

THE
GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE
AND
HISTORICAL REVIEW.

THE ROMAN CITY OF URICONIUM.

ABOUT five miles and a-half from Shrewsbury, close upon the banks of the river Severn, stands the little village of Wroxeter, consisting of a church, a rectory-house, and a few farm-houses and cottages. The ground rises eastwardly from the river, the course of which is here from north to south, and forms a gentle elevation commanding a fine view of the valley of the Severn. Behind, directly eastward, is the famed Wrekin; and the horizon to the south and west is formed by the Wenlock and Stretton hills, Lawley hill, Caer-Caradoc, the Long-Mynd, the Breidden, and the more distant mountains of Wales. Towards the north the elevated ground of Wroxeter sinks into a hollow and rises again, and at the bottom of this hollow runs a small brook known by the name of Bell-brook. At a short distance to the south of the church will be observed some very uneven ground rising into high mounds which overlook the river. From this uneven ground we trace a long continuous mound, at first due eastward along the side of the rising ground into the glebe-land, where it takes a bend, till it runs nearly in a northernly direction, crossing the little valley and Bell-brook, then turning along the higher ground on the other side of the brook, till it reaches the hamlet of Norton, where it turns suddenly westward and makes a long curve, recrossing Bell-brook, just before the latter crosses the road to Shrewsbury, and continuing the curve until it approaches the river Severn, the bank of which it follows until it reaches the place from which we started. This mound, which is somewhat more than three miles in circuit, covers the wall of inclosure and defence of an ancient city. The surface of the ground within it is strewed everywhere with small fragments of pottery, bricks, and mortar; quantities of Roman antiquities have been picked up at all times when people were digging a little deeper than usual; remains of buildings underground have been accidentally discovered at different spots within the inclosure of the walls; portions of columns and sculptured stones have been frequently met with in the ground or in the river, and some of them are preserved in the gardens of the rectory and farm-houses; and, lastly, on the highest part of the ground, nearly in the centre of the inclosure, stands above ground a massive piece of wall, of that unmistakable kind of masonry, with its long thin bonding-courses of red tiles or bricks, which we recognise at once as Roman. This wall, which has

been long known popularly as the "Old Wall," or the "Old Works," runs nearly east and west, or at least sufficiently nearly so to allow us to adopt those points of the compass in speaking generally of it.

There can be no doubt, indeed, that this was the site of a Roman city of considerable magnitude and importance, and when we examine the old Roman Itineraries, we have no difficulty in identifying it. The second iter of Antoninus brings us from Chester to London by the great military way which was called by the Anglo-Saxons the Watling Street, and on that way, between a place called Rutunium, which is identified with Rowton, a short distance from Oswestry, and another called Uxacona, which is believed to have been at Oxengates, in the neighbourhood of Shiffnall, stood a town called in this iter Uriconium, but in another iter of the Antonine Itineraries, Viroconium. This latter iter gives the road from Isca Dumnoniorum, or Exeter, across the Bristol Channel, by way of South Wales, and up the Welsh border to this town, where it joined the road from London to Chester. The line of this road, on the border, is distinctly traced up the valley of Stretton (which took its name from it), where it still bears popularly the name of Watling Street, to Wroxeter, where in fact it does join the Watling Street which led from London to Chester. There can be no doubt, therefore, that Wroxeter is the site of the Viroconium or Uriconium of the Romans. The Itinerary of Antoninus is believed to have been composed about the year 320, but this town is mentioned just two centuries before that date, in the Geography of Ptolemy, written about the year 120, in which the two Roman towns in the territory of the British tribe of the Cornavii are said to be Deva (*Δηοία*—Chester), and Viroconium (*Οὐδροκόνοιον*). In a compilation of a more doubtful character, the treatise of Richard of Cirencester *De Situ Britannie*, we are told that Uriconium was "the mother of all the towns in this district, and reputed among the greatest cities of Britain," (*et reliquarum mater Uriconium, quæ inter Britannie civitates maximas nomen possidebat*). Our present knowledge of Wroxeter so completely justifies this description, that, as it could hardly be known at the time when Bertram published this work, we are inclined to believe that there must have been some old authority for this statement.

A single glance at this long straggling line of defensive wall is enough to convince us that, as appears to have been the case with the walls of most of the Roman towns in Britain, it must have been constructed at a late period,—in fact, that Uriconium was probably an open town, which no doubt went on increasing in magnitude, and that it was not until it had reached its greatest extent that it was walled, probably amid the civil contentions and formidable invasions from without, which marked the later period of the Roman domination in our island. It was probably at the close of that domination, amid the struggles of the Roman population against their barbarian assailants, that Uriconium fell into the power of the latter, who plundered it, massacred those of its inhabitants whom they did not carry away into slavery, and delivered the town to the flames, which left it a mass of blackened ruins.

From time immemorial the farmers have been in the habit of digging into the ground, especially on the line of the town wall, for building materials, and the villagers and farm labourers point out different spots where, either in their own memory or according to local tradition^a, objects

^a There is said to have been a well, or fountain, on the bank, sloping down to Bell-brook, near where this brook crosses the Watling Street road, now covered up, but

of interest have been discovered. About the year 1700 the smith's shop was burnt down, and the tenant, in want of materials to re-build it, set his eyes upon a spot in a field where he had observed that the corn grew worse than on other parts, and he proceeded to dig there. The result was the discovery of a tessellated pavement, and the remains of rooms and hypocausts, an account of which was published in the *Philosophical Transactions*. At other times, a pavement was found in the outskirts of the village; in a field to the northward of the village, what are described as the remains of a bath were met with; and still more recently, when the tenant was erecting the cruciform farm buildings in the northernmost corner of the field last mentioned, near the side of the Watling Street road, the men employed in digging for the foundations came upon the remains of Roman buildings, the exact character of which is not known. The sites of these various discoveries are marked in the accompanying map. No attempt, however, had been made to explore systematically the site of Uriconium, when in the summer of the last year, Mr. Thomas Wright, who had long looked upon the spot with the interest he felt both as an antiquary and as a native of Shropshire, suggested the undertaking to Beriah Botfield, Esq., M.P. for the borough of Ludlow, who entered into the proposal with zeal, and offered to head with a handsome contribution a subscription for carrying it out, if Mr. Wright would promise to direct the excavations. Accordingly, at the general annual meeting of the Shropshire and North Wales Natural History and Antiquarian Society, held at Shrewsbury on the 11th of November, 1858, at the close of the Society's proceedings, Mr. Botfield, as its President, moved, and the Earl of Powis seconded, the proposal, "That a subscription be entered into, for the purpose of making excavations at Wroxeter, by permission of his Grace the Duke of Cleveland; and that all the objects discovered should be placed in the Museum of the Society at Shrewsbury." A committee was immediately appointed^b, and a subscription opened, to which Mr. Botfield made the handsome donation of fifty guineas, and which soon placed at the committee's disposal a sum considerably exceeding that which was made conditional for the actual commencement of the excavations. These excavations were commenced on the 3rd of February of the present year, and have been continued ever since, under the immediate care of Dr. Henry Johnson, of Shrewsbury, who accepted the office of Honorary Secretary of the committee of excavations.

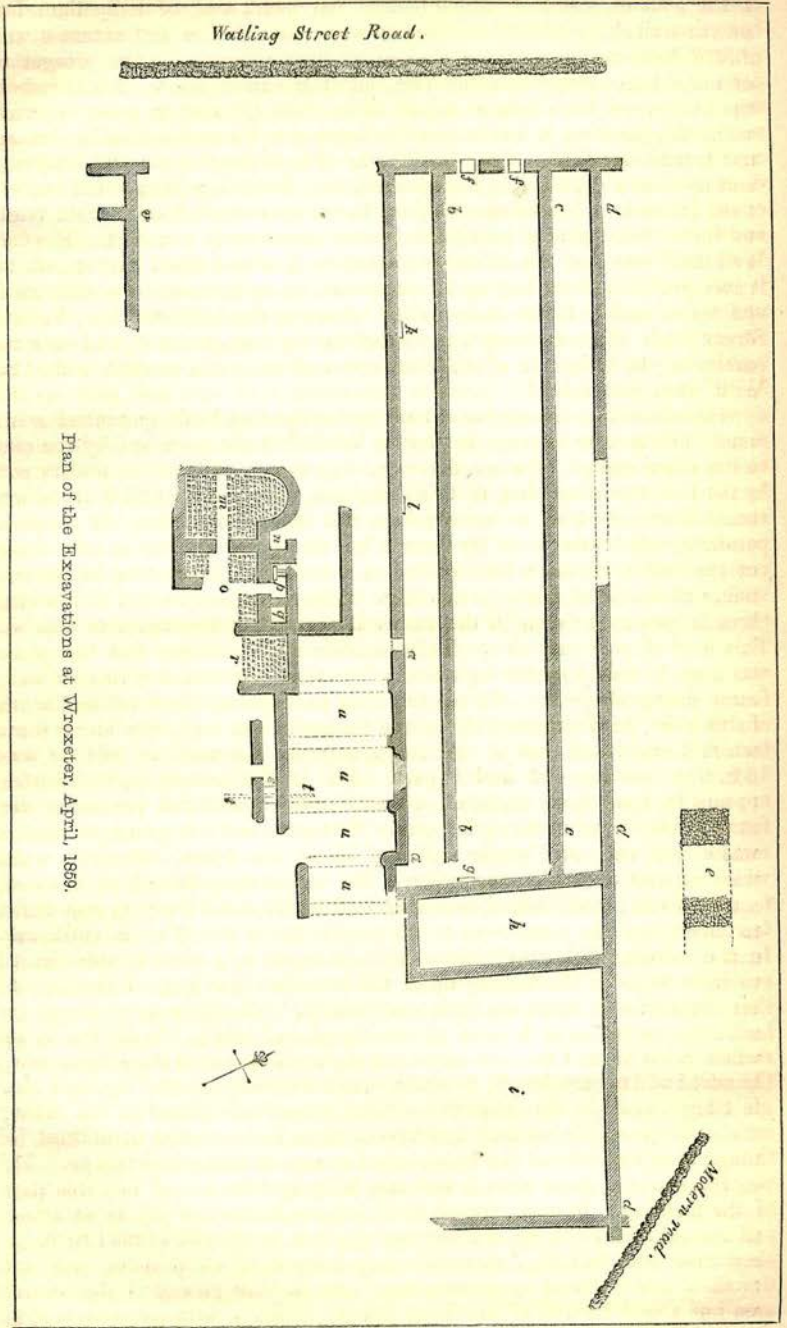
Wroxeter presents the site of an ancient city under circumstances unusually favourable to the researches of the antiquary. A very small portion

which some of the oldest inhabitants remember to have seen open, and they can point out its site. It was believed that great treasures were concealed under this fountain, and the following proverbial rhymes have been current in the parish from time immemorial:—

"By the brook of Bell
There is a well
Which is richer than any man can tell."

^b The committee of excavations elected at this time consisted of the Earl of Powis, R. A. Slaney, Esq., M.P., Beriah Botfield, Esq., M.P., the Rev. R. W. Eyton, Thomas Wright, Esq., Henry Johnson, Esq., M.D., the Rev. E. Egremont (Rector of Wroxeter), and Samuel Wood, Esq. To these names were subsequently added those of the Rev. B. H. Kennedy, D.D. (Head Master of Shrewsbury School), the Rev. H. M. Scarth, Albert Way, Esq., George Staunton, Esq., William Foulkes, Esq. (of Chester), and Samuel Ashdown, Esq.

of the ground, and that probably the least interesting of Uriconium, has been disturbed by modern buildings; while the position and nature of the ground have rendered it unnecessary to have recourse to the process of deep draining, which would have broken up the ruins below. All, however, depended upon the depth at which these ruins lie, and, to solve approximately this question, it was resolved to commence the excavations by sinking a pit to the foundation of the Old Wall. The bottom of the Old Wall was discovered at a depth of no less than fourteen feet below the present surface of the ground. A trench was then dug to the northward from the Old Wall, and three walls running parallel to it were successively met with. The Old Wall itself was next traced under ground, and, after a small interval, where it has probably been dug up for materials, its continuation was met with, and traced nearly to the hedge which separates the field from the Watling Street road. Here it joined a wall nearly at right angles to it, and running parallel to the hedge, to which transverse wall the walls parallel to the Old Wall were also traced. Another transverse wall was met with in the opposite direction, joining the eastern end of the Old Wall, and running (as is not unfrequently the case in Roman buildings) not quite at right angles to the other walls. The extensive building thus traced will be understood by the accompanying plan of the excavations, in which the Old Wall, which stands above ground, is indicated by the darker shade *aa*. It forms a parallelogram, divided in its length by the walls *bb* and *cc* into three compartments, of which the middle one is exactly 226 feet long by 30 feet wide, and has been neatly paved in its whole extent with small red bricks, three inches long by one wide, set in what is called herring-bone fashion. This sort of pavement is generally considered to indicate that the place was open to the sky, although here a few pieces of broken roof-tiles were found scattered about. Of the two long passages to the north and south of this inner parallelogram, the one to the south was uniformly about fourteen feet wide, and that to the north, between the walls *cc* and *dd*, was 13 ft. 9 in. wide at the western, and 16 ft. at the eastern end. Neither appears to have been uniformly paved; a fine tessellated pavement was found at the eastern end of the one to the north, and a fragment of similar mosaic was met with about half way along the other. The two walls which separated these passages from the central area, *bb* and *cc*, are each four feet thick; while that of which the Old Wall formed a part is only three feet thick, and the outer wall to the north, *dd*, is 3 ft. 9 in. in thickness. In the middle of the wall last-mentioned there is a considerable break, evidently made by the tearing up of the materials, but it is not improbable that there was an entrance here, and that the wall was torn to pieces on both sides in the eagerness of the mediæval builders to obtain the large stones which formed the doorway. At the western end of the central area, the wall had two breaks, *ff*, in which stood, evidently *in situ*, in one a single large stone, in the other two similar stones, one placed on the other, which were carefully squared, and one of them had bevelled mouldings, as though they had formed the basements for large columns, and this probably was the entrance from what is now the Watling Street road into this part of the building. Several fragments of large columns and plinths of stone, and one capital, which lay in a reversed position by the side of the Old Wall, shew that this building, whatever may have been its purpose, was not devoid of architectural ornamentation. At the eastern end of the central area was a step formed of one large square stone, *g*, with a corresponding opening in the wall, which appeared to be the bottom of a doorway. It



Plan of the Excavations at Wroxeter, April, 1859.

led into an enclosure, *h*, which had no pavement, and seems by the set-off on the wall all round to have been an open court. The northernmost wall, *ddd*, was subsequently traced in an eastern direction to an extent, altogether, of more than three hundred feet, but the excavators were stopped by the hedge. A little before it reached the hedge, however, a wall was met with running from it south, and inclosing a large space, *i*, which, though not extensively explored, appeared to be without pavement or sub-divisions, and may have been a large open court, or perhaps a garden. One or two trenches were dug northwardly from the outer wall, *ddd*, and each brought to light a portion of a continuous pavement of small round stones, which evidently occupied the middle of a street, and resembled very much the pavement of our old mediæval towns, as it may be seen to perfection in Leicester, and in Shrewsbury itself. There appears, therefore, to be little doubt that this great building stood in the corner formed by a street occupying here the line of the Watling Street road, and another which ran at right angles to it.

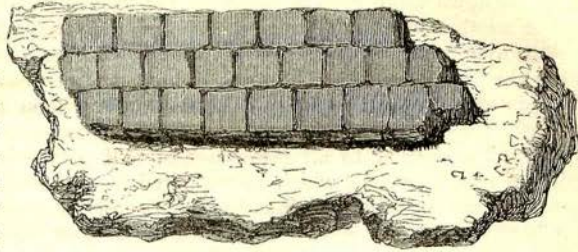
The wall *bb* terminated short of the eastern wall of the central apartment, but it is uncertain whether the breach has been caused by the tearing up of materials or was a doorway. There is a similar uncertainty with regard to the other end of this wall; but it is probable that there was, somewhere or other, a doorway from this central area into the southern passage, which was probably open to the air: at least, the northern face of the Old Wall, *aa*, which formed one side of it, has every appearance of being the external face of a building. Nearly in the middle of it is a large breach, as may be seen in the rather imperfect representation of this wall in the corner of our map. There can be no doubt that this breach has been made chiefly by the breaking away of the material, but this breaking away may perhaps have been caused, as we have supposed to be the case in that in the northern wall, by the desire to get away the large stones which formed a doorway. Further along this passage, towards the west, occurred two steps, *k* and *l*, each made of a single stone, and leading to openings in the continuation of the old wall, exactly like the similar step at the eastern end of the great area. The more western of these steps, *k*, was very much worn by the feet of those who had trodden over it, which was not the case with the other. The workmen were directed to dig a trench southward from the opening in the wall at *l*. They appear at first to have come into a mere yard, but they soon fell in with the semicircular end of a room with a hypocaust (*m*). This proved, when it was cleared, to have been a handsome room, thirty-seven feet long, including the semicircular end, and twenty-five in breadth. The floor had disappeared, with the exception of a mass of the concrete of which it was formed, and which remains in the north-eastern corner. It was supported by above a hundred and twenty pillars, formed of the flat square Roman tiles, just three feet high, and in a very perfect condition when first uncovered. A passage through the eastern wall of this hypocaust led into another hypocaust (*o*), the entrance to which was by an archway turned with Roman tiles. This entrance was approached on the outside by a staircase (*p*) of three steps, each formed of a single stone, the workmanship of which is extremely sharp and fresh. To the east of this staircase was found a small room (*q*), eight feet square, with a herring-bone pavement, like that in the great area to the north. There appears to have been a wide passage in the eastern wall of this little room, which led into a smaller apartment with a hypocaust (*r*). Eastward of this room again runs a passage between two walls,

in which is a square pit, *s*, occupying the whole breadth of it, and across the bottom of which runs an extremely well-formed drain, *tt*, in a direction at right angles to the Old Wall. The floor of this drain is formed of the well-known large Roman roof-tiles, the flanged edges turned upwards. To the southward of this passage the excavators have just entered upon another hypocaust, which is not yet opened. To the north, the space between the passage and the Old Wall has not yet been fully explored. This (the southern) side of the Old Wall has on its face arches, which are evidently the springings of vaulted roofs, and transverse walls have been discovered answering to all these arches, and evidently belonging to a series of rooms (*uuuu*), which were vaulted in the manner called barrel-roofs. In one of them was found a quantity of burnt wheat, so that they may have been store-rooms. The space to the west, between these excavations and the hedge of the Watling Street road, has not yet been explored, except by a short trench which laid open the portion of walls indicated at *v* in our plan. These shew that the western wall of the great building on the north was continued along the side of the Watling Street road, and within it appears to have been small and mean rooms, perhaps shops, or the dwellings of the poorer inhabitants of Uriconium.

Such is the state of the excavations on the site of this ancient city in the month of April, after little more than two months' work; for, during more than a fortnight, their progress at this place has been suspended by circumstances to which, as the obstacle is probably by this time removed, we will do no more than allude. They have evidently laid open, in the first place, a large building destined for some public purpose, to the south of which they are entering upon a magnificent mansion, which no doubt belonged to one of the principal people in the town. The excavators are evidently coming upon discoveries that will prove more interesting than any of those they have yet made; and we look forward with, we think, well grounded hopes to the result of the further diggings. It is the first opportunity that has yet occurred of obtaining any satisfactory knowledge of the internal character of a Roman town in Britain.

Little, of course, has yet been done towards tracing the distribution of the buildings in the Roman town, but enough has already been brought to light to give us a tolerable general notion of the character of the buildings themselves. The walls of the houses, even the partition-walls between one room and another, are in no instances less than three feet thick. The fine massive character of this masonry may be seen to advantage in the descents to the hypocausts at *p*, and in the work about the drain at *s*. In the inside they were covered with a thick layer of mortar, which was painted in fresco, and which, where it remains, either on the lower part of the walls or in pieces scattered about, has preserved its colours remarkably fresh. The ornamentation in those yet found is very simple, but tasteful. One piece of cement from the wall contained three or four large letters of an inscription. In the interior of one of the rooms immediately to the south of the Old Wall, the wall, instead of being painted, was *tessellated*, we think an ornamentation of a unique character, at least as far as this country is concerned. A fragment of this wall is represented in the accompanying cut (p. 454); the tessellæ, which are of an uniform size, one-half by three-fifths of an inch, are set in the cement, alternately of a dark and light-coloured stone. The outside of the houses appear, in some cases at least, to have been likewise painted in fresco. Thus the exterior of the semicircular end of the hypocaust *m*, was plastered over, and painted red, with stripes of

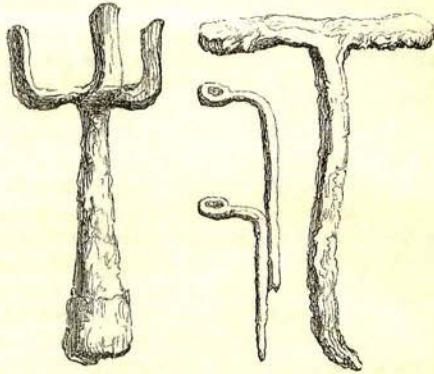
yellow. A few roof-tiles were found scattered about; but the houses appear to have been more generally roofed with rather thick slabs of micaceous slate, which appears to have been brought from Wales. Quantities of these slates are found scattered about; they are sometimes lozenge-shaped, but more frequently the side angles of the lozenge are broken off, so as to form an elongated hexagon. The most remarkable article



Fragment of tessellated wall.

connected with the structure of the houses was the window-glass, which was found in considerable quantity, and appears to have been of fine quality, though its transparency is now destroyed by the iridescence. It was found in some instances in rather large pieces, its uniform thickness exceeding the eighth of an inch.

A great quantity of iron has been found in the progress of the excavations at Wroxeter, and in general it is better preserved than usual. It consisted, in a great measure, of clamps, large nails, rivets, and other articles, which appear to have been used in fixing the woodwork, &c., of the buildings. Of these the most numerous is the T-shaped clamp, the third figure in the annexed cut, which is found rather commonly in Roman buildings, sometimes arranged at equal distances along the wall, just above the level of the floor. From the discoveries of the Abbé Cochet in Normandy, it would appear that they were used to hold to the wall the flue-tiles of the hypocausts. The object represented in the middle figure of the cut was also found in some numbers, of exactly uniform size and shape, but it is not easy to guess at its use. The curious object which forms the first figure in this cut is also of iron, and was found in the excavations to the north of the Old Wall. It is about five inches and a-half long, and the one end, formed like the ferules of the old spear-heads, was evidently intended to be fitted on a shaft, so that it appears to have belonged to some sort of a ceremonial staff,—a trident. In the same part of the excavations was also found a portion of a very strong iron chain, and the head of an axe.



The most abundant of all the metals found hitherto in these excavations, at least after iron, is lead; an unusual circumstance in Roman sites, but probably to be explained by the proximity of Uriconium to the extensive lead-mines on the Welsh borders. Among various objects composed of lead, it may be sufficient to mention a little bowl or cup, about three

inches in diameter, and of elegant form, though devoid of ornament: it is represented in our cut.

Pottery has, as usual, been found in great quantities, including the red ware commonly called Samian, the ware from the potteries at Caistor (*Durobrivæ*) and Upchurch, and nearly all the other varieties usually met with in Roman sites in this island. But a pottery found in great abundance at Wroxeter is almost new to the antiquary: it is white, and of a porous texture, and was probably made of some one of the clays of the Severn valley. It has been conjectured that the kilns which produced this pottery were situated somewhere in the neighbourhood of Broseley. The articles made of this ware were principally jugs, the elegant and usual form of which is represented in the upper figure of our cut, at p. 458, and mortaria, or bowls for pounding and bruizing in the operations of cookery. A fragment of one of the latter is represented in the lower figure in the cut, and shews the manner in which the surface internally was set with small granular pieces of silex, to assist in the process of trituration. Among other fragments of pottery found here, is a boldly executed mask of a female face, which has no doubt formed the ornamental mouthpiece of a large amphora. One or two fragments of very choice glass vessels have also been dug up.



Objects of a more miscellaneous character, in a great variety of materials, are also numerous,—such as ladies' hair-pins, in bronze, bone, and wood, fibulæ for attaching the dress, styli for writing on tablets, knives, rings, buttons, &c., even to Roman pins and needles. Of the coins, two only of those yet found are of silver; the oldest a coin of Galba, the others being all of copper. Quantities of bones of quadrupeds and birds have been found, with oyster-shells, and even some nut-shells, from which we may form a notion of the diet of the inhabitants of the Roman city. Among these were remarked numerous tusks and toe-hoofs of wild boars and horns of stags, the latter in some instances of very large dimensions. Some of the stags' horns had been cut and sawed, probably in order to turn them to some useful purpose.

The mention of bones leads us to one of the most remarkable circumstances connected with these excavations. It has often struck us that, as the buildings of the Romans among which the antiquary digs were evidently destroyed by fire, and part of their inhabitants no doubt slaughtered by the invaders, we might expect to find the bones of human beings among the ruins; yet this is very rarely the case. Perhaps this may be partly explained by the circumstance that most of the sites hitherto explored have been those of villas or country mansions, which were doubtless abandoned by their inhabitants before they were invaded by the enemy. At Wroxeter, so long as the labours of the excavators were confined to the extensive (public?) buildings to the north of the Old Wall *aa* (in the plan), they met with no bones which could be identified as human; but when they crossed this wall, and came among the domestic buildings to the south of it, the case was entirely changed. In a very short time they gathered up human bones belonging to at least three or four individuals; and in what appeared to be the corner of a yard, at the spot marked *n* in our plan, was found the skull of a very young child. Other scattered bones were subsequently met with, and at last, when the smallest of the hypocausts, *r*, was explored, three skeletons were found in it, one of which appeared to have

been seated or crouching in a corner, and the other two lying extended by the side of the wall; it appeared from the skull and jaw of the skeleton in the corner that it had belonged to a very old man, while at least one of the other two, if not both, seemed from similar evidence to have been females. At a very short distance from the skeleton of the old man lay in a little heap a hundred and thirty-two small copper coins, most of them of the different types of the emperors of the Constantine family, and among them small iron nails and remains of decayed wood, which shewed that they must have been inclosed in a small wooden coffer. We may thus safely conclude that these three individuals, in the midst of the massacre of the inhabitants of Uriconium, had sought concealment by creeping into the hypocaust, a place where, as it was rather a low hypocaust, they were not likely to be followed, and there the old man had tried to secure the money which was within his reach. Perhaps they had been suffocated in their place of refuge, or the burning buildings may have fallen in and blocked up their passage out. It places in a lively manner before our imagination the sufferings of the inhabitants of the doomed city when it fell before the barbarians; and it is the first instance which has occurred in which we have the opportunity of ascertaining what were the coins which a man carried about him as the current money in this island at this obscure period of history. These coins have been placed in the hands of Mr. Roach Smith, who has made a report upon them to the Numismatic Society. Other human remains have been since found, and among them those of another child.

The various objects above mentioned or alluded to have been deposited, according to the terms of the resolution of the Shropshire Society, in the Society's Museum at Shrewsbury; and if, as there is every reason to expect, the excavations are continued with the same success, the Wroxeter Museum will become eventually one of the most interesting and important in this island; the more so because, like the museum at Naples, gathered from the ruins of Pompeii, it will be restricted to one period of our history. To the objects dug up by the men employed by the committee of investigation will be added others that can be purchased from those who have gathered them in previous times. Many of these have been already brought into the Museum, and others will shortly follow them. Among these are several neat bronzes; but one of the most interesting of them is a stamp of a Roman oculist, engraved on a small round stone, and represented in the annexed cut, the size of the original. The inscription may be read without any difficulty as follows:—



TIBERII CLAUDII MEDICI DIALIBANUM AD OMNE VITIIUM OCULORUM EX OVO, i. e. "The dialibanum of Tiberius Claudius, the physician, for all complaints of the eyes, to be used with egg." The *dialibanum*, or *dialebanum*, was a collyrium, or salve for the eyes, which in a stamp of this description found at Cirencester is directed similarly to be used EX OV, where we have a letter more of this word. This phrase occurs also on similar stamps found in France and Germany. We learn from the ancient writers that several of the collyria when used were mixed up with the white of egg. This stamp makes us acquainted with

We learn the names of others of its citizens from inscribed sepulchral monuments which have been from time to time accidentally turned up in the extensive cemetery outside the town walls, which it is to be expected will richly reward some of the future labours of the excavators. One of these commemorates a soldier of the twentieth Legion, named Caius Marinus Secundus Pollentius, who was also a pensioner of the first Legion; another, a soldier of the fourteenth Legion, named Marcus Petromus; and a third, a soldier of the cohort of the Thracians, named Tibertius Claudius Terentius, whose name seems to have rather a curious relationship to that of the physician. Another of these monumental stones is dedicated to a lady named Antonia Gemella, by Diadumenus, whom we may suppose to have been of Greek extraction; and a triple tablet commemorates a citizen of Uriconium named Deccus, who held the office of *curator agrorum*, his wife named Placidia, and probably a son or daughter, but the inscription of the third column is defaced. While speaking of inscriptions we must also state that, besides the formal wall inscription already mentioned, of which two or three letters were preserved on a piece of the plaster, and which no doubt would have given us some insight into the character of these buildings if it had been preserved, the surface of the painted plaster of the southern face of the southern wall of the passages (on the plan), was, when first discovered, covered with a straggling inscription, traced into the mortar with some sharp-pointed instrument, like similar inscriptions found on the walls of houses at Pompeii; but, unfortunately, before this Wroxeter inscription could be properly examined, some meddling visitors broke away a great part of it in trying the strength of the mortar, and the tenant having immediately afterwards, in a fit of opposition to the excavations, shut up the place against the excavation committee, the weather, and other causes have so much deteriorated the rest, that it is not now possible to ascertain its original character.

During the temporary interruption of the excavations at the Old Wall, just alluded to, the men have been employed on another spot at the southern extremity of the ancient city, inclosed in our map by a dotted line to indicate apparently that it was doubtful if it were outside or within the true town wall. This ground is very uneven, rising into rather high mounds, the top of the highest of which has been trenched, and the walls of a square building of some kind, perhaps a tower, partly uncovered. Enough, however, has not yet been done to make us fully acquainted with its character. Among the objects found at this place are a bearded head of a statue in stone, which, from a horn which has escaped mutilation, has been supposed to have been a statue of the god Pan, though it has since been suggested that it may belong to the statue of a river god, intended to represent the Severn; and a mould for casting Roman coins, made of clay, and having still the impress of a coin of Julia Domna, the wife of the Emperor Severus. Curiously enough, a silver coin of this Empress was

This medicine stamp, the use of which was no doubt to impress the names of the medicine and of its maker on the pot, box, or packet, containing it, was found by a farmer in 1808, and was engraver in the GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE at that time from so incorrect a copy, that it could not be satisfactorily interpreted. It was supposed to have been subsequently lost, and was only recovered by accident since the excavations were commenced in the present year. It will be observed that a small space is filled up by a branch before the second and third lines, and by a leaf-ornament at the end of the fourth. The Δ in the fourth line is a mere expetive to fill up a space.

found in the excavations near the Old Wall, which fits the impress exactly. This method of multiplying the imperial coinage by casts seems to have been very common in these distant provinces, and was perhaps exercised by the imperial or municipal officers. The discovery of this mould would seem to shew that Uriconium enjoyed the privilege, if it were one.

Such is a plain and simple statement of the result of the progress at the beginning of these very important excavations, during a very short space of time, and under all the impediments which present themselves at a beginning. There can be no doubt that this is one of the most important undertakings of historical research that this country has seen. We have for the first time the opportunity of exploring a large Roman city in Britain, the site of which has been very little disturbed. Fortunately, the ruins lie sufficiently deep underground to have protected the lower and more important parts of the buildings from extensive injury. We may therefore hope, from the continued progress of the excavations, that a new and great light will be thrown on the condition and character of this island at the close of the Roman period, the most obscure period of our history; that we shall have a number of mysterious points of history cleared up, and that we shall even obtain inscriptions which may make known to us important historical events. In fact the Committee of Excavations formed at Shrewsbury is digging up, not merely the city of Uriconium, but Roman Britain itself; and Wroxeter may, without any great exaggeration of language, be termed the British Pompeii.



Romano-Salopian pottery.

happy adoption of the same in Denmark in 1849. But it is also a statement of grievances, and points out many things in which Iceland is treated as a mere dependency or colony, or province, instead of as an independent state, which it has always been, entitled to every right of self-taxation and self-government, as are even the youngest actual colonies of Great Britain.

Next comes *Bréf frá Rómaborg*, "Letters from Rome," by O. G., very amusing sketches of the Eternal City.

Guðbrandr Vigfússon follows with *Um Utgáfur af nokkrum Íslendinga Sögum*, in which critical remarks are made on the last editions of *Bandamanna Saga*, *Bjarnar Saga*, *Hítalækakappa*, *Grettis Saga*, and *Gísla Saga Súrssonar*.

We next have an Icelandic translation, by Gísh Brynjúlfsson, of the famous *Dies iræ, dies illa*. It begins:—

"Dagur reiði, dagur voða,
Deyðir öld í bála roða,
Einsög spárnar öldnu boða."

This is followed by a similar version, by the same, of *Stabat Mater dolorosa*, commencing:—

"Stóð að krossi sefa sárum
Sorgum bitin, drifin tárur,
Móðir þar sem mögur hëkk;

Og um hennar hyggju skarða,
Harmi lostna, böli marða,
Eggjabrandur bitur gekk."

Some smaller poems, and an account of the wreck of two Icelandic ships last year, conclude the volume.

The other work is published with the assistance of the Norwegian State, and is a most valuable contribution to Northern History. It is an exact literal reprint, for the first time exact and complete, of the well-known *Saga-Vundle*, called *Flateyjarbok*, containing all sorts of historical and legendary lore, in prose and verse, formal and episodical, concerning Norway, Iceland, and the whole North, our own country included. We here have not only the longest recensions of *Olaf Trygvason's Saga*, *Saint Olaf's Saga*, *the Saga of Magrius the Good*, &c.; but also the *Jomsvikinga-Saga*, the *Færoe*, and *Orkney Sagas*, &c., and a host of smaller pieces. It is a membrane transcribed about the year 1390. This splendid work, the first part of which is now before us, is in large 8vo. It will be in three volumes, beautifully printed in Christiana, and will cost, complete, a mere trifle. It may be hoped that Scandinavian readers at home will avail themselves of this opportunity of obtaining and studying so valuable a contribution to our common Northern Annals.

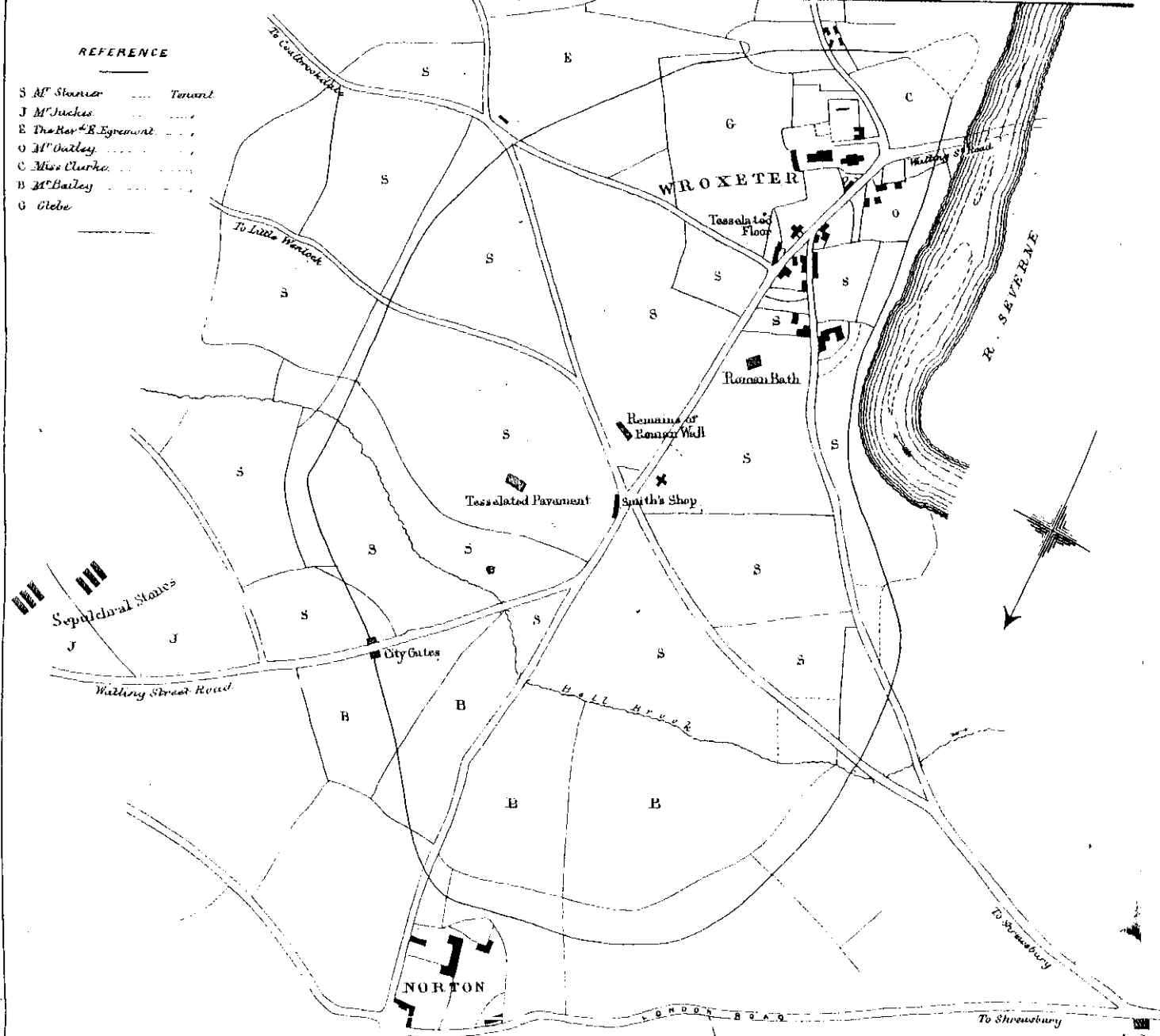
THE EXCAVATIONS AT WROXETER.

THE last few days have thrown considerable light on the character of the buildings which are at present the site of the excavations in the Roman city of *Uriconium*. A continuous outer wall has been traced, bordering what was evidently the Roman street (now the *Watling-street-road*), and facing the west, to a distance of about 80 ft. southwards, where another wall was found running eastward, at right angles from it. Within these walls is a large interior court, with a fine brick herring-bone pavement, like that in the building first laid open to the north of the old wall. The sides of this court towards the street appear to have been occupied by rooms of small dimensions, which perhaps served for shops or offices. In one of them, the floor of which is about 10 feet from the present level of the ground, was found a quantity of unused charcoal, as though it had been a charcoal depôt, either for sale or for the use of the more important buildings to the east. One or two weights, with numbers upon them, and various other objects,

have been found in these small rooms. Among other things found in this part of the excavations are one or two nice finger-rings, and human remains have again been met with. At the north-western corner of the court there is a wide opening in the western wall, approached from the street by an inclined plane formed of several large flagstones, as though to allow carriages to enter the court, the level of which is higher than that of the street. A little further south there is another but smaller entrance through the same wall, approached by stone steps. The stones of both are considerably worn by use. The back, or eastern side of the court appears to have been occupied by the better apartments of a very important mansion, running southward from the hypocausts already opened, and these will now be immediately uncovered, and we may hope for interesting results. It may be remarked that traces of the use of mineral coal in the houses of *Uriconium* have already been met with.

REFERENCE

- S M' Stanger Tenant
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- E The Rev & B. Egmont
- O M' Outley
- C Miss Clarke
- D M' Bailey
- G Glebe



CITY OF
URICONIUM,
 as laid down on the
 PRIVATE SURVEY
 of the
Board of Ordnance.

