

ON ROMAN REMAINS DISCOVERED IN
ROCHESTER.

BY A. A. ARNOLD.

THE South-Eastern Railway Company have been engaged, intermittently, since August 1888, in making approaches to their new Bridge across the Medway at Rochester. Messrs. Ball and Gammon are the contractors for the work; and Mr. Ball, a member of our Kent Archæological Society, has taken great care to preserve all objects of antiquarian interest which have been brought to light during the work.

A beautifully made bowl of Samian ware (Plate III.) was found, in September 1888, near *Horsewash*, formerly known as *St. Clement's Lane*, a narrow roadway parallel with and close to the river. The spot where it was found lies, Mr. Owen Ball kindly informs me, about seventy feet from the river front, and at a depth of from twelve to fifteen feet below the surface.

Near to this was also found a singular plate of thin bronze, having a slightly raised boss or handle in the centre, with rivet holes near the four corners. Probably it formed the lid of some box or casket. It is too thin to have been used as part of the flue or furnace arrangements of a hypocaust, as was at first supposed. A plate of bronze (found at Colchester) shewing a similar handle, or boss, is figured in vol. v. of the *Journal of the British Archæological Association*, p. 89.

At the same works were found several pieces of Samian ware, mere fragments, but they bore, in some instances, their makers' names. So far as these were decipherable, they are as follows:—

ALBANI
 (B?) RAVCI.—M
 (NV) MIDI
 MARTIALIS.
 OFROMNI
 SEVIRI. M
 DOCCI. M.A.

I have also to record two other recent discoveries of Roman Remains within the city of Rochester.

The first was communicated to me by Mr. Banks, the City Surveyor. He had been so obliging as to take accurate measurements of the foundations of the city wall, where it was cut through, near the Common, by the works of the South-Eastern Railway in the early part of the year 1889. The workmanship and the mortar were mediæval, and all the remains down to the very foundation were clearly of that age; but Mr. Banks then called attention to a fragment of the wall, near *St. Clement's Lane*, which he had preserved when the wall was cut through during some drainage works in 1887. The mortar in this instance is undoubtedly Roman, and goes to support the theory that, to some extent at least, at this point, the city wall occupies the site, or rests upon the foundations of the Roman work.

In Fisher's *History of Rochester*, p. 3, the writer states that there is reason to think that a great part of the present wall of the city is on its original foundation, and that this place was first fortified by the Romans. It is, he adds, particularly in the portion towards the west end of the North Wall that Roman bricks have been used, and are conspicuous. It was close to this point that the mortar and fragments of wall were obtained by Mr. Banks.

A second discovery took place on the 11th May 1889, when one of the sons of Mr. Frederick Wingent found, near Epple Lane, at the foot of the Castle Hill, Rochester, a coin of the Empress Helena, wife of Constantine. It was in excellent preservation, of the kind known as third brass. On the reverse is "*Pax Publica*," with a female figure holding an olive-branch, and the hasta.

I am the more glad to be able to record these few dis-

coveries, within the city of Rochester, as the recent publication by the Society of Antiquaries of Mr. George Payne's valuable archaeological map of Kent, called attention to the fact that, as Mr. Payne writes, "there is not a single discovery of Roman remains recorded from Rochester." In a note to his introductory chapter Mr. Payne has, however, added a brief reference to some of the discoveries I have just mentioned, and to others related to him by Mr. Roach Smith, F.S.A., and by Mr. Irvine. His topographical index annexed to the map, which focuses within seventeen pages of easy reference all the recorded antiquarian discoveries in Kent, from the time of Lambard to Roach Smith, is a monument of patient labour and research for which Kentish archaeologists, yet unborn, will thank him. He refers to the discovery during the last century of Roman coins, and of urns and lachrymatories on Boley Hill outside the city wall (see Fisher's *History of Rochester*, pp. 281-2, and Thorpe's *Antiquities of Rochester*, pp. 147-148), but even these few exceptions do not explain, they serve only to emphasise the remarkable fact, that notwithstanding the importance of Rochester, as a Roman fortress and station, and its occupation by the Romans for about four centuries, "not one fragment of sculpture, and not one lapidary inscription" left by them, is recorded as having been discovered within this city.