

XI. *A further Notice of Vineta, in a Letter addressed to Sir HENRY ELLIS, K.H., F.R.S., Director, from K. R. H. MACKENZIE, Esq., F.S.A.*

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Read March 22, 1855.

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DEAR SIR HENRY,

60, Berners Street, Oxford Street, March 22, 1855.

Mr. Major's paper on the subject of the so-called city of Vineta, lately read before the Society of Antiquaries, together with the interest which I know you to have in the question, afford a sufficient apology for the few lines I now address to you, for communication to the Society.

In 1851, while on a visit in Pomerania, I took advantage of my vicinity to the island of Usedom, to visit the reef of rocks with which the legend of Vineta has become connected. At the foot of the Streckelberg are situated the rocks in question, and, although some of the stones have very fantastic forms, there is certainly nothing to explain how it happened that the place should be so associated with the idea of a town. Still I found, although my boatman himself was a sceptic, that the countrypeople thereabouts believed in the story of a sunken city, destroyed, like the cities of the Plain of the Dead Sea, for its idolatry and wickedness, and also associated with the place traditions of immense but concealed wealth, with the ordinary accompaniment of a spirit to watch it.

It is curious to read in Kantzow (ob. 1542) a description of the place, as it appeared to a visitor who believed in the story. As Mr. Major did not seem to me to refer to his visit, I may be excused for translating the passage (Hoch Deutsche Chronik, ed. Meden, lib. ii. pp. 34 et seq.) :—"And it is true," says the worthy man, "that the remains (of Vineta) exist to the present day; for on the way across the Peene from Wolgast into Usedom, there is a village named Damerow, about two miles (German) from Wolgast, where, about a quarter of a mile to sea (the ocean having encroached upon the land thus much since then) one may see great stones and foundations. I, as well as others, have rowed thither, and examined them carefully. There is now no brickwork visible at the place; so many hundred years have passed since the destruction of the city that it is impossible for any to have remained in that stormy sea. The great foundation stones, however, are still there, lying in rows in the usual way that they are placed under houses, one by one, and here and there one above another. Some of these stones are so tall as to reach ell-high above the water, so that it is believed that their

churches and assembly houses stood in those parts. The other stones plainly show the direction of the streets, by the order in which they lie, stretched along the length and breadth of the city. The fishermen told me that the paving-stones of the streets were in some parts still entire, but covered with sea-moss (*uebermoset*), and therefore not to be seen, although with a long pointed pole or lance they might easily be felt. Thus were the stones laid; and, as we rowed over the city, we saw that the place was built lying from east to west. On account of the depth of the sea, however, we could not tell how great the extent of the place was, but, from what we saw, we thought it about the size of Lübeck, a short quarter of a mile in length, but broader than Lübeck."

Thus far Kantzow; and, with the sole exception of his having idealised a great deal, his description fits the present time very well. A more useful purpose than supplying a subject for literary controversy, however, has now been made of the rocks, as they have been employed in constructing a new pier and harbour at Swinemünde. The place, my fisherman told me, was much frequented by bathers from the Baltic Brighton, Misdroy, on the island of Wollin, who came to stare at the remains of the sunken city.

In Kantzow's account of the history of Vineta, Helmold's version of Adam of Bremen's History of Julin, or Jumne, the present Wollin, is applied to that city. Still it is evident, from his reference to the three seas surrounding the island of Wollin, that Kantzow was not thinking at the moment of the site of Vineta at the Streckelberg, although, with the confusion which compilers of his standing seem to be tormented with, he refers to his visit to Usedom almost in the same breath.

In Saxo Grammaticus, Harald, when unseated by Schwenotto, fled to Wollin; in Helmold he fled to Vineta; but in every other particular the history of the destruction of the two places is identical. Schwenotto in both instances came down upon the place and desolated it, in consequence of the refuge afforded to Harald. Kantzow gives no account of the submersion of Vineta by the waves.

While numerous coins, not only Wendic, but Kufic, Byzantine, and Italian, have been found in the ruins of ancient Jumne, about a mile north-east of modern Wollin, I have never been able to find any mention of similar discoveries at the Streckelberg reef, nor did I hear of any on my visit.

I am therefore led to the conclusion that the history of the grandeur and fall of Vineta is to be referred to Julin solely, and that if an origin be sought for the name of Vineta, it might be found in Rügen, where Tacitus (I think in the Germania) locates the head-quarters of the Veneti.

I remain, dear Sir Henry, yours faithfully,

K. R. H. MACKENZIE.