

**CURIOSITIES OF COMMUNICATION:
THE ROAD. THE RAILWAY. THE
ELECTRIC TELEGRAPH. THE SAIL AND
THE STEAMER. OCEAN STEAMERS.
FOREIGN MAILS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649354320

Curiosities of communication: The road. The railway. The electric telegraph. The sail and the steamer. Ocean steamers. Foreign mails by Various

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VARIOUS

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FOREIGN MAILS.

LONDON:

CHARLES KNIGHT, 90, FLEET-STREET.

1851.

Transportation
Library

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CURIOSITIES OF COMMUNICATION.

THE ROAD.

Who made our roads? Engineers before McAdam. "Some imagine," says Camden, "that these ways were made by one Mulmutius, God knows who, many ages before the birth of Christ; but this is so far from finding credit with me, that I positively affirm they were made from time to time by the Romans. When Agricola was lieutenant here, Tacitus tells us, the people were commanded to carry their corn about, and into the most distant countries, not to the nearest camps, but to those that were far off, and out of the way. And the Britons, as the same author has it, complained that the Romans put their hands and bodies to the drudgery of clearing woods and paying fens." The Britons, no doubt, had roads; but we think it is as little doubtful that the Romans made the solid roads of which we constantly discover such wonderful remains. They were indeed great road-makers, these kings of the world; and they went about their work in a scientific style, like the iron road-makers of our own age, with

. labouring pioneers,
A multitude with spades and axes armed,
To lay hills plain, fell woods, or valleys fill.
Or where plain was raise hill, or overlay
With bridges rivers proud, as with a yoke.

PARADISE REGAINED.

Their work has lasted. Their "highways from sea to sea" cannot be traced through their whole lines with perfect distinctness; but enough can be traced to show the genius of the great civilizers. All old writers agree that there were four chief ways in England; modern researches have traced other

trunk roads than these four of the Watling Street, the Erming Street, the Ikenald Street, and the Fosse. What the great lines of Railways have accomplished, according to the wants of our age, within the last twenty years, the old roads accomplished sixteen hundred years ago. They made this island, to a certain extent, one whole. We have a circuitous railway from Dover to London; the Romans had their direct road, the Watling Street, through Rochester. The Great Western Railway follows its sinuous course from London to Bath; the Romans had a direct road through Staines, Silchester, and Marlborough, to their great city of medicinal waters. If the descriptions of the Fosse Way may be relied upon, it followed very closely the present track of the Great Western from Tonness to Bristol; and connected the Midland Counties, as far as Lincoln, with the Western coasts, as completely as the network of railways does at this day. The Ikenald way is held to have connected the Eastern coast with the interior, as the Eastern Counties Railway now effects the same object. The Erming Street is affirmed to have run from St. David's to Southampton, a line which railways have yet to thread. Lastly, the Watling Street, after it had reached London from Dover, is understood to have passed towards the North to Saint Alban's, and thence, in a direct line, very little verging from that which we call the Great North Road, to York and Chester-le-Street, going straight to its point, like the Great Northern Railway. For purposes of internal communication "from sea to sea," the direction of the Roman roads was, there can be little dispute, sufficiently complete. The manufacturing element has demanded new combinations.

Here, then, sixteen hundred years ago, were direct roads, with bold cuttings, and solid terraces worked in stone and cement, founded on piles where the soil was marshy, raised upon piers where it was necessary to gain elevation; and over these, for five centuries of Roman dominion, moved the legions of the mighty empire,

"In costs of mail, and military pride."

Then succeeded the fierce strifes of the Heptarchy—the devastations of the Dane—the plunder of the Norman—the struggle between the Crown and the Barons—the wars of England and Scotland—the battles of the Roses;—during each of which epochs the country made slight advances, if any, in the real business of civilization, as compared with the Roman period.

With the Tudor dynasty came comparative quiet, and, with quiet, increased commercial intercourse. There had always been a coasting trade. In 1489, the Bishop of Durham writes from his manor of Auckland, to Sir John Paston, at Caister, near Yarmouth, that he sends his Gentleman Usher to negotiate a matter of business, "forasmuch as I have coals and other things in these parts, and also ye have in those parts corns, wine, and wax; and as I am informed ye be not evil willed to deal with me, no more than I am to deal with you, in uttering, and also in receiving of such things, the which might be to the profit of us both." The bishop had a sensible notion of the real objects of trade. These exchanges were to be "to the profit of either of us, whereby our familiarity and friendship may be increased in time to come." Such a desire for communication, between the influential men of districts producing different commodities, would necessarily make and uphold roads, and improve harbours. Let us see what roads the people of England had in the time of Elizabeth.

William Harrison, in his 'Description of England,' prefixed to Holinshed's Chronicle, has "a Table of the best thoroughfares and towns of greatest travel;" and he says, "Those towns that we call thoroughfares have great and sumptuous inns builded in them, for the receiving of such travellers and strangers as pass to and fro." We have traced upon a map the various lines of this old Itinerary; and it is remarkable how little appears to have been added to the means of internal communication since the days of the Roman roads. Indeed, with a few exceptions, the Roman roads appear to have determined the great highways of the sixteenth century. We will briefly describe them. 1. From the south-east coast there is the road from Dever to London. 2. From the south-west coast there is a road from the extreme point of Cornwall to Exeter, by Launceston and Okehampton, and thence to London by Shaftesbury and Salisbury. 3. There are two roads from Norfolk and Suffolk to London,—one from Walsingham, by Newmarket, till it joins the north road near Royston; the other from Yarmouth to Ipswich, Colchester, and Chelmsford. 4. From South Wales to London, there is a road from St. David's, by Caermarthen and Hay to Gloucester, and thence by Cirencester, Farringdon, Abingdon, Henley, and Maidenhead; where it unites with, 5, the road from London to Bristol, by Reading, Marlborough, and Chippenham. The northern roads constitute the longest and most important lines. They are, 6, the road from London