T

C

THE

EL



AN UNEXPECTED JOURNEY

LICEO SCIENTIFICO A. EINSTEIN 3 ALS 2013 – 2014

It was still dark outside when I heard the voices of the Druid and my father. They woke me up. They were talking about something important and their voices were concerned.

My father was the chief of our village, Eboracum. The village was situated in the centre-east of Britain and it was made up of twenty-six families who lived in wooden huts. The huts were built by the men of the village. First of all they picked up all the necessary material (branches, wooden beams..) from the forest, then they built the hut’s walls using twisted branches and wooden beams and finally they covered the hut with painted clay to make it permeable and stable.



*Eboracum*

The Druid usually made ceremonies and sacrifices to pray the immortal gods of nature in Nemeton, the sacred area of the village. The Druid imparted to the youth many things respecting the extent of the world, the nature, the stars and their motion, the power and the majesty of the immortal gods. His principal tenet was to love the nature and appreciate all that it offered to us. He wasn’t only a priest but he was also a legislator: he interpreted the ancient laws that he had learnt by heart. He taught us about traditions of our people, stories of gods and heroes, ancient wisdom of herbs, medicaments and spells. He knew to interpret the future, the destiny of men and the Gods’ will.

The village was surrounded by a high and defensive fence and a deep ditch. The fence had protected us for long years, but it was becoming useless!

The Eboracum’s territory was characterized by hills, forests, meadows, pastures and rivers so people used to cultivating fields, hunting and fishing animals to survive. In addition there were many mines so men used to extract minerals to fashion metals such as iron and bronze, and realize artefacts.

Eboracum wasn’t the only village in the centre-east of Britain. There were many other villages near us. The villages were obeyed by the Romans. Since the arrival of the Romans in our land, life had changed for all of us!

By now I was awake and after a good breakfast, I went into the forest over the hill to collect firewood with my older brothers.

I had 12 years and so I had to help my family. My parents expected responsibility and participation in the life of the village from me. While we were doing our job, we heard some voices coming from the edge of the forest so we approached a bit scared to the bushes. We could see an incredible scene: a group of Roman soldiers was digging a long ditch wide 7-8 feet and deep one arm. They had been working hard all day and they sometimes stopped to quench their thirst drinking from sheepskin’s bottles.

We were frightened at this scene because we didn’t know what was going on, so we ran away and we went to our village. Here, we found our father who was training using swords with other warriors. We told him what we had seen. My father reassured us telling that it was the construction of one of the Roman roads which now crossed the entire Britain.

He explained to me that our men had controlled the Romans for a long time. During this period the Romans began the construction of long straight roads for military, political and commercial purposes. Roman roads were essentially for the growth of their empire. They made more faster the move of their army. Initially they dug a ditch, then they filled it with layers of earth, stone and sand until they reached the level of the ground. At the end the whole was cemented with the mortar. In addition they built channels for drainage of rain water on the sides of the ditch.

Listening to my father, I realized the Romans were more expert than Britain peoples. We had to resign ourselves to the presence of the Roman army.

We spent the rest of the day playing war and imagining the defeat of our invaders.

The days passed and after spring my father told me that he had decided to send me to Londinium with my uncle and other men. My uncle knew how to fashion metals and he was highly skilful in working them. He forged gold jewellery and other precious objects of all kinds. He decided to try to sell their goods in Londinium which later the Roman invasion was becoming an important harbour and it was expanding immoderately. I accepted willingly the request imagining the adventurous journey that I could take and the wonders that I could learn.

The preparations for the departure lasted several days. We loaded into the wagon some foods and artefacts that my uncle wanted to sell. In those days I often saw my mother who was bursting into tears for my departure.

When arrived the day of departure, it was the dawn of a warm summer day, the caravan, consisting of four wagons pulled by cows and 12 men, started the long journey. We reached Londinium using Roman roads: they were comfortable, fast and safe.

 *Roman roads*

Our journey lasted several weeks. During the day we traveled, and during the night we camped in the woods or we found hospitality in the villages.

During the trip I made interessant discoveries: in clearings, at strategic points, the Romans had set up camps. The camp was organized into some tents of different sizes that were made of skin of animals. There were often wooden constructions. The camp offered Roman legions hospitality. The camp was preferably constructed near watercourses, woods and meadows so they could get supplies of water, timber and forage.

I also observed Roman ability in building bridges over rivers: I was amazed and admired.

We tried to not talk to them and they, after checking our load, let us make our way safely. However, on more than one occasion I had a lot of fear… and the fault wasn’t of the Romans!

One day we were fording the river with difficulty... when we heard screams behind us… a group of armed men was attacking toplunder us. They were Celtic warriors. They looked aggressive and wild. They were robust, their face was painted in blue (the colour blue was obtained by the plant called *Guado*) and they had got long hair. They wore red clothes and they were armed with swords, lances, shields and helmets.
We defended ourselves with ferocity. I put into practice all the techniques of fight that my father had taught to me and my brothers during the long winter evenings. At the end we managed to scare off the warriors and save almost all of our precious cargo. This adventure allowed me to prove that now I wasn’t a child. I was a man!

Finally we arrived in Londinium and what I saw was wonderful! I remembered when the Druid narrated to me the growth of this city with the arrival of the Romans. He told me that one time a young boy was compelled to leave our village and to go to Londinium. Before the arrival of the Romans, Londinium was a settlement of people composed only by wooden buildings. The Romans turned it into an important commercial centre. They built roads and infrastructures to make it similar of “Rome”, their native land. The boy had to help the Romans to expand Londinium building different public buildings that he had never seen before. In particular, he realized the construction of a bridge that allowed people to cross the river without getting wet. When I could see what the Druid had told me I felt shocked and amazed! My uncle found accommodation for us at an inn, the couches were less comfortable than them we had left in my village, but we ate very well and drank plenty of water. I ate a good broth and a good wild meat.

****

*Londinium*

That evening, when I went to bed, for the first time I felt homesick so I wanted to return to my home and see my mother.

The next morning my uncle left me free to explore the city. Walking through the alleys, I came to the river. It was the largest river I have ever seen, which the Romans called “Tamesis”.
Its large bed was crossed by boats of various types and some merchant boats were anchored in the harbour.

The merchant boats were large about 10-11 steps and long about 25-26 steps. The dimensions were suitable for the transport of large quantities of goods. The Romans transported oils, spices, cereals and products coming from their lands in large containers, which they called “amphorae”. The Romans realized that the transport of goods by sea was more convenient than by land: in this way the trip was fast and secure enough.

 *Roman boat*

As a matter of fact, my uncle decided to barter the artefacts that he had forged in exchange for some Roman products. He hoped to gain something in order to live better.

While my uncle was working I explored the inside of the city; there were different buildings that I had never seen before. An enormous public building collocated in the centre of a square fascinated me. The Romans called it “Forum” or civic centre. It was always crowded with people. The Romans used it to discuss political, administrative and economic affairs.

In addition the “Forum” gave access to the “Basilica”. It was a law court and a town hall.

There was a “Thermae” (Roman bath) which was a centre not only for bathing, but also socializing. I was astonished at looking how the Romans could project complex systems of town planning and architecture. They were supplied with water from the Thames. The water could be heated by a log fire before being channelled into the hot bathing rooms.

There were some buildings where people went to pray their Gods. The major ones were the temples of Jupiter and Isis.

The Roman fort, collocated in the outskirts of the city, had a lot of importance. It was the place where the Roman legions stayed for training.

Londinium had also an “Amphitheatre” ,circular in shape, used by the Romans for public events such as gladiator combats, chariot races, venationes (animal slayings) and executions.

I noticed that the Romans spoke a different and strange language from mine.. the “Latin”. I didn’t know neither read nor write, but I realized that the Celts, who lived in Londinium just before the arrival of the Romans, had learnt from them how to read and write. So the Romans hadn’t brought only building-innovations in these territories but they had changed the Britain’s culture. My culture was characterized by oral traditions, on the contrary the Romans used to write their traditions and customs. I was interested in learning how to read and write, so during my stay in Londinium, I had learnt it. One of the major ability of the Romans was that they were able to convert the local people from Celtic warriors and Druids into Romanised gentlemen.

However the Celts kept the use of their language. I noticed that many Latin words were incorporated into Celtic language but the Latin wasn’t spoken by the Celts.

Two summers were passed from my stay in Londinium… one morning I woke up listening a big confusion coming from the forum. I went there to see what was happening and I saw that a mass of people was waiting someone very important, who was appositely coming from Rome.

I saw an imposing man on a horseback arriving to the forum. The crowd was screaming: “Adrian, Adrian is coming!”. He was the Roman Emperor Adrian and beside him Roman legions were following him. He greeted the crowd and gave orders to the legions.

After he had given orders to the legions I could understand that the soldiers were preparing to embark on a journey toward the centre, in my lands.

I reported what I had seen and I had listened to my uncle and we decided to leave as soon as possible in order to return to the village and warn people of the arrival of Roman legions and a possible attack.

We prepared the caravan and a few days after the departure of the Romans we started the journey again. Taking advantage of new roads that the Romans had built, we arrived quickly to our village.

The Romans had already taken possession of the land not far from my village and they were building a construction. The intent of the Romans was not to attack our village but to protect ourselves from the raids of Pitti’s tribes, who came from Caledonia. Hadrian’s wish was to keep intact his empire. As a matter of fact, the Pitti threatened our village and the surrounding villages for a long time.

After three years the Romans completed that immense construction that they called Hadrian's Wall, in honour of the emperor Hadrian who started the construction. The wall was large 3 steps and high 5 steps.

The Romans invaded Britain’s lands and obliged people to administer territories according to their political and administer organization but they also brought innovations (for example they created a network of communication) and so they improved our conditions of living (people could finally move).

They were able to change the way people lived and the land where people lived.



*Hadrian’s Wall*

Lavoro a cura di: Ballarin Kristina, Decorte Aurora e Formentin Luca