

RETROSPECTIVE OBSERVATIONS

RESPECTING

A HOARD OF ROMAN COINS FOUND IN
THE SAND HILLS, NEAR DEAL.

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THE late Mr. W. H. Rolfe of Sandwich had in his collections of local antiquities some hundreds of small brass Roman coins, found in the sand hills, or downs (dunes), near Deal, to which my attention has been lately called in thinking over the events of the day when I first visited him and Richborough and Reculver. They possess an interest which at that time I had not trained myself to understand; neither did I see it when, some years afterwards, a notice of them was printed in the *Numismatic Chronicle*, vol. ii., p. 259. Mr. Rolfe himself and Mr. Akerman could never have thought on the somewhat important historical and local value of the hoard, for only a list of the reverses of the coins is published, without any note or comment. The number is not stated; but it must have been some hundreds. They are now in the cabinet of John Evans, Esq., LL.D., etc.

I have lately, in the *Numismatic Chronicle*, and elsewhere, drawn consideration to the fact of the very frequent discovery of hoards of coins ranging from the time of Valerian (A.D. 254-260) and Gallienus to that of Tetricus and Aurelian; the coins of Tetricus and of the young Cæsar his son, as well as those of the

preceding Emperors being very numerous, while usually there are only a very few, sometimes only one or two, of Aurelian (A.D. 270-275).* This from the Deal sand hills corresponds with them.

The inference I draw is that all these hoards were buried at one and the same time; and that was at the close of the usurpation or reign of Tetricus (A.D. 267-272), when his army in Gaul was recruited largely from Britain. The soldiers and recruits could carry with them what silver and gold they possessed; but the copper coinage, being heavy and cumbersome, was concealed in the earth *circa* A.D. 271. The expedient was good and safe provided they returned to Britain; but the frequent discoveries I allude to shew that many never again recrossed the channel.

The discovery of this hoard of coins has a local as well as an historical interest. The district of the Dealsand hills resembles that of the neighbourhood of Etaples† on the northern coast of France, where, some years since, an extensive Roman *vicus* was found beneath accumulated sand, the residence, no doubt, of an establishment of fishermen. A close examination of the Deal sand hills would probably confirm my belief that the land they cover was also tenanted by the Romans. Mr. Rolfe had in his possession some remains collected in this district by M. Lejoindre which indicated habitation.

* Cf. *Collectanea Antiqua*, vol. v., p. 150; *Numismatic Chronicle*, v., 157.

† *Collectanea Antiqua*, vol. i., p. 4.