

**A SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE
THERMAE ROMANO-
BRITANNICAE, OR, THE ROMAN
BATHS FOUND IN ITALY, BRITAIN,
FRANCE, SWITZERLAND, &C. &C**

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A Short Description of the *Thermae Romano-Britannicae*, Or, The Roman Baths found in Italy, Britain, France, Switzerland, &C. &C by Robert Wollaston

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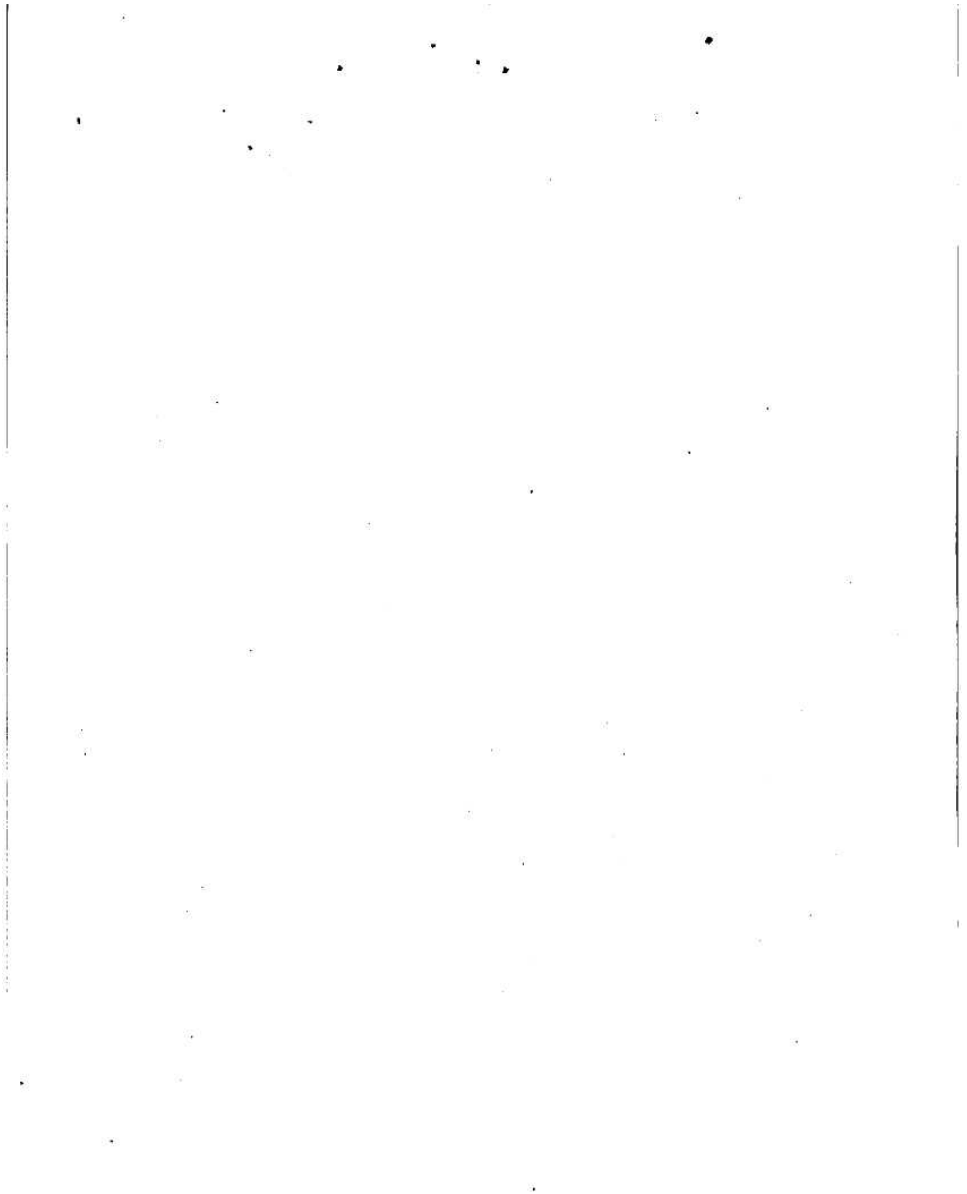
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ROBERT WOLLASTON

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THERMÆ ROMANO-BRITANNICÆ.



A
SHORT DESCRIPTION
OF THE
THERMÆ ROMANO-BRITANNICÆ,
OR THE
ROMAN BATHS
FOUND IN
ITALY, BRITAIN, FRANCE, SWITZERLAND, &c. &c.

WITH SOME NOTICES
OF THE MOSAICS AND PAINTINGS WHICH FORMED A PART
OF THEIR DECORATIONS,
ESPECIALLY OF THE THERMÆ OF TITUS AND CONSTANTINE.

BY
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1864.



P R E F A C E .

IN endeavouring to give some brief account of the ancient Roman Thermæ, I was surprised to find how meagre and scattered were the materials of information. Though much has been written on the construction of the Roman Bath by the learned Cameron, yet the history of the British Baths has never been attempted in a comprehensive manner. Detached works on a few of the British Thermæ no doubt exist, but for the most part they are not readily accessible. Lysons' large folios are seldom to be met with, which contain interesting accounts of several Baths, found at Bignor, Woodchester, and other places. I am aware that I have omitted to mention several of the Ruins of ancient Baths, both British and Continental; but my object was rather to show the identity of structure of the Roman Bath found in Britain, Italy, France, Switzerland, Germany, &c., and I have collected a sufficient number to answer my purpose. My intention, moreover, is to exhibit the Archeological and Decorative features of the Baths, rather than to elucidate their Medical Properties; though I have selected a few pages from professional writers, with a view to explain the advantages of the Hot-Air Bath as a valuable Medical Agent, and to suggest the expediency of building such Baths more extensively throughout the kingdom.

My official position in Turkey as Physician on the Medical Staff of the British Army, enabled me to test the efficacy of the Bath as a Therapeutic agent; while a residence of many months in Rome gave me abundant leisure to examine the ruins of the ancient Thermæ of Diocletian, of Caracalla, of Titus, and others.

N.B. I have a large collection of Drawings, with which I could have illustrated my subject, by a series of Lithographical and Chromo-lithographical representations of the Ancient Thermæ, and the numerous Mosaics and Fresco-paintings found in them, in Italy, Britain, and other countries. But as the cost would be considerable, I am disposed to wait, to ascertain if there be any demand for such illustrations.

R. W.



THERMÆ ROMANO-BRITANNICÆ.

"Quid sit futurum cras, fuge querere, et
Quem fors dierum cumque dabit, lucro
Appone; nec dulces BALNEAS,
Sperne, puer, neque tu choreas."

Horatius, lib. 1, od. ix.

"Quicquid sub terris est, in apricum proferat setas."—*Horatius.*

In the fascinating historical Novel "The Last Days of Pompeii," by Sir Bulwer Lytton, Glaucus is made to exclaim, Well! let us to the BATHS! blest be he who invented Baths! But tell me, Glaucus, are the Baths at Rome really so magnificent? Glaucus turned and recognized Diomed; and suppressing a smile replied,—“Imagine all Pompeii converted into Baths, and then you will form some notion of the size of the imperial Thermæ of Rome, but a notion of the *size* only. Imagine every entertainment for mind and body, enumerate all the gymnastic games our fathers have invented, repeat all the books that Italy and Greece have produced, suppose places for all these games, admirers for all these works, add to these, Baths of the vastest size, the most complicated construction, intersperse the whole with gardens, theatres, porticos, and schools; suppose in one word a City of the Gods composed but of palaces and public edifices, and you may form some faint idea of the Glories of the great Thermæ of Imperial Rome.”

Such is the grandiloquent description of one of our most refined writers—but his protraiture of the magnificence of the ancient Roman Thermæ is not more gorgeous than faithful, however apparently exaggerated. During the reign of the Cæsars,—from Augustus to Constantine, the world had never seen grander buildings than the wonderful Thermæ of Imperial Rome. The burst of admiration from the lips of Glaucus was a just tribute to national greatness in the construction of these luxurious and favourite Thermæ.

* The author has taken a liberty with Horace in substituting the word "*Balneæ*" instead of "*Amores*"—a violation of accuracy, perhaps pardonable, as the quotation seemed applicable to the subject.