much more up hill than the latter did, to 760 or 770 feet at Coldharbour, and down a break-neck ravine to Dorking. Why people preferred it we cannot imagine, but it was not to avoid a hill. This was the high road, the *via regia* of the Court Rolls, the highway between London and Chichester depicted by Ogilby under Charles II, the road which Dr. Burton followed, and describes in Greek in 1752.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Unless he diverged still further west. See article in this volume  
But, at all events, he did not go by Beare Green.

Again, we read here that the line of the Roman road and of the present road over the Holmwood approach very closely near Holmwood Smithy, "so very near that we must imagine the two to have converged in former times." Unfortunately, the Holmwood road, up to about 1835, when it was remade on its present line, used to run at this point about a furlong further away from the Roman line, to the east. Where it ran in the Middle Ages, if there was any road at all, we do not pretend to say. But there is no reason for imagining that it ran in its present course.

In Dorking town the conjecture here advanced is unsupported by the evidence, but this evidence, imperfect still, is, so far as we know, unpublished. The theory says that for about 600 yards the Roman road was on the line of the modern road, which used the Roman cutting through Flint Hill, to where the ways turn off right and left, towards the Water Works and the Nore respectively. Thence the book takes it in a straight line over the broken slopes under the west front of the Work House, across the steep declivity on the west side of Rose Hill, to an imaginary *mansio*, which must have been, but which is not to be found, at the junction of the three main streets of Dorking. The track would be a remarkable "switch-back" to select, and has never been verified by remains. Remains of a road have, we believe, been found upon another line, perhaps upon two other lines, but not upon this one; and Roman coins have been found nearly half-a-mile away from the supposed *mansio*, near Cotmandene, and over three-quarters of a mile away, in Pixham Lane. The latter find is recorded in *Surrey Archaeological Collections*, Vol. XXIV.

Time and patience may reveal something more some day about the lines of the road in Dorking, and also beyond Epsom Downs. Meanwhile, pleasant discourse and ingenious speculation cannot be taken as a serious contribution to archaeological research.

Bertram's forgery, Richard of Cirencester, is rightly described here as *nihil ad rem*; but it is a little surprising to find it characterised as "not demonstrably a mere forgery." Mayor disposed of it for good fifty years ago.