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ENGLISH VILLAGES

BY

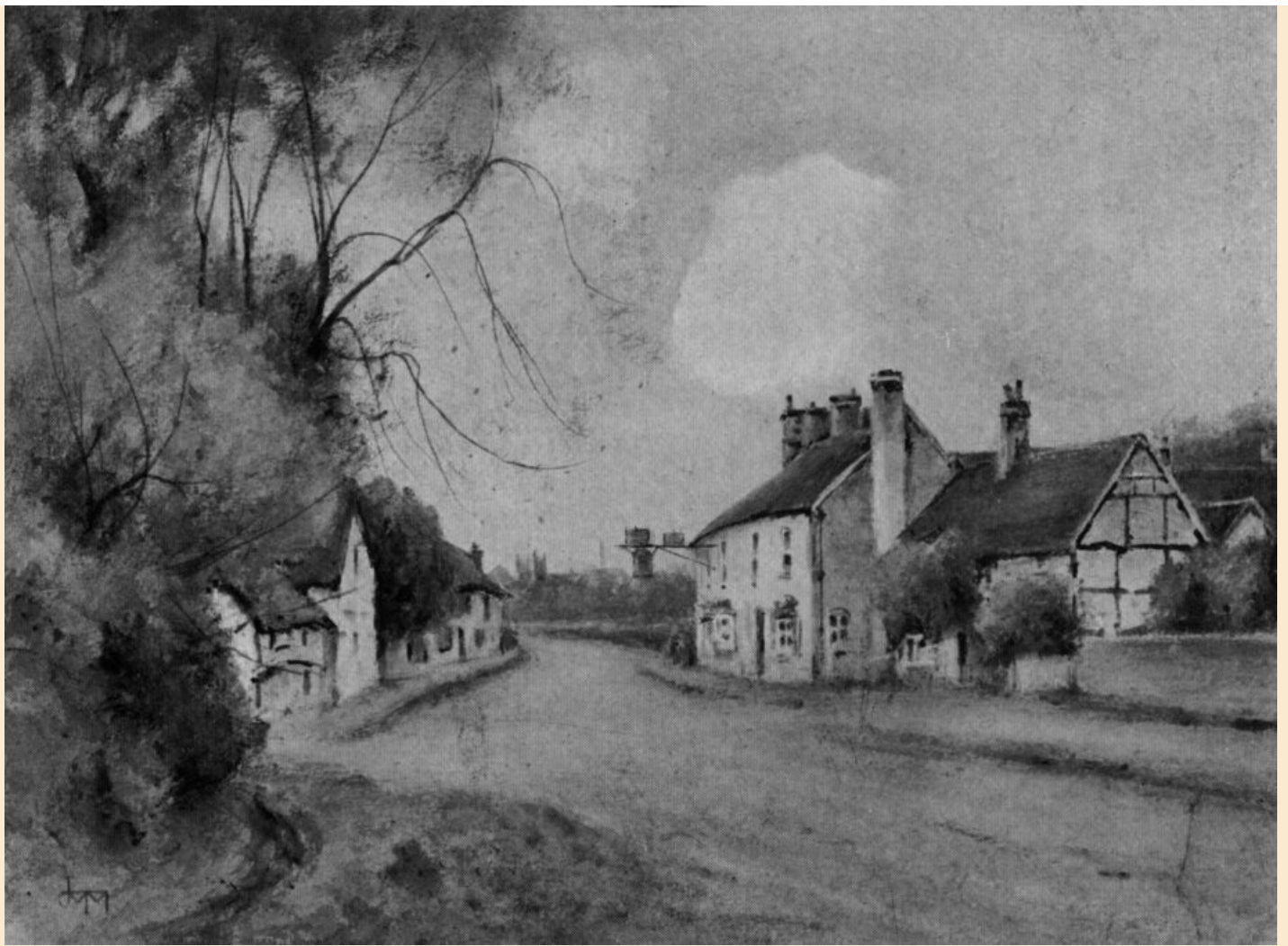
P. H. DITCHFIELD

M.A., F.S.A.

WITH ONE HUNDRED ILLUSTRATIONS

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ENGLISH VILLAGES

BY

P.H. DITCHFIELD M.A., F.S.A.

TO MY WIFE

PREFACE

Eleven years ago my little book on the antiquities of English villages was published. Its object was to interest our rustic neighbours in their surroundings, to record the social life of the people at various times—their feasts and fairs, sports and pastimes, faiths and superstitions—and to describe the scenes which once took place in the fields and lanes they know so well. A friendly reviewer remarked that the wonder was that a book of that kind had never been written before, and that that was the first attempt to give a popular and readable sketch of the history and associations of our villages. In the present work I have attempted to fill in the sketch with greater detail, and to write not only for the villagers themselves, but for all those who by education are able to take a more intelligent interest in the study of the past.

During the last decade many village histories have been written, and if this book should be of service to anyone who is compiling the chronicles of some rural world, or if it should induce some who have the necessary leisure and ability to undertake such works, it will not have been written in vain.

One of the most distressing features of modern village life is the continual decrease of the population. The rural exodus is an alarming and very real danger to the welfare of social England. The country is considered

dull and life therein dreary both by squire and peasant alike. Hence the attractions of towns or the delights of travel empty our villages. The manor-house is closed and labourers are scarce. To increase the attractions of our villages, to arouse an interest in their past history and social life, is worth attempting; and perhaps this Story may be of some use in fostering local patriotism, and in reconciling those who spend their lives far from the busy hives of men to their lot, when they find how much interest lies immediately around them.

The study of archaeology has been pursued with much vigour during recent years, and increased knowledge has overthrown the many wild theories and conjectures which were gravely pronounced to be ascertained facts by the antiquaries of fifty years ago. Gildas, Geoffrey of Monmouth, or Richard of Cirencester are no longer accepted as safe and infallible guides. We know that there were such people as the Druids, but we no longer attribute to them the great stone circles nor imagine them sacrificing on "Druid's altars," as our forefathers called the dolmens. The history of Britain no longer begins with the advent of Julius Caesar, nor is his account of the Celtic tribes and their manners accepted as a full and complete statement of all that is known about them. The study of flint implements, of barrows and earthworks, has considerably thrown back our historical horizon and enabled us to understand the conditions of life in our island in the early days of a remote past before the dawn of history. The systematic excavation of Silchester, so ably conducted by the Society of Antiquaries, and of other Roman sites of towns and villas, enables us to realise more clearly the history of Britain under the rule of the Empire; and the study of the etymology of place-names has overthrown many of the absurd derivations which found a place in the old county histories, and are often repeated by the writers of modern guide books. Moreover patient labour amid old records, rolls, and charters, has vastly increased our knowledge of the history of manors; and the ancient parish registers and churchwardens' account books have been made to yield their store of information for the benefit of industrious students and scholars. There has been much destruction and much construction; and this good work will doubtless continue, until at length English archaeology may be dignified with the title of an exact science. Destruction of another kind is much to be deplored, which has left its mark on many an English village. The so-called "restoration" of ancient parish churches, frequently conducted by men ignorant of the best traditions of English architecture, the obliteration of the old architectural features, the entire destruction of many interesting buildings, have wrought deplorable ruin in our villages, and severed the links with the past which now can never be repaired. The progress of antiquarian knowledge will I trust arrest the destroyer's hand and prevent any further spoliation of our diminished inheritance. If this book should be found useful in stimulating an intelligent interest in architectural studies, and in protecting our ancient buildings from such acts of vandalism, its purpose will have been abundantly achieved.

I am indebted to many friends and acquaintances for much information which has been useful to me in writing this book; to Sir John Evans whose works are invaluable to all students of ancient stone and bronze implements; to Dr. Cox whose little book on *How to Write the History of a Parish* is a sure and certain guide to local historians; to Mr. St. John Hope and Mr. Fallow for much information contained in their valuable monograph on *Old Church Plate*; to the late Dr. Stevens, of Reading; to Mr. Shrubsole of the same town; to Mr. Gibbins, the author of *The Industrial History of England*, for the use of an illustration from his book; to Mr. Melville, Mr. P.J. Colson, and the Rev. W. Marshall for their photographic aid; and to many other authors who are only known to me by their valuable works. To all of these gentlemen I desire to express my thanks, and also to Mr. Mackintosh for his artistic sketch of a typical English village, which forms the frontispiece of my book.

P.H.D.

BARKHAM RECTORY

May, 1901

CONTENTS

- I. [INTRODUCTION](#)
- II. [PREHISTORIC REMAINS](#)
- III. [TUMULI OR BARROWS](#)
- IV. [PIT AND PILE DWELLINGS](#)
- V. [CROMLECHS, CAMPS, AND EARTHWORKS](#)
- VI. [ROMAN RELICS](#)
- VII. [ANGLO-SAXON VILLAGES](#)
- VIII. [SAXON RELICS](#)
- IX. [ENGLISH ARCHITECTURE](#)
- X. [NORMAN VILLAGES AND THE "DOMESDAY BOOK"](#)
- XI. [NORMAN CASTLES](#)
- XII. [MONASTERIES](#)
- XIII. [THE MANOR-HOUSE](#)
- XIV. [PARISH CHURCHES](#)
- XV. [CHURCH PLATE](#)
- XVI. [MONUMENTAL EFFIGIES AND BRASSES](#)
- XVII. [THE PARISH CHEST](#)
- XVIII. [STAINED GLASS, TILES, AND MURAL PAINTINGS](#)
- XIX. [CHURCH BELLS](#)
- XX. [THE MEDIAEVAL VILLAGE](#)
- XXI. [VILLAGE SPORTS AND PASTIMES](#)

ILLUSTRATIONS

FULL-PAGE (photographs)
[Click on photographs to enlarge]

[An English Village street](#)
[Palaeolithic implements](#)
[Neolithic and bronze implements](#)
[Old market cross](#)
[Broughton Castle](#)
[Netley Abbey, south transept](#)
[Southcote Manor, showing moat and pigeon-house](#)
[Old Manor-house—Upton Court](#)
[Stone Tithe Barn, Bradford-on-Avon](#)
[Village church in the Vale](#)
[An ancient village](#)
[Anne Hathaway's cottage](#)
[Old stocks and whipping-post](#)
[Village inn, with old Tithe Barn of Reading Abbey](#)
[Old cottages](#)

IN THE TEXT (drawings)

[Barbed and leaf-shaped arrow-heads](#)
[Plan of a tumulus](#)
[Plan of tumulus called Wayland Smith's Cave, Berkshire](#)
[Celtic cinerary urn](#)
[Articles found in pit dwellings](#)
[Iron spear-head found at Hedsor](#)
[Menhir](#)
[Rollright stones \(from Camden's Britannia, 1607\)](#)
[Dolmen](#)
[Plan and section of Chun Castle](#)
[The White Horse at Uffington](#)
[Plan of Silchester](#)
[Capital of column](#)
[Roman force-pump](#)
[Tesselated pavement](#)
[Beating acorns for swine \(from the Cotton MS., Nero, c. 4\)](#)
[House of Saxon thane](#)
[Wheel plough \(from the Bayeux tapestry\)](#)
[Smithy \(from the Cotton MS., B 4\)](#)
[Saxon relics](#)
[Consecration of a Saxon church](#)
[Tower of Barnack Church, Northamptonshire](#)
[Doorway, Earl's Barton Church](#)
[Tower window, Monkwearmouth Church](#)
[Sculptured head of doorway, Fordington Church, Dorset](#)
[Norman capitals](#)
[Norman ornamental mouldings](#)
[Croyland Abbey Church, Lincolnshire](#)
[Semi-Norman arch, Church of St. Cross](#)
[Early English piers and capitals](#)
[Dog-tooth ornament](#)
[Brownsover Chapel, Warwickshire](#)
[Ball-flower mouldings, Tewkesbury Abbey](#)
[Ogee arch](#)
[Decorated capitals, Hanwell and Chacombe](#)
[Decorated windows, Merton College Chapel; Sandiacre, Derbyshire](#)
[Decorated mouldings, Elton, Huntingdonshire; Austrey, Warwickshire](#)
[Perpendicular window, Merton College Chapel, Oxford](#)
[Tudor arch, vestry door, Adderbury Church, Oxon](#)
[Perpendicular parapet, St. Erasmus' Chapel, Westminster Abbey](#)

[Perpendicular moulding, window, Christchurch, Oxford](#)
[Diagram of a manor](#)
[Ancient plan of Old Sarum](#)
[A Norman castle](#)
[Tournament](#)
[A monk transcribing](#)
[Ockwells manor-house](#)
[Richmond Palace](#)
[Doorway and staircase, Ufton Court](#)
[The porch, Ufton Court](#)
[Window of south wing, Ufton Court](#)
[Ancient pew-work, Tysoe Church, Warwickshire](#)
[Early English screen, Thurcaston, Leicestershire](#)
[Norman piscina, Romsey Church, Hants](#)
[Lowside window, Dallington Church, Northamptonshire](#)
[Reading-pew, seventeenth century, Langley Chapel, Salop.](#)
[Chalice and paten, Sandford, Oxfordshire](#)
[Pre-Reformation plate](#)
[Censer or thurible](#)
[Mural paintings \(several\)](#)
[Ancient sanctus bell found at Warwick](#)

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Local histories—Ignorance and destruction—Advantages of the study of village antiquities—Description of an English village—The church— The manor-house—Prehistoric people—Later inhabitants—Saxons—Village inn—Village green—Legends.

To write a complete history of any village is one of the hardest literary labours which anyone can undertake. The soil is hard, and the crop after the expenditure of much toil is often very scanty. In many cases the records are few and difficult to discover, buried amidst the mass of papers at the Record Office, or entombed in some dusty corner of the Diocesan Registry. Days may be spent in searching for these treasures of knowledge with regard to the past history of a village without any adequate result; but sometimes fortune favours the industrious toiler, and he discovers a rich ore which rewards him for all his pains. Slowly his store of facts grows, and he is at last able to piece together the history of his little rural world, which time and the neglect of past generations had consigned to dusty oblivion.

In recent years several village histories have been written with varied success by both competent and incompetent scribes; but such books are few in number, and we still have to deplore the fact that so little is known about the hamlets in which we live. All writers seem to join in the same lament, and mourn over the ignorance that prevails in rural England with regard to the treasures of antiquity, history, and folklore, which are to be found almost everywhere. We may still echo the words of the learned author of *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, the late Mr. Hughes, who said that the present generation know nothing of their own birthplaces, or of the lanes, woods, and fields through which they roam. Not one young man in twenty knows where to find the wood-sorrel, or the bee-orchis; still fewer can tell the country legends, the stories of the old gable-ended farmhouses, or the place where the last skirmish was fought in the Civil War, or where the parish butts stood. Nor is this ignorance confined to the unlearned rustics; it is shared by many educated people, who have travelled abroad and studied the history of Rome or Venice, Frankfort or Bruges, and yet pass by unheeded the rich stores of antiquarian lore, which they witness every day, and never think of examining closely and carefully. There are very few villages in England which have no objects of historical interest, no relics of the past which are worthy of preservation. "Restoration," falsely so called, conducted by ignorant or perverse architects, has destroyed and removed many features of our parish churches; the devastating plough has well-nigh levelled many an ancient barrow; railroads have changed the character of rustic life and killed many an old custom and rural festival. Old legends and quaint stories of the countryside have given place to talks about politics and newspaper gossip. But still much remains if we learn to examine things for ourselves, and endeavour to gather up the relics of the past and save them from the destructive hand of Time.

A great service may thus be rendered not only to the cause of history, but also to the villagers of rural England, by those who have time, leisure, and learning, sufficient to gain some knowledge of bygone times. It adds greatly to the interest of their lives to know something of the place where they live; and it has been well said that every man's concern with his native place has something more in it than the amount of rates and taxes that he has to pay. He may not be able to write a history of his parish, but he can gather up the curious gossip of the neighbourhood, the traditions and stories which have been handed down from former generations. And if anyone is at the pains to acquire some knowledge of local history, and will impart what he knows to his poorer neighbours, he will add greatly to their interest in life. Life is a burden, labour mere drudgery, when a man has nothing in which he can interest himself. When we remember the long hours which an agricultural labourer spends alone, without a creature to speak to, except his horses or the birds, we can imagine how dull his life must be, if his mind be not occupied. But here, on his own ground, he may

find an endless supply of food for thought, which will afford him much greater pleasure and satisfaction than thinking and talking about his neighbours' faults, reflecting upon his wrongs, or imitating the example of one of his class who, when asked by the squire what he was thinking so deeply about, replied, "Mostly naught." To remove the pall of ignorance that darkens the rustic mind, to quicken his understanding and awaken his interest, are certainly desirable objects; although his ignorance is very often shared by his betters, who frequently hazard very strange theories and manifest many curious ideas with regard to village antiquities.

We will walk together through the main roads of the village, and observe some of its many points of interest. Indeed, it is no small thing to live in such a "city of memories" as every village is, when at every turn and corner we meet with something that reminds us of the past, and recalls the pleasing associations of old village life. To those who have lived amid the din and turmoil of a large town, where everybody is in a hurry, and there is nothing but noise, confusion, and bustle, the delicious calm and quietude of an old English village, undisturbed by the world's rude noise, is most grateful. But to live in memory of what has gone before, of the lives and customs of our forefathers, of the strange events that have happened on the very ground upon which we are standing, all this will make us love our village homes and delight in them exceedingly. In most of our large towns the old features are fast disappearing; historical houses have been pulled down to make room for buildings more adapted to present needs, and everything is being modernised; but in the country everything remains the same, and it is not so difficult to let one's thoughts wander into the past, and picture to one's self the old features of village life in bygone times.

Most of our villages have the usual common features, and it is not difficult to describe a typical example, though the details vary very much, and the histories of no two villages are identical. We see arising above the trees the church, the centre of the old village life, both religious, secular, and social. It stands upon a site which has been consecrated to the service of God for many centuries. There is possibly in or near the churchyard a tumulus, or burial mound, which shows that the spot was set apart for some religious observances even before Christianity reached our shores. Here the early Saxon missionary planted his cross and preached in the open air to the gathered villagers. Here a Saxon thane built a rude timber church which was supplanted by an early Norman structure of stone with round arches and curiously carved ornamentation. This building has been added to at various times, and now shows, writ in stone, its strange and varied history. The old time-worn registers, kept in the parish chest in the vestry, breathe the atmosphere of bygone times, and tell the stories and romances of the "rude forefathers of the hamlet." The tombs and monuments of knights and ancient heroes tell many a tale of valour and old-world prowess, of families that have entirely died out, of others that still happily remain amongst us, and record the names and virtues of many an illustrious house. The windows, brasses, bells, and inscriptions, have all some interesting story to relate, which we hope presently to examine more minutely.

Nestling amid the trees we see the manor-house, standing probably on the site of a much older edifice; and this building carries our thoughts back to the Saxon and early Norman times, when the lord of the manor had vassals and serfs under him, held his manorial court, and reigned as a king in his own small domain. The history of the old English manor is a very important one, concerning which much has been written, many questions disputed, and some points still remain to be decided.

Then we notice an old farmhouse which has doubtless seen better days, for there are the remains of an ancient moat around it, as if some family of importance once lived there, and wished to guard themselves and their possessions from troublesome visitors. This moat tells of the times of war and lawlessness, of wild and fierce animals roaming the countryside; and if the walls of the old house could speak how many stories could they tell of the strange customs of our ancestors, of bread riots, of civil wars, and disturbances which once destroyed the tranquillity of our peaceful villages!

We shall endeavour to discover the earliest inhabitants of our villages who left their traces behind in the curious stone and bronze weapons of war or domestic implements, and who lived in far remote periods before the dawn of history. The barrows, or tumuli, which contain their dead bodies tell us much about them; and also the caves and lake dwellings help us to form some very accurate notions of the conditions of life in those distant days. We shall see that the Britons or Celts were far from being the naked woad-dyed savages described by Caesar, whose account has so long been deemed sufficient by the historians of our childhood. We shall call to mind the many waves of invaders which rolled over our country—the Celts, the Romans, Saxons, Danes, and Normans—all of whom have left some traces behind them, and added sundry chapters to the story of our villages.

The fields too proclaim their story, and tell us of the Saxon folk who were our first farmers, and made clearings in the forests, and tilled the same soil we work to-day. They tell us too of the old monks who knew so much about agriculture; and occasionally the plough turns up a rusty sword or cannon ball, which reveals the story of battles and civil wars which we trust have passed away from our land for ever. The very names of the fields are not without signification, and tell us of animals which are now extinct, of the manners of our forefathers, of the old methods of farming, and the common lands which have passed away.

The old village inn, with its curiously painted signboard, has its own story to tell, of the old coaching days, and of the great people who used to travel along the main roads, and were sometimes snowed up in a drift just below "The Magpie," which had always good accommodation for travellers, and stabling for fifty horses. All was activity in the stable yard when the coach came in; the villagers crowded round the inn doors to see the great folks from London who were regaling themselves with well-cooked English joints; and if they stayed all night, could find comfortable beds with lavender-scented sheets, and every attention. But the railroads and iron steeds have changed all that; until yesterday the roads were deserted, and the glory of the old inns departed. Bicyclists now speed along in the track of the old coaches; but they are not quite so picturesque, and the bicycle bell is less musical than the cheerful posthorn.

On the summit of a neighbouring hill we see a curious formation which is probably an earthwork, constructed many centuries ago by the early dwellers in this district for the purpose of defence in dangerous times, when the approach of a neighbouring tribe, or the advance of a company of free-booting invaders, threatened them with death or the destruction of their flocks and herds. These earthworks we shall examine more closely. An ivy-covered ruin near the church shows the remains of a monastic cell or monastery; and in

the distance perhaps we can see the outlines of an old Norman keep or castle; all of these relate to the story of our villages, and afford us subjects for investigation and research.

Then there is the village green where so many generations of the villagers have disported themselves, danced the old country dances (now alas! forgotten), and reared the merry May-pole, and crowned their queen. Here they held their rural sports, and fought their bouts of quarter-staff and cudgel-play, grinned through horse-collars, and played pipe and tabor at many a rustic feast, when life was young and England merry. We shall try to picture to ourselves these happy scenes of innocent diversion which cheered the hearts of our forefathers in bygone times.

[ENLARGE](#)



AN ENGLISH VILLAGE STREET

We will try to collect the curious legends and stories which were told to us by our grandsires, and are almost forgotten by the present generation. These we should treasure up, lest they should be for ever lost. Local tradition has often led the way to important discoveries.

In this brief circuit of an ordinary English village we have found many objects which are calculated to excite our imagination and to stimulate inquiry. A closer examination will well repay our study, and reward the labour of the investigator. It is satisfactory to know that all possible discoveries as to the antiquities of our villages have not yet been made. We have still much to learn, and the earth has not yet disclosed all its treasures. Roman villas still remain buried; the sepulchres of many a Saxon chieftain or early nomad Celt are still unexplored; the pile dwellings and cave domiciles of the early inhabitants of our country have still to be discovered; and piles of records and historical documents have still to be sought out, arranged, and examined. So there is much work to be done by the antiquary for many a long year; and every little discovery, and the results of every patient research, assist in accumulating that store of knowledge which is gradually being compiled by the hard labour of our English historians and antiquaries.

CHAPTER II

PREHISTORIC REMAINS

Pytheas of Marseilles—Discovery of flint implements—Geological changes—Palaeolithic man—Eolithics—Palaeolithic implements—Drift men—Cave men—Neolithic man and his weapons—Dolichocephalic—Celtic or Brachycephalic race—The Iron Age.

It was customary some years ago to begin the history of any country with the statement, "Of the early inhabitants nothing is known with any certainty," and to commence the history of England with the landing of Julius Caesar B.C. 55. If this book had been written forty or fifty years ago it might have been stated that our first knowledge of Britain dates from 330 B.C. when Pytheas of Marseilles visited it, and described his impressions. He says that the climate was foggy, a characteristic which it has not altogether lost, that the people cultivated the ground and used beer and mead as beverages. Our villagers still follow the example of their ancestors in their use of one at least of these drinks.

Of the history of all the ages prior to the advent of this Pytheas all written record is silent. Hence we have to play the part of scientific detectives, examine the footprints of the early man who inhabited our island, hunt for odds and ends which he has left behind, to rake over his kitchen middens, pick up his old tools, and even open his burial mound.

About fifty years ago the attention of the scientific world was drawn to the flint implements which were scattered over the surface of our fields and in our gravel pits and mountain caves; and inquiring minds began

to speculate as to their origin. The collections made at Amiens and Abbeville and other places began to convince men of the existence of an unknown and unimagined race, and it gradually dawned on us that on our moors and downs were the tombs of a race of men who fashioned their weapons of war and implements of peace out of flint. These discoveries have pushed back our knowledge of man to an antiquity formerly never dreamed of, and enlarged considerably our historical horizon. So we will endeavour to discover what kind of men they were, who roamed our fields and woods before any historical records were written, and mark the very considerable traces of their occupation which they have left behind.

The condition of life and the character and climate of the country were very different in early times from what they are in the present day; and in endeavouring to discover the kind of people who dwelt here in prehistoric times, we must hear what the geologists have to tell us about the physical aspect of Britain in that period. There was a time when this country was connected with the Continent of Europe, and the English Channel and North Sea were mere valleys with rivers running through them fed by many streams. Where the North Sea now rolls there was the great valley of the Rhine; and as there were no ocean-waves to cross, animals and primitive man wandered northwards and westwards from the Continent, and made their abode here. It is curious to note that the migratory birds when returning to France and Italy, and thence to the sunny regions of Algiers and other parts of Northern Africa, always cross the seas where in remote ages there was dry land. They always traverse the same route; and it appears that the recollection of the places where their ancestors crossed has been preserved by them through all the centuries that have elapsed since "the silver streak" was formed that severs England from her neighbours.

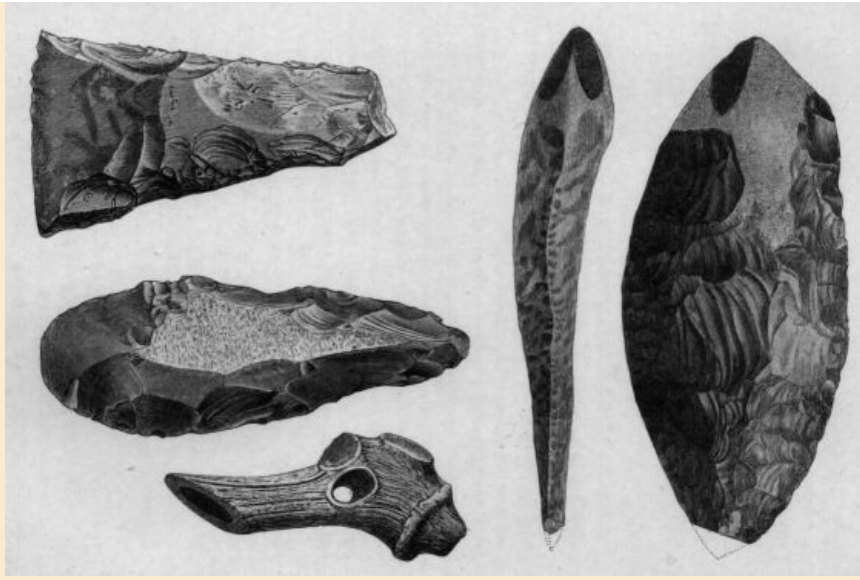
In the times of which we are speaking the land was much higher than it is now. Snowdon was 600 feet greater, and the climate was much colder and more rigorous. Glaciers like those in Switzerland were in all the higher valleys, and the marks of the action of the ice are still plainly seen on the rocky cliffs that border many a ravine. Moreover we find in the valleys many detached rocks, immense boulders, the nature of which is quite different from the character of the stone in the neighbourhood. These were carried down by the glaciers from higher elevations, and deposited, when the ice melted, in the lower valleys. Hence in this glacial period the condition of the country was very different from what it is now.

Then a remarkable change took place. The land began to sink, and its elevation so much decreased that the central part of the country became a huge lake, and the peak of Snowdon was an island surrounded by the sea which washed with its waves the lofty shoulder of the mountain. This is the reason why shells and shingle are found in high elevations. The Ice Age passed away and the climate became warmer. The Gulf Stream found its way to our shores, and the country was covered by a warm ocean having islands raising their heads above the surface. Sharks swam around, whose teeth we find now buried in beds of clay. The land continued to rise, and attracted by the sunshine and the more genial climate animals from the Continent wandered northwards, and with them came man. Caves, now high amongst the hills, but then on a level with the rivers, were his first abode, and contain many relics of his occupancy, together with the bones of extinct animals. The land appears to have risen, and the climate became colder. The sea worked its relentless way through the chalk hills on the south and gradually met the waves of the North Sea which flowed over the old Rhine valley. It widened also the narrow strait that severed the country from Ireland, and the outline and contour of the island began more nearly to resemble that with which we are now familiar.

A vast period of time was necessary to accomplish all these immense changes; and it is impossible to speculate with any degree of certainty how long that period was, which transformed the icebound surface of our island to a land of verdure and wild forests. We must leave such conjectures and the more detailed accounts of the glacial and post-glacial periods to the geologists, as our present concern is limited to the study of the habits and condition of the men who roamed our fields and forests in prehistoric times. Although no page of history gives us any information concerning them, we can find out from the relics of arms and implements which the earth has preserved for us, what manner of men lived in the old cave dwellings, or constructed their rude huts, and lie buried beneath the vast barrows.

The earliest race of men who inhabited our island was called the Palaeolithic race, from the fact that they used the most ancient form of stone implements. Traces of a still earlier race are said to have been discovered a few years ago on the chalk plateau of the North Down, near Sevenoaks. The flints have some slight hollows in them, as if caused by scraping, and denote that the users must have been of a very low condition of intelligence—able to use a tool but scarcely able to make one. This race has been called the Eolithic; but some antiquaries have thrown doubts upon their existence, and the discovery of these flints is too recent to allow us to speak of them with any degree of certainty.

[ENLARGE](#)



PALAEOLITHIC IMPLEMENTS

The traces of Palaeolithic man are very numerous, and he evidently exercised great skill in bringing his implements to a symmetrical shape by chipping. The use of metals for cutting purposes was entirely unknown; and stone, wood, and bone were the only materials of which these primitive beings availed themselves for the making of weapons or domestic implements. Palaeolithic man lived here during that distant period when this country was united with the Continent, and when the huge mammoth roamed in the wild forests, and powerful and fierce animals struggled for existence in the hills and vales of a cold and inclement country. His weapons and tools were of the rudest description, and made of chipped flint. Many of these have been found in the valley gravels, which had probably been dropped from canoes into the lakes or rivers, or washed down by floods from stations on the shore. Eighty or ninety feet above the present level of the Thames in the higher gravels are these relics found; and they are so abundant that the early inhabitants who used them must have been fairly numerous. Their shape is usually oval, and often pointed into a rude resemblance of the shape of a spear-head. Some flint-flakes are of the knifelike character; others resemble awls, or borers, with sharp points evidently for making holes in skins for the purpose of constructing a garment. Hammer-stones for crushing bones, tools with well-wrought flat edges, scrapers, and other implements, were the stock-in-trade of the earliest inhabitant of our country, and are distinguishable from those used by Neolithic man by their larger and rougher work. The maker of the old stone tools never polished his implements; nor did he fashion any of those finely wrought arrowheads and javelin points, upon which his successor prided himself. The latter discovered that the flints which were dug up were more easily fashioned into various shapes; whereas Palaeolithic man picked up the flints that lay about on the surface of the ground, and chipped them into the form of his rude tools. However, the elder man was acquainted with the use of fire, which he probably obtained by striking flints on blocks of iron pyrites. Wandering about the country in families and tribes, he contrived to exist by hunting the numerous animals that inhabited the primeval forests, and has left us his weapons and tools to tell us what kind of man he was. His implements are found in the drift gravels by the riversides; and from this cause his race are known as drift men, in order to distinguish them from the *cave men*, who seem to have belonged to a little later period.

The first dwellings of man were the caves on the hillsides, before he found out the art of building pile huts. In Palaeolithic times these caves were inhabited by a rude race of feral nomads who lived by the chase, and fashioned the rude tools which we have already described. They were, however, superior to the drift men, and had some notion of art. The principal caves in the British islands containing the relics of the cave folk are the following: Perthichoaren, Denbighshire, wherein were found the remains of Platycnemic man—so named from his having sharp shin-bones; Cefn, St. Asaph; Uphill, Somerset; King's Scar and the Victoria Cave, Settle; Robin Hood's Cave and Pinhole Cave, Derbyshire; Black Rock, Caldy Island, Coycan Caves, Pembrokeshire; King Arthur's Cave, Monmouth; Durdham Downs, Bristol; and sundry others, near Oban, in the valleys of the Trent, Dove, and Nore, and of the Irish Blackwater, and in Caithness.

In these abodes the bones of both men and animals have been found; but these do not all belong to the same period, as the Neolithic people, and those of the Bronze and Iron Ages, followed the occupation of the earlier race. The remains of the different races, however, lie at various depths, those of the earlier race naturally lying the lowest. An examination of the Victoria Cave, Settle, clearly shows this. Outside the entrance there was found a layer of charcoal and burnt bones, and the burnt stones of fireplaces, pottery, coins of the Emperors Trajan and Constantine, and ornaments in bone, ivory, bronze and enamel. The animal remains were those of the *bos longifrons* (Celtic ox), pig, horse, roe, stag, fowl (wild), and grouse. This layer was evidently composed of the relics of a Romano-British people. Below this were found chipped flints, an adze of melaphyre, and a layer of boulders, sand, and clay, brought down by the ice from the higher valley.

Inside the cave in the upper cave earth were found the bones of fox, badger, brown bear, grizzly bear, reindeer, red deer, horse, pig, and goat, and some bones evidently hacked by man. In the lower cave earth there were the remains of the hyena, fox, brown and grizzly bears, elephant, rhinoceros, hippopotamus, urus, bison, and red deer, the hacked bones of a goat, and a small leg-bone of a man.

Some idea of the time which has elapsed since primitive man inhabited this rude dwelling may be formed from these excavations. Two feet below the surface lay the Romano-British layer, and we know therefore that about 1,600 years was required for the earth to accumulate to that depth. The Neolithic layer was six feet

below this; hence 4,800 years would be necessary to form this depth of earth. So we may conclude that at least 6,400 years ago Neolithic man used the cave. A long time previous to this lived the creatures of the lower cave earth, the bison, elephant, and the hyena with the solitary human bone, which belonged to the sharp-shinned race (Platycnemic) of beings, the earliest dwellers in our country.

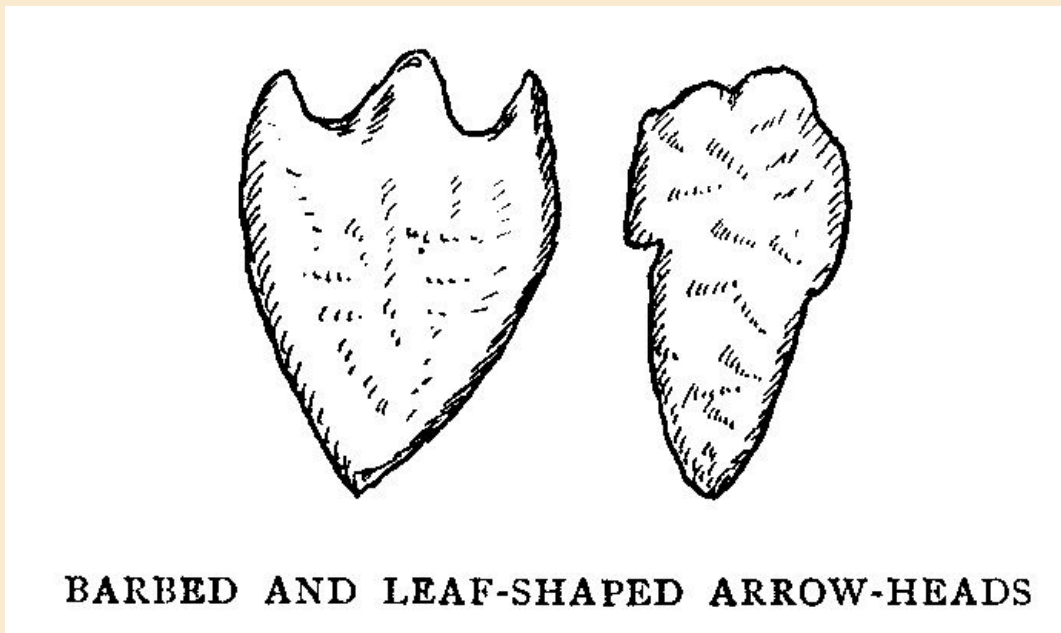
It is doubtful whether Palaeolithic man has left any descendants. The Esquimaux appear to somewhat resemble them. Professor Boyd Dawkins, in his remarkable book, *Cave Hunting*, traces this relationship in the character of implements, methods of obtaining food and cooking it, modes of preparing skins for clothing, and particularly in the remarkable skill of depicting figures on bone which both races display. In carving figures on bone and teeth early man in Britain was certainly more skilful than his successor; but he was a very inferior type of the human race, yet his intelligence and mode of life have been deemed not lower than those of the Australian aborigines.

The animals which roamed through the country in this Pleistocene period were the elk and reindeer, which link us on to the older and colder period when Arctic conditions prevailed; the Irish deer, a creature of great size whose head weighed about eighty pounds; bison, elephant, rhinoceros, hippopotamus, lion, wolf, otter, bear, horse, red deer, roe, urus or gigantic ox, the short-horned ox (*bos longifrons*), boar, badger and many others which survive to the present day, and have therefore a very long line of ancestors.

The successor of the old stone implement maker was Neolithic man, to whom we have already had occasion to refer. Some lengthy period of geological change separates him from his predecessor of the Old Stone Age. Specimens of his handiwork show that he was a much more civilised person than his predecessor, and presented a much higher type of humanity. He had a peculiarly shaped head, the back part of the skull being strangely prolonged; and from this feature he is called *dolichocephalic*. He was small in stature, about 5 feet 6 inches in height, having a dark complexion, and his descendants are the Iberian or Basque races in the Western Pyrenees and may still be traced in parts of Ireland and Wales. The long barrows or mounds, the length of which is greater than the breadth, contain his remains, and we find traces of his existence in all the western countries of Europe.

He had made many discoveries which were unknown to his Old Stone predecessor. Instead of always hunting for his food, like an animal, he found out that the earth would give him corn with which he could make bread, if only he took the trouble to cultivate it. Instead of always slaying animals, he found that some were quite ready to be his servants, and give him milk and wool and food. He brought with him to our shores cows and sheep and goats, horses and dogs. Moreover he made pottery, moulding the clay with his hand, and baking it in a fire. He had not discovered the advantages of a kiln. He could spin thread, and weave stuffs, though he usually wore garments of skins.

His dwellings were no longer the caves and forests, for he made for himself rude pit huts, and surrounded himself, his tribe, and cattle with a circular camp. Traces of his agricultural operations may still be found in the "terraces," or strips of ground on hillsides, which preserve the marks of our early Neolithic farmers.



Their implements are far superior to those of the Old Stone men, and are found on the surface of our fields, or on hillsides, where they tended their flocks, or dug their rude pit shelters. Their weapons and tools are highly polished, and have evidently been ground on a grindstone. They are adapted for an endless variety of uses, and are most skilfully and beautifully fashioned. There are finely wrought arrowheads, of three shapes—barbed, tanged and barbed, and leaf-shaped; axes, scrapers for cleansing and preparing skins for clothing, hammer stones, wedges, drills, borers, knives, and many other tools. In the Reading Museum may be seen a heavy quartzite axe and chipped flint hatchet, which were found with some charred timber on an island in the Thames, and were evidently used for scooping out the interior of a boat from a tree with the aid of fire. So this New Stone man knew how to make boats as well as a vast number of other things of which we shall presently speak more particularly. His descendants linger on in South Wales and Ireland, and are short in stature, dark in complexion, and narrow-skulled, like their forefathers a few thousand years ago.

[ENLARGE](#)



NEOLITHIC AND BRONZE IMPLEMENTS

Another wave of invaders swept over our land, and overcame the long-headed Neolithic race. These were the Celtic people, taller and stronger than their predecessors, and distinguished by their fair hair and rounded skulls. From the shape of their heads they are called Brachycephalic, and are believed to have belonged to the original Aryan race, whose birthplace was Southern Asia. At some remote period this wave of invaders poured over Europe and Asia, and has left traces behind it in the languages of all Indo-European nations.

Their weapons were made of bronze, although they still used polished stone implements also. We find chisels, daggers, rings, buttons, and spear-heads, all made of bronze, an alloy of copper and tin, and fashioned by the skilled hands of these early Celtic folk. As they became more civilised, being of an inventive mind, they discovered the use of iron and found it a more convenient metal for fashioning axes to cut down trees.

When Caesar came to Britain he found that the inhabitants knew the use of iron, even the less civilised early Celtic settlers driven northwards and westwards by the Belgae, had iron weapons, and the wild Caledonians in the time of Severus, although they were naked, woad-dyed savages, wore iron collars and girdles and were armed with metal weapons.

Such are some of the relics of antiquity which the soil of our native land retains, as a memorial of the primitive people who first trod upon it. Concerning their lives and records history is silent, until the Conqueror tells us something of our Celtic forefathers. From the scanty remains of prehistoric races, their weapons and tools, we can gather something of the earliest inhabitants of our island, and try to realise their habits and mode of life.

CHAPTER III

TUMULI OR BARROWS

Barrows near churchyards—Their universality—Contents—Food in barrows—Curious burial customs—Belief in future life—Long and round barrows—Interior of barrow—Position of bodies—Cremation— Burial urns—Articles of dress and ornament—Artistic workmanship— Pottery—Remains of agriculture—Organised condition of society among prehistoric people.

Throughout the country we find many artificial mounds which are called *tumuli* or barrows, or in the neighbourhood of Wales, "tumps." These are the ancient burial-places of the early inhabitants of our island, the word "barrow" being derived from the Anglo-Saxon *beorh*, a hill or grave-mound. It is not unusual to see a

barrow in the centre, or near, an old churchyard, as at Taplow, Bucks. The church was built, of course, much later than the erection of the mound; but doubtless the early preachers of the gospel took advantage of the reverence which was paid to these ancient tombs, proclaimed there the story of the cross, and on the spots so consecrated churches were ultimately built.

These mounds have much to tell us of the early inhabitants. To cover the dead with a mound of earth was a custom common to all nations. All over Europe, in Northern Asia, India, and in the new world of America, we find burial-mounds. The pyramids of Egypt are only glorified mounds; and our islands can boast of an endless variety, sometimes consisting of cairns, or heaps of stones, sometimes of huge hills of earth, 130 feet in height, as at Silbury, Wilts, and covering five acres; while others are only small heaps of soil a few feet high.

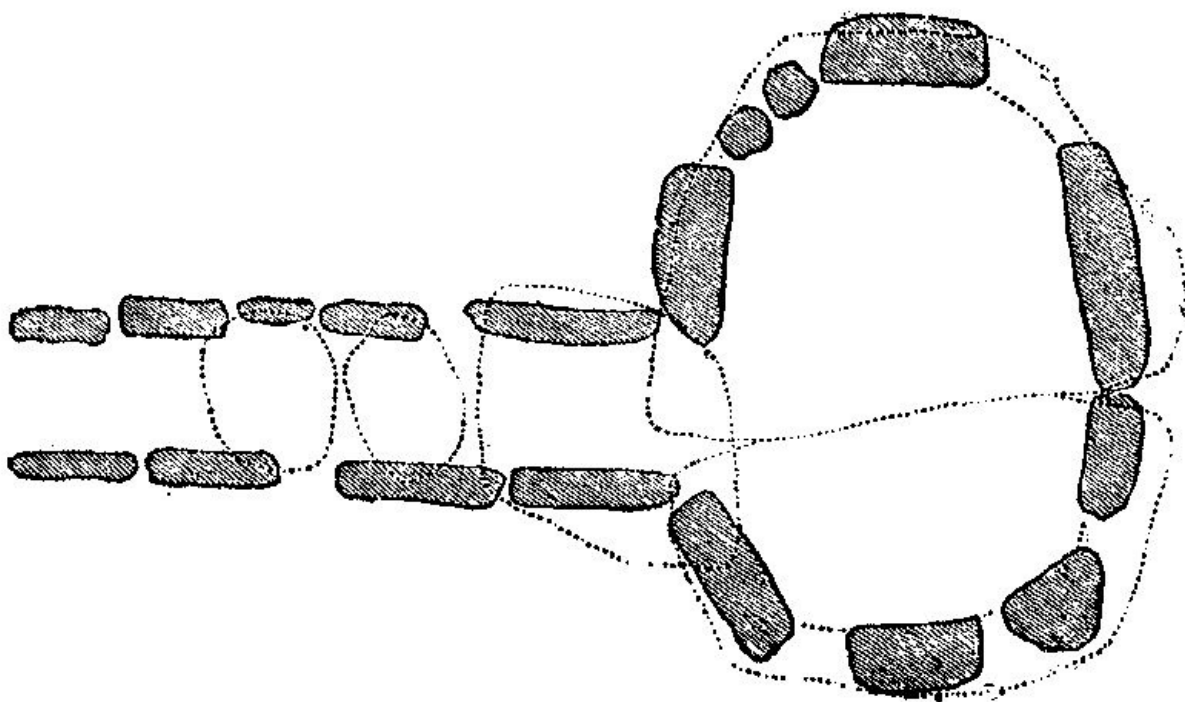
The contents of the tumuli differ also. Sometimes the bodies were burnt and the ashes preserved in rude urns; sometimes they were not cremated. Sometimes they were buried in stone cists, or in the hollowed trunk of trees; sometimes without any covering save that of the earth. In nearly all cases we find numerous articles buried with the dead, such as personal ornaments, weapons, pottery, and food.

The presence of food in the tumuli testifies to the natural instinct implanted by the Creator in the human heart with regard to a future existence. The idea that the soul of the departed is about to take a long journey is constant and deeply rooted; the rainbow and the milky way have often been supposed to be the paths trod by the departed, who require sustenance for so long a journey. The Aztecs laid a water-bottle beside the bodies to be used on the way to Mictlan, the land of the dead. Bow and arrows, a pair of mocassins with a spare piece of deerskin to patch them if they wear out, and sinews of deer to sew on the patches with, together with a kettle and provisions, are still placed in the graves by the North American Indians. The Laplanders lay beside the corpse flint, steel, and tinder, to supply light for the dark journey. A coin was placed in the mouth of the dead by the Greeks to pay Charon, the ferryman of the Styx, and for a similar purpose in the hand of a deceased Irishman. The Greenlanders bury with a child a dog, for they say a dog will find his way anywhere. In the grave of the Viking warrior were buried his horn and armour in order that he might enter the halls of Valhalla fully equipped.

These and many other examples might be quoted showing the universality of the belief in a future life, a belief that was evidently shared with other nations by the primeval races who inhabited our islands in prehistoric times.

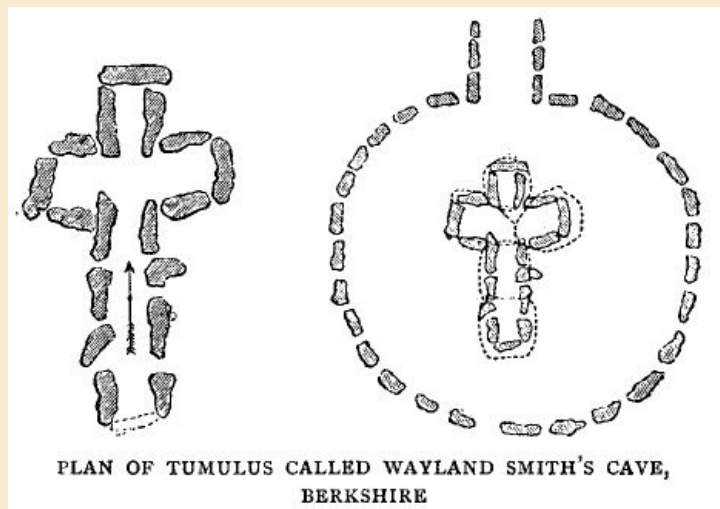
The presence of food and drinking vessels in the tumuli clearly shows this, and also the store of weapons and implements, adzes, hammers, scrapers, and other tools which the barrows have preserved through so many ages.

These barrows are not confined to one period or one race, as their shape denotes. Some are long, measuring 200 to 400 feet in length by 60 or 80 feet wide; others are circular. The former were made by the long-headed (dolichocephalic) race of whom we have already spoken; the latter by the round-headed (brachycephalic), conquerors of their feeble long-skulled forerunners. When we consider the poor tools used by these primitive peoples, we may wonder at the amount of labour they must have expended on the construction of these giant mounds. Picks made of deer's horns and pointed staves enabled them to loosen the earth which was then collected in baskets and thrown on the rising heap. Countless toilers and many years must have been needed to produce such wonderful memorials of their industry.



PLAN OF A TUMULUS

With better tools we will proceed to dig into these mounds and discover what they contain. First we notice an encircling trench and mound surrounding the barrow, the purpose of which is supposed to have been to keep the dead person in the tomb, and prevent it from injuring the living. After much digging in the centre of the barrow we find a single stone chamber, entered by a passage underneath the higher and wider end of the mound. Sometimes the chamber is divided into three parts, the centre one being covered by a dome, formed by the overlapping of the stones in the upper parts of the walls. The passage leading to the centre chamber is also built with large stones erected with much care and skill. The contents of these long barrows are not so interesting, or numerous, as those contained in the round barrows. The skeletons are usually found in irregular positions, and few weapons or ornaments accompany the buried bones. Derbyshire possesses many barrows; wherever in a place-name the suffix *low* occurs, derived from the Anglo-Saxon *hlow*, signifying a small hill or mound, a barrow is generally to be found. The long barrow is usually about 200 feet in length, 40 feet wide, and 8 to 12 feet high. They run east and west, frequently north-east by south-west, the principal interment being usually at the eastern and higher end. The bodies are often found in a cist or box made of large stones, and several were buried in one mound, generally on the south and east sides, so that they might lie in the sun. This practice may have been connected with sun-worship; and the same idea prevailed in modern times, when the south side of the churchyard was considered the favoured portion, and criminals and suicides were relegated to the colder north side.



The position of the bodies varied, but usually they were buried in a crouching position, with knees bent and head drawn towards the knees. This was probably the natural position which a man would assume when he slept without a luxurious bed to lie upon, and with little to cover him, in order to keep himself as warm as possible. Hence when he sank into his last long sleep, his mourning relatives would place him in the same posture. In the Channel Islands bodies were often placed in a kneeling position.

The custom of burning the body seems to have been adopted later by the same long-headed race who used the long barrows, and prevailed more in the north of England, in Yorkshire, Derbyshire, and Scotland, than in the south. The cremation was sometimes not very thoroughly performed. The bodies were placed together, wood being piled about them, and over the heap the mound was raised. Then the fire was lighted, which naturally only partly consumed the bodies. We find also, mingled with bones of men and women, the bones of animals, which were probably the remains of funeral feasts.

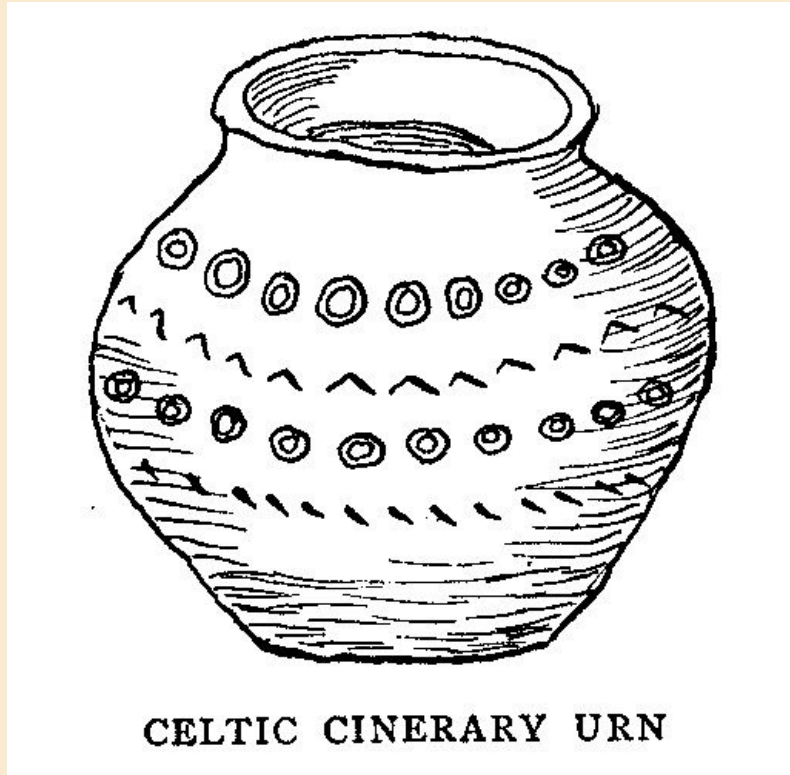
As we have said the round-headed race introduced the circular barrow, and cremation was their usual, though not exclusive, practice. These people were much stronger and bigger men than their predecessors, their powerful jaws and projecting chins showing much more power of will than the softer narrow-faced dolichocephalic race. However, in the round barrows we also find the bodies of the latter, and we gather that they were not exterminated or driven out by their conquerors, but mingled with them, intermarried, until at length the type of the long-skulled race prevailed, and the Celt of later times possessed the features of the race he had formerly subdued. At least such seems to be the teaching of the barrows.

The Celt became acquainted with the use of bronze, and his tomb was enriched with a store of the relics of the life and art of the workmanship of the time. As cremation was the usual practice, it was no longer necessary to have a chamber which the dead might inhabit; the size of the sleeping-place of the dead was reduced, and a cist was constructed for the receptacle of the urn in which the remains were placed. The mound also was reduced in size and looked much less imposing than the huge barrows of the Stone Age; but its contents were much more important.

The ashes we find frequently contained in a rude urn of black pottery with some ornamentation. Then we discover pins made of bones, which were evidently used to fasten the dress. The people therefore were evidently not naked, woad-dyed savages; moreover we find bits of woollen fabric and charred cloth, and in Denmark people belonging to this same early race were buried in a cap, shirt, leggings, and boots, a fairly complete wardrobe. They also loved to adorn themselves, and had buttons of jet, and stone and bone ornaments. Besides flint implements we find adzes and hatchets and chisels, axe-hammers constructed with a hole in them for the insertion of a handle, grain rubbers, wheat stones, and hammer stones. The mounds also

disclose a great variety of flint implements, hatchets, scrapers, both round and long, knife-daggers, knives, saws, drills, fabricators or flaking tools, sling stones, hammer stones, polishers, arrow-points, either leaf-shaped, triangular, or barbed, and heads of darts and javelins. A very curious object is sometimes found, a stone wrist guard, for the purpose of protecting the wrist from the bow string.

These barrows and their contents bear evidences to the artistic workmanship of the prehistoric dwellers in our villages. Their tombs show that these people did not confine themselves to the fabrication of objects of utility, but that they loved to adorn themselves with personal ornaments, which required much art and skill in the manufacture. Necklaces of beads pleased their fancy, and these they made of jet, or shells, the teeth of deer, and the vertebrae of fish. Moreover they loved ear-rings, which were sometimes made of the teeth of pigs. Objects of gold, bronze, glass, ivory, amber, clay, and bone were also used as ornaments.



If we examine the pottery in the barrows we find that a vessel of earthenware was usually placed at the back of the head of the body when it was not cremated. There were also cinerary urns, cups, usually called incense cups, which were certainly not used for incense, whatever may have been their purpose, food and drinking vessels. This pottery was not sun-dried, but burnt in a fire, though not made in a kiln, and the form of the vessels shows that the makers were ignorant of the use of a potter's wheel. The ornamentation consisted of a series of straight lines made by a sharp-pointed instrument and by impressions of the finger nails or string, often revealing much skill and artistic workmanship.

From a study of the barrows we may learn much about the early inhabitants of our island, who lived and worked and died on the same spots where we now are spending our days. We can see them hunting in the wild woodlands, rearing cows and sheep and goats, and cultivating their crops of corn. We can still trace on the hillsides some curious terraces fashioned by them for the growing of their grain, and discover querns, or hand millstones, and stones for bruising the corn. The bones of young oxen a few days old, discovered in the mounds, show that they knew the use of milk, and how to get a good supply. A rude spindle-whorl shows that they knew how to weave stuffs for their clothing, and the numerous buttons, fasteners, and belts prove that the clothes were fitted to the wearer, and not mere shapeless sacks.

The barrows also bear evidence to the existence of some organised condition of society. In the early savage state of human existence the family is the only community; but as man progressed towards civilisation, he learnt how to combine with his fellows for mutual defence and support. We gather from our examination of the tombs of these early races that they had attained to this degree of progress. There were chiefs of tribes and families who were buried with more honour than that bestowed upon the humbler folk. Many families were buried in one mound, showing that the tribal state had been reached, while the many humbler graves denote the condition of servitude and dependence in which a large number of the race lived. All this, and much more, may be learnt from a careful study of the tombs of these prehistoric people.

PIT AND PILE DWELLINGS

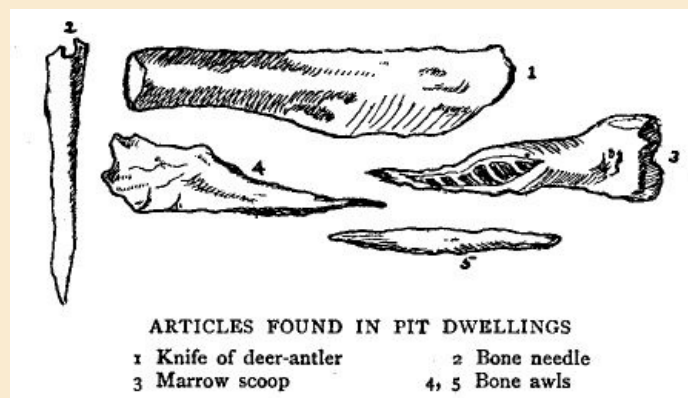
Pit dwelling earliest form of house-building—Discoveries at Bright-hampton, Worlebury—British oppida—Hurstbourne—Contents of pit dwelling—Pot-boilers—Condition of civilisation—Pile dwellings—Switzerland—Glastonbury—Hedsor—Crannogs—Modern use of pile dwellings—Description of a lake dwelling—Contents—Bronze Age—Recent discoveries at Glastonbury.

We have examined in our last chapter the abodes of the dead; we will now investigate the abodes of the living which the earth has preserved for us for so many centuries. The age of the cave dwellers had long passed; and the prehistoric folk, having attained to some degree of civilisation, began to devise for themselves some secure retreats from inclement rains and cold winds. Perhaps the burrowing rabbit gave them an idea for providing some dwelling-place. At any rate the earliest and simplest notion for constructing a habitation was that of digging holes in the ground and roofing them over with a light thatch. Hence we have the pit dwellings of our rude forefathers.

Many examples of pit dwellings have been found by industrious explorers. Some labourers when digging gravel at Brighthampton, near Oxford, came across several such excavations. They were simply pits dug in the earth, large enough to hold one or two persons, and from the sides of these pits a certain quantity of earth had been removed so as to form a seat. At the bottom of these a few rude flint arrow-heads were found. In the remarkable British oppidum at Worlebury, near Weston-super-Mare, several circular, well-like pits may be seen, fairly preserved in shape owing to the rocky nature of the ground in which they have been excavated. One in particular is very perfect, and about two feet from the bottom is a seat formed of the rock extending all round the pit.

These ancient pit dwellings are usually surrounded by an earthen rampart. Caesar says that "the Britons called that a town where they used to assemble for the sake of avoiding an incursion of enemies, when they had fortified the entangled woods with a rampart and ditch." The remains of many of these oppida may still be seen in almost all parts of the country; and in most of these hollows are plainly distinguishable, which doubtless were pit dwellings; but owing to the sides having fallen in, they have now the appearance of natural hollows in the earth.

At Hurstbourne, Hants, nine of these early habitations were discovered by the late Dr. Stevens, some of which were rudely pitched with flint stones, and had passages leading into the pit. A few flints irregularly placed together with wood ashes showed the position of the hearths, where cooking operations had been carried on. The sloping entrance-passages are peculiar and almost unique in England, though several have been met with in France. A rude ladder was the usual mode of entrance into these underground dwellings. Fragments of hand-made British pottery and the commoner kinds of Romano-British ware were found, and portions of mealing stones and also a saddle-quern, or grain-crusher, which instruments for hand-mealing must have been in common use among the pit dwellers. The grain was probably prepared by parching it before crushing; the hollow understone prevented the grain from escaping; and the muller was so shaped as to render it easily grasped, while it was pushed backwards and forwards by the hands. Similar stones are used at the present time by the African natives, as travellers testify.



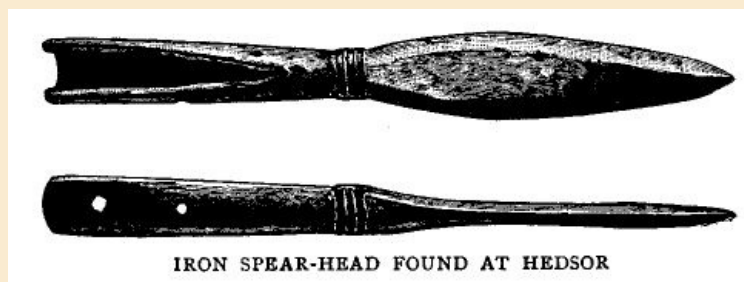
One of the pits at Hurstbourne was evidently a cooking-hole, where the pit dwellers prepared their feasts, and bones of the Celtic ox (*bos longifrons*), pig, red deer, goat, dog, and hare or rabbit were found near it. One of the bones had evidently been bitten by teeth. The pit dwellers also practised some domestic industries, as Dr. Stevens found a needle, an awl or bodkin, and fragments of pointed bone, probably used for sewing skins together. A rude spindle-whorl shows that they knew something of weaving, and two bored stones were evidently buttons or dress-fasteners. A large supply of flint implements, scrapers, and arrow-heads, proves that the dwellings were inhabited by the Neolithic people before the Britons came to occupy them. I must not omit to notice the heating stones, or "pot-boilers." These were heated in the fire, and then placed among the meat intended to be cooked, in a hole in the ground which served the purpose of a cooking pot. I have found many such stones in Berkshire, notably from the neighbourhood of Wallingford and Long Wittenham. The writer of the *Early History of Mankind* states that the Assineboins, or stone-boilers, dig a hole in the ground, take a piece of raw hide, and press it down to the sides of the hole, and fill it with water; this is called a "paunch-kettle"; then they make a number of stones red-hot in a fire close by, the meat is put into the water, and the hot stones dropped in until it is cooked. The South Sea Islanders have similar primitive methods of cooking. The Highlanders used to prepare the feasts of their clans in much the same way; and the modern gipsies adopt a not very dissimilar mode of cooking their stolen fowls and hedgehogs.

We can now people these cheerless primitive pit dwellings with their ancient inhabitants, and understand something of their manners of life and customs. Their rude abodes had probably cone-shaped roofs made of

rafters lashed together at the centre, protected by an outside coat of peat, sods of turf, or rushes. The spindle-whorl is evidence that they could spin thread; the mealing stones show that they knew how to cultivate corn; and the bones of the animals found in their dwellings testify to the fact that they were not in the wild state of primitive hunters, but possessed herds of cows and goats and other domestic animals.

Who were these people? Mr. Boyd Dawkins is of opinion that the early pit dwellers belonged to the Neolithic folk of whom I have already told you, as the flint implements testify. But these dwellings were evidently occupied by a later people. The querns and spindle-whorl probably belonged to the Celts, or Britons, before the advent of the Roman legions; and that these people were the inhabitants of the Hampshire pit dwellings is proved by the presence of a British gold coin which is recognised by numismatists as an imitation of the Greek stater of Philip II. of Macedon. According to Sir John Evans, the native British coinage was in existence as early as 150 years before Christ. Hence to this period we may assign the date of the existence of these Celtic primitive habitations.

Pit dwellings were not the only kind of habitations which the early inhabitants of our country used, and some of our villages possess constructions of remarkable interest, which recent industrious digging has disclosed. These are none other than lake dwellings, similar to those first discovered in Switzerland about fifty years ago. Few of our villages can boast of such relics of antiquity. Near Glastonbury, in 1892, in a dried-up ancient mere a lake village was discovered, which I will describe presently; and recently at Hedsor in Buckinghamshire a pile dwelling has been found which some learned antiquaries are now examining. In Ireland and Scotland there are found the remains of fortified dwellings called Crannogs in some of the lakes, as in Dowalton Loch, Wigtownshire, and Cloonfinlough in Connaught, but these belong to later times and were used in the Middle Ages.



In primitive times, when tribe warred with tribe, and every man's hand was against his fellow-man, and when wild and savage beasts roamed o'er moor and woodland, security was the one thing most desired by the early inhabitants of Europe. Hence they conceived the brilliant notion of constructing dwellings built on piles in the midst of lakes or rivers, where they might live in peace and safety, and secure themselves from the sudden attack of their enemies, or the ravages of beasts of prey. Switzerland is famous for its numerous clusters, or villages, of ancient lake dwellings, which were of considerable size. At Morges, on the Lake of Geneva, the settlement of huts extends 1,200 feet long by 150 in breadth; and that at Sutz on the Lake of Biemme covers six acres, and is connected with the shore by a gangway 100 feet long and 40 feet wide. Nor is the use of these habitations entirely abandoned at the present time. Venezuela, which means "little Venice," derives its name from the Indian village composed of pile dwellings on the shores of the Gulf of Maracaibo, as its original explorer Alonzo de Ojeda in 1499 chose to compare the sea-protected huts with the queen city of the Adriatic; and in many parts of South America, in the estuaries of the Orinoco and Amazon, such dwellings are still found, also among the Dyaks of Borneo, in the Caroline Islands, and on the Gold Coast of Africa. Herodotus describes similar dwellings on the Lake Prasias, existing in the fifth century B.C., and Lord Avebury states that now the Roumelian fishermen on the same lake "inhabit wooden cottages built over the water as in the time of Herodotus."

These habitations of primitive man were built on piles driven into the bed of the lake or river. These piles were stems, or trunks of trees, sharpened with stone or bronze tools. A rude platform was erected on these piles, and on this a wooden hut constructed with walls of wattle and daub, and thatched with reeds or rushes. A bridge built on piles connected the lake village with the shore whither the dwellers used to go to cultivate their wheat, barley, and flax, and feed their kine and sheep and goats. They made canoes out of hollow trunks of trees. One of these canoes which have been discovered is 43 feet in length and over 4 feet wide. The beams supporting the platform, on which the huts were erected, were fastened by wooden pins. Much ingenuity was exercised in the making of these dwellings. Sometimes they found that the mud of the lake was too soft to hold the piles; so they fashioned a framework of trunks of trees, which they let down to the bottom of the lake, and fastened the upright piles to it. Sometimes the rocky bed of the lake prevented the piles from being driven into it; so they heaped stones around the piles, and thus made them secure. The lake dwellers were very sociable, and had only one common platform for all the huts, which were clustered together. As all the actual dwellings have been destroyed by time's rude action, it is impossible to describe them accurately; but their usual size was about 20 feet by 12 feet. The floor was of clay, and in the centre of the building there was a hearth made of slabs of stone.

The people who inhabited these structures belonged either to the later Stone Age, or the Bronze Age, as we learn from the relics which their huts disclose. In the earlier ones are found celts, flint flakes, arrow-heads, harpoons of stag's horn with barbs, awls, needles, chisels, and fish-hooks made of bone, and sometimes wooden combs, and skates made out of the leg-bone of a horse. Besides the remains of the usual domestic animals we find bones of the beaver, bear, elk, and bison.

When the use of bronze was discovered the people still lived on in their lake dwellings. Fire often played

havoc with the wooden wattle walls; hence we frequently find a succession of platforms. The first dwelling having been destroyed by flames, a second one was subsequently constructed; and this having shared the same fate, another platform with improved huts was raised upon the ruins of its predecessors. The relics of each habitation show that, as time went on, the pit dwellers advanced in civilisation, and increased the comforts and conveniences of life.

Some of the dwellings of these early peoples belong to the Bronze Age, as do those of the Auvernier settlement in the Lake of Neuchatel; and these huts are rich in the relics of their former inhabitants. At Marin on the same lake the lake dwellers were evidently workers in iron; and the relics, which contain large spear-heads, shields, horse furniture, fibulas, and other ornaments, together with Roman coins, prove that they belonged to the period of which history tells us.

I have described at length these Swiss lake dwellings, although they do not belong to the antiquities of our villages in England, because much the same kind of habitations existed in our country, though few have as yet been unearthed. Possibly under the peaty soil of some ancient river-bed, or old mere, long ago drained, you may be fortunate enough to meet with the remains of similar structures here in England. At Glastonbury a few years ago a lake village was discovered, which has created no small stir in the antiquarian world, and merits a brief description. Nothing was known of its existence previously; and this is an instance of the delightful surprises which explorers have in store for them, when they ransack the buried treasure-house of the earth, and reveal the relics which have been so long stored there.

All that met the eyes of the diggers was a series of circular low mounds, about sixty in number, extending over an area of three acres. Imagine the delight of the gentlemen when they discovered that each of these mounds contained the remains of a lake dwelling which was constructed more than two thousand years ago.

First they found above the soft peat, the remains of a lake long dried up, a platform formed of timber and brushwood, somewhat similar to the structures which we have seen in the Swiss lakes. Rows of small piles support this platform, and on it a floor of clay, or rather several floors. The clay is composed of several horizontal layers with intervening thin layers of decayed wood and charcoal, each layer representing a distinct floor of a dwelling. In the centre of each mound are the remains of rude hearths. The dwellings, of which no walls remain, were evidently built of timber, the crevices between the wood being filled with wattle and daub. In one of the mounds were found several small crucibles which show that the inhabitants knew how to work in metals. Querns, whetstones, spindle whorls, fibulae, and finger-rings of bronze, a horse's bit, a small saw, numerous implements of horn and bone, combs, needles, a jet ring and amber bead, all tell the tale of the degree of civilisation attained by these early folk. They worked in metals, made pottery and cloth, tilled and farmed the adjoining lands, and probably belonged to the late Celtic race before the advent of the Romans. These lake dwellers used a canoe in order to reach the mainland, and this primitive boat has been discovered. It is evidently cut out of the stem of an oak, is flat-bottomed, and its dimensions are 17 feet long, 2 feet wide, and 1 foot deep. The prow is pointed, and has a hole, through which doubtless a rope was passed, in order to fasten it to the little harbour of the lake village.

It will be gathered that these people, whether dwelling in their pit or lake villages, showed so much capacity, industry, and social organisation, that even in the Neolithic Age they were far removed from a savage state, and a low condition of culture and civilisation. They showed great ingenuity in the making of their tools, their vessels of pottery, their ornaments, and clothing. They were not naked, woad-dyed savages. They could spin and weave, grow corn, and make bread, and had brought into subjection for their use domestic animals, horses and cattle, sheep and goats, and swine. They lived in security and comfort, and were industrious and intelligent; and it is interesting to record, from the relics which the earth has preserved of their civilisation, the kind of life which they must have lived in the ages which existed before the dawn of history.

CHAPTER V

CROMLECHS, CAMPS, AND EARTHWORKS

Stone monuments—Traditions relating to them—Menhirs or hoar-stones—*Alignements*—Cromlechs—Stonehenge—Avebury—Rollright stones—Origin of stone circles—Dolmens—Earthworks—Chun Castle—Whittenham clumps—Uffington—Tribal boundaries—Roman rig—Grims-dike—Legends—Celtic words.

Among the antiquities which some of our English villages possess, none are more curious and remarkable than the grand megalithic monuments of the ancient races which peopled our island. Marvellous memorials are these of their skill and labour. How did they contrive to erect such mighty monuments? How did they move such huge masses of stone? How did they raise with the very slender appliances at their disposal such gigantic stones? For what purpose did they erect them? The solution of these and many such-like problems we can only guess, and no one has as yet been bold enough to answer all the interesting questions which these rude stone monuments raise.

Superstition has attempted to account for their existence. Just as the flint arrow-heads are supposed by the vulgar to be darts shot by fairies or witches which cause sickness and death in cattle and men, and are worn as amulets to ward off disease; just as the stone axes of early man are regarded as thunder bolts, and when boiled are esteemed as a sure cure for rheumatism, or a useful cattle medicine—so these stones are said to be the work of the devil. A friend tells me that in his childhood his nurse used to frighten him by saying that the devil lurked in a dolmen which stands near his father's house in Oxfordshire; and many weird traditions cluster round these old monuments.



In addition to the subterranean sepulchral chambers and cairns which we have already examined, there are four classes of megalithic structures. The first consists of single stones, called in Wales, Cornwall, and Brittany, *menhirs*, a name derived from the Celtic word *maen* or *men* signifying a stone, and *hir* meaning tall. In England they are known as "hoar-stones," *hoar* meaning a boundary, inasmuch as they are frequently used in later times to mark the boundary of an estate, parish, or manor. There is one at Enstone, Oxfordshire, and at Wardington, Warwickshire. Possibly they were intended to mark the graves of deceased chieftains.

The second class consists of lines of stones, which the French call *alignements*. Frequently they occur in groups of lines from two to fourteen in number, Carnac, in Brittany, possesses the best specimen in Europe of this curious arrangement of giant stones.

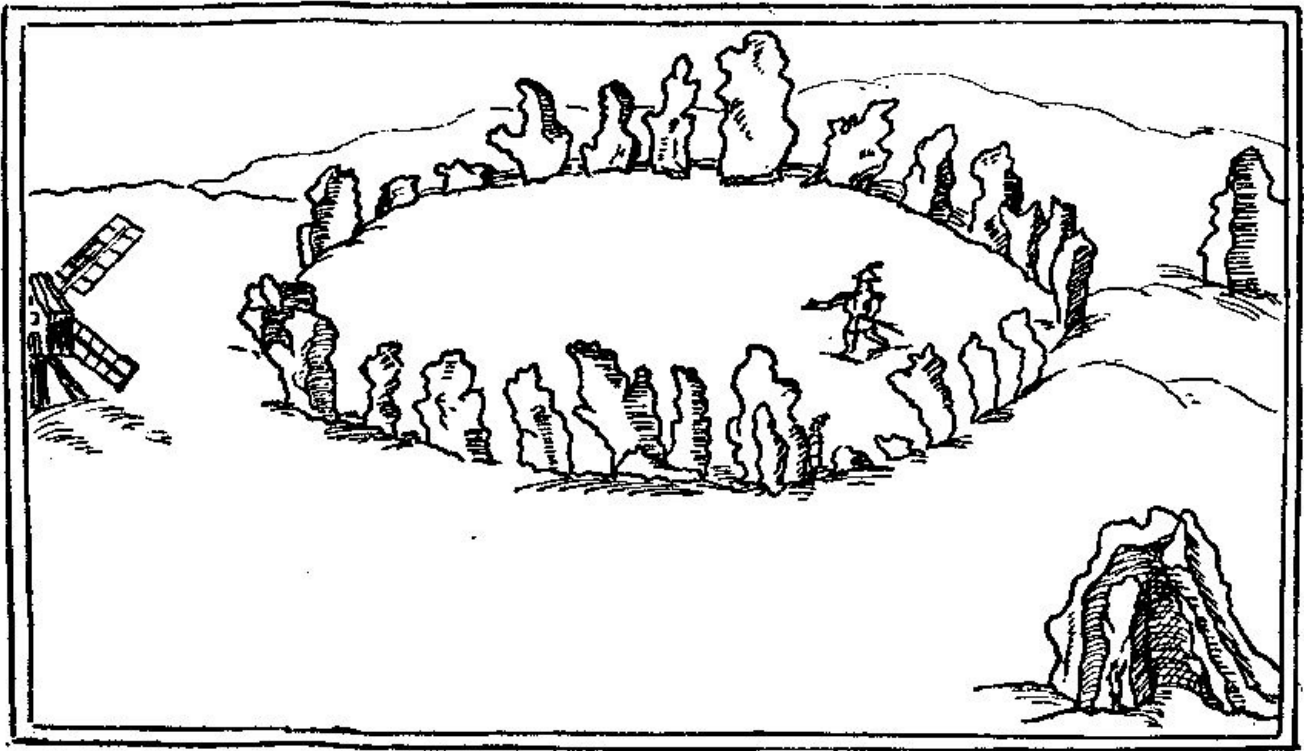
The third class of megalithic monuments is the circular arrangement, such as we find at Avebury and Stonehenge. These are now usually called cromlechs, in accordance with the term used by French antiquaries, though formerly this name was applied in England to the dolmens, or chambered structures, of which we shall speak presently. According to the notions of the old curator of Stonehenge the mighty stones stood before the Deluge, and he used to point out (to his own satisfaction) signs of the action of water upon the stones, even showing the direction in which the Flood "came rushing in." The Welsh bards say that they were erected by King Merlin, the successor of Vortigern; and Nennius states that they were erected in memory of four hundred nobles, who were treacherously slain by Hengist, when the savage Saxons came. There is no need to describe these grand circles of huge stones which all antiquaries have visited.

The cromlech at Avebury covers a larger area than that of Stonehenge, the circle being about 1,300 feet in diameter. There is a fine circle at Rollright, in Oxfordshire, which is the third largest in England. The diameter of the circle is about 107 feet, and the stones numbered originally about sixty. Near the circle stand the Five Whispering Knights, five large stones leaning together, probably the remains of a dolmen, and a large solitary stone, or menhir. Popular tradition has woven a strange legend about these curious relics of bygone ages. A mighty chieftain once ruled over the surrounding country; but he was ambitious, and wished to extend his sway, and become King of England. So he mustered his army, and the oracle proclaimed that if he could once see Long Compton, he would obtain his desire. Having proceeded as far as Rollright, he was repeating the words of the oracle—

"If Long Compton I can see,
King of England I shall be"—

when Mother Shipton, who had doubtless ridden on her broomstick from her Norfolk home, appeared and pronounced the fatal spell—

"Move no more; stand fast, stone;
King of England thou shall none."



ROLLRIGHT STONES
From Camden's Britannia

Immediately the king and his army were changed into stone, as if the head of Medusa had gazed upon them. The solitary stone, still called the King Stone, is the ambitious monarch; the circle is his army; and the Five Whispering Knights are five of his chieftains, who were hatching a plot against him when the magic spell was uttered. The farmers around Rollright say that if the stones are removed from the spot, they will never rest, but make mischief till they are restored. Stanton Drew, in Somersetshire, has a cromlech, and there are several in Scotland, the Channel Islands, and Brittany. Some sacrilegious persons transported a cromlech bodily from the Channel Islands, and set it up at Park Place, Henley-on-Thames. Such an act of antiquarian barbarism happily has few imitators.

For what purpose were these massive stones erected at the cost of such infinite labour? Tradition and popular belief associate them with the Druids. Some years ago all mysterious antiquarian problems were solved by reference to the Druids. But these priests of ancient days are now out of fashion, and it is certainly not very safe to attribute the founding of the great stone circles to their agency. The Druidical worship paid its homage to the powers of Nature, to the nymphs and genii of the woods and streams, whereas the great stone circles were evidently constructed by sun-worshippers. There is no doubt among antiquaries that they are connected with the burial of the dead. Small barrows have been found in the centre of them. Dr. Anderson is of opinion that the stone circles were developed out of the hedge, or setting of stone, which frequently surrounds the base of a barrow, and was intended to keep the ghost in, and prevent it from injuring the living. By degrees the wall was increased in size while the barrow or cairn decreased; until at last a small mound of earth, or heap of stones, only marked the place of burial, and the huge circle of stones surrounded it. Stonehenge, with its well-wrought stones and gigantic trilitha, is much later than the circles of Avebury and Rollright, and was doubtless constructed by the people who used iron, about two hundred years before our era. The earlier circles have been assigned to a period eight or ten centuries before Christ.



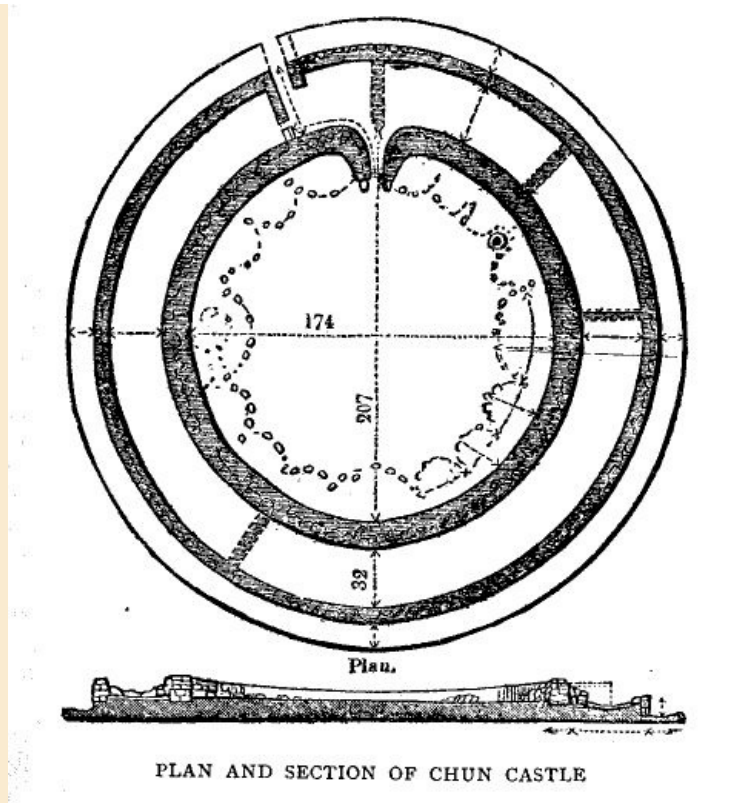
DOLMEN

Many conjectures have been made as to how the huge capstones of the circle at Stonehenge were placed on the erect stones. Sir Henry Dryden thought that when the upright stones were set on end, earth or small stones were piled around them until a large inclined plane was formed, on which "skids" or sliding-pieces were placed. Then the caps were placed on rollers, and hauled up by gangs of men. Probably in some such way these wonderful monuments were formed.

The last class of rude stone monuments is composed of dolmens, or chambered tombs, so named from the Welsh word *dol*, a table, and *maen* or *men*, a stone. They are in fact stone tables. Antiquaries of former days, and the unlearned folk of to-day, call them "Druids' altars," and say that sacrifices were offered upon them. The typical form is a structure of four or more large upright stones, supporting a large flat stone, as a roof. Sometimes they are covered with earth or stones, sometimes entirely uncovered. Some antiquaries maintain that they were always uncovered, as we see them now; others assert that they have been stripped by the action of wind and rain, and snow, frost, and thaw, until all the earth placed around them has been removed. Possibly fashions changed then as now; and it may console some of us that there was no uniformity of ritual even in prehistoric Britain. Dolmens contain no bronze or iron implements, or carvings of the same, and evidently belong to the time of the Neolithic folk.

Among prehistoric remains none are more striking than the great camps and earthworks, which hold commanding positions on our hills and downs, and have survived during the countless years which have elapsed since their construction. Caesar's camps abound throughout England; it is needless to say that they had nothing to do with Caesar, but were made long years before the Conqueror ever set foot on British land. These early camps are usually circular in shape, or follow the natural curve of the hill on which they stand. Roman camps are nearly always square or rectangular. They consist of a high vallum, or rampart of earth, surrounded by a deep ditch, and on the *counterscarp*, or outside edge of the ditch, there is often another bank or rampart. The entrance to these strongholds was often ingeniously contrived, in order that an enemy endeavouring to attack the fortress might be effectually resisted.

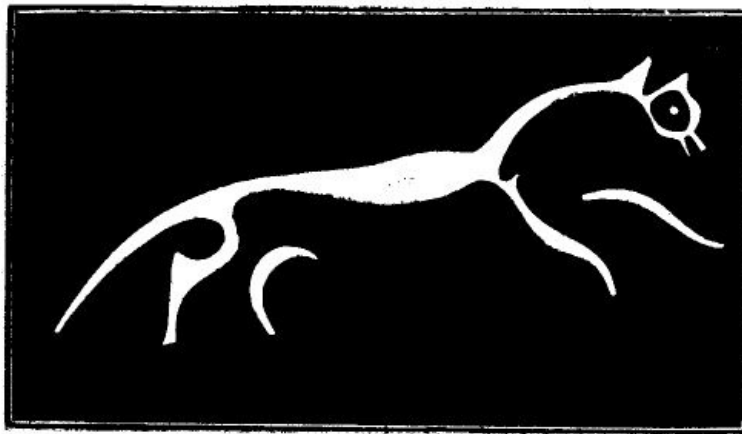
Chun Castle, in Cornwall, is an interesting specimen of ancient Celtic fortress. It consists of two circular walls separated by a terrace. The walls are built of rough masses of granite, some 5 or 6 feet long. The outer wall is protected by a ditch. Part of the wall is still about 10 feet high. Great skill and military knowledge are displayed in the plan of the entrance, which is 6 feet wide in the narrowest part, and 16 in the widest, where the walls diverge and are rounded off on either side. The space within the fortress is about 175 feet in diameter. The Herefordshire Beacon on the Malvern Hills is a fine example of a triple-ramparted Celtic camp.



In Berkshire we have the well-known Whittenham Clumps, the Sinodun of the Celts, on the summit of which there is a famous camp, with a triple line of entrenchment, the mound and ditch being complete. The circumference of the fortress is over a mile. Berkshire and Oxfordshire are very rich in these camps and earthworks, which guard the course of the old British road called the Iknield Way. Hill-forts crown the tops of the hills; and the camps of Blewberry, Scutchamore Knob (a corruption of Cwichelm's law), Letcombe, Uffington, and Liddington, command the ancient trackway and bid defiance to approaching foes.

The object of these camps was to provide places of refuge, whither the tribe could retire when threatened by the advent of its enemy. The Celts were a pastoral people; and their flocks grazed on the downs and hillsides. When their scouts brought news of the approach of a hostile force, some signal would be given by the blowing of a horn, and the people would at once flee to their fortress driving their cattle before them, and awaiting there the advent of their foes.

At Uffington there is a remarkable relic of British times called the Blowing Stone, or King Alfred's Bugle-horn, which was doubtless used by the Celtic tribes for signalling purposes; and when its deep low note was heard on the hillside the tribe would rush to the protecting shelter of Uffington Castle. There, armed with missiles, they were ready to hurl them at the invading hosts, and protect their lives and cattle until all danger was past. Those who are skilled at the art can still make the Blowing Stone sound. The name, King Alfred's Bugle-horn, is a misnomer, and arose from the association of the White Horse Hill with the battle which Alfred fought against the Danes at Aescendune, which may, or may not, have taken place near the old British camp at Uffington. There are several White Horses cut out in the turf on the hillsides in Wiltshire, besides the famous Berkshire one at Uffington, celebrated by Mr. Thomas Hughes in his *Scouring of the White Horse*. We have also some turf-cut crosses at White-leaf and Bledlow, in Buckinghamshire. The origin of these turf monuments is still a matter of controversy. It is possible that they may be Saxon, and may be the records of Alfred's victories; but antiquaries are inclined to assign them to an earlier date, and connect them with the builders of cromlechs and dolmens. It is certainly improbable that, when he was busily engaged fighting the Danes, Alfred and his men would have found time to construct this huge White Horse.



THE WHITE HORSE AT UFFINGTON

In addition to the earthen mounds and deep ditch, which usually formed the fortifications of these ancient strongholds, there were wicker-work stockades, or palisading, arranged on the top of the vallum. Such defences have been found at Uffington; and during the present year on the ancient fortifications of the old Calleva Atrebatum, afterwards the Roman Silchester, a friend of the writer has found the remains of similar wattle-work stockades. Evidently tribal wars and jealousies were not unknown in Celtic times, and the people knew how to protect themselves from their foes.

Another important class of earthen ramparts are the long lines of fortifications, which extend for miles across the country, and must have entailed vast labour in their construction. These ramparts were doubtless tribal boundaries, or fortifications used by one tribe against another. There is the Roman rig, which, as Mrs. Armitage tells us in her *Key to English Antiquities*, coats the face of the hills all the way from Sheffield to Mexborough, a distance of eleven miles. A Grims-dike (or Grims-bank, as it is popularly called) runs across the southern extremity of Oxfordshire from Henley to Mongewell, ten miles in length; and near it, and parallel to it, there is a Medlers-bank, another earthen rampart, exceeding it in length by nearly a third. Near Salisbury there is also a Grims-dike, and in Cambridgeshire and Cheshire. Danes' Dike, near Flamborough Head, Wans-dike, and Brokerley Dike are other famous lines of fortifications.

There are twenty-two Grims-dikes in England. The name was probably derived from Grim, the Saxon devil, or evil spirit; and was bestowed upon these mysterious monuments of an ancient race which the Saxons found in various parts of their conquered country. Unable to account for the existence of these vast mounds and fortresses, they attributed them to satanic agency.

There is much work still to be done in exploring these relics of the prehistoric races; and if there should be any such in your own neighbourhood, some careful digging might produce valuable results. Perhaps something which you may find may throw light upon some disputed or unexplained question, which has perplexed the minds of antiquaries for some time. I do not imagine that the following legend will deter you from your search. It is gravely stated that years ago an avaricious person dug into a tumulus for some treasure which it was supposed to contain. At length after much labour he came to an immense chest, but the lid was no sooner uncovered than it lifted itself up a little and out sprang an enormous black cat, which seated itself upon the chest, and glowed with eyes of passion upon the intruder. Nothing daunted, the man proceeded to try to move the chest, but without avail; so he fixed a strong chain to it and attached a powerful team of horses. But when the horses began to pull, the chain broke in a hundred places, and the chest of treasure disappeared for ever.

Some rustics assert that if you run nine times round a tumulus, and then put your ear against it, you will hear the fairies dancing and singing in the interior. Indeed it is a common superstition that good fairies lived in these old mounds, and a story is told of a ploughman who unfortunately broke his ploughshare. However he left it at the foot of a tumulus, and the next day, to his surprise, he found it perfectly whole. Evidently the good fairies had mended it during the night. But these bright little beings, who used to be much respected by our ancestors, have quite deserted our shores. They found that English people did not believe in them; so they left us in disgust, and have never been heard of since.

If you have no other Celtic remains in your neighbourhood, at least you have the enduring possession of the words which they have bequeathed to us, such as *coat*, *basket*, *crook*, *cart*, *kiln*, *pitcher*, *comb*, *ridge*, and many others, which have all been handed down to us from our British ancestors. Their language also lives in Wales and Brittany, in parts of Ireland and Scotland, and in the Isle of Man, where dwell the modern representatives of that ancient race, which was once so powerful, and has left its trace in most of the countries of Europe.

CHAPTER VI

ROMAN RELICS

Roman remains numerous—Chedworth villa—Roads—Names derived from roads—*Itinerary* of Antoninus—British roads—Watling Street—Ikniel Street—Ryknield Street—Ermyrn Street—Akeman Street—Saltways—Milestones—Silchester—Its walls—Calleva—Its gardens and villas—Hypocausts—Pavements—Description of old city—Forum—Temple—Baths—Amphitheatre—Church—Roman villa.

“The world’s a scene of change,” sings Poet Cowley; but in spite of all the changes that have transformed our England, the coming and going of conquerors and invaders, the lapse of centuries, the ceaseless working of the ploughshare on our fields and downs, traces of the old Roman life in Britain have remained indelible. Our English villages are rich in the relics of the old Romans; and each year adds to our knowledge of the life they lived in the land of their adoption, and reveals the treasures which the earth has tenderly preserved for so many years.

If your village lies near the track of some Roman road, many pleasing surprises may be in store for you. Oftentimes labourers unexpectedly meet with the buried walls and beautiful tessellated pavements of an ancient Roman dwelling-place. A few years ago at Chedworth, near Cirencester, a ferret was lost, and had to be dug out of the rabbit burrow. In doing this some Roman *tesserae* were dug up; and when further excavations were made a noble Roman villa with numerous rooms, artistic pavements, hypocausts, baths, carvings, and many beautiful relics of Roman art were brought to light. Possibly you may be equally successful in your own village and neighbourhood.

If you have the good fortune to live near a Roman station, you will have the pleasing excitement of discovering Roman coins and other treasures, when you watch your labourers draining the land or digging wells. Everyone knows that the names of many of the Roman stations are distinguished by the termination *Chester*, *caster*, or *caer*, derived from the Latin *castra*, a camp; and whenever we are in the neighbourhood of such places, imagination pictures to us the well-drilled Roman legionaries who used to astonish the natives with their strange language and customs; and we know that there are coins and pottery, *tesserae* and Roman ornaments galore, stored up beneath our feet, awaiting the search of the persevering digger. Few are the records relating to Roman Britain contained in the pages of the historians, as compared with the evidences of roads and houses, gates and walls and towns, which the earth has preserved for us.

Near your village perhaps a Roman road runs. The Romans were famous for their wonderful roads, which extended from camp to camp, from city to city, all over the country. These roads remain, and are evidences of the great engineering skill which their makers possessed. They liked their roads well drained, and raised high above the marshes; they liked them to go straight ahead, like their victorious legions, and never swerve to right or left for any obstacle. They cut through the hills, and filled up the valleys; and there were plenty of idle Britons about, who could be forced to do the work. They called their roads *strata* or streets; and all names of places containing the word *street*, such as *Streatley*, or *Stretford*, denote that they were situated on one of these Roman roads.

You may see these roads wending their way straight as a die, over hill and dale, staying not for marsh or swamp. Along the ridge of hills they go, as does the High Street on the Westmoreland hills, where a few inches below the grass you can find the stony way; or on the moors between Redmire and Stanedge, in Yorkshire, the large paving stones, of which the road was made, in many parts still remain. In central places, as at Blackrod, in Lancashire, the roads extend like spokes from the centre of a wheel, although nearly eighteen hundred years have elapsed since their construction. The name of Devizes, Wilts, is a corruption of the Latin word *divisae*, which marks the spot where the old Roman road from London to Bath was *divided* by the boundary line between the Roman and the Celtic districts.

In order to acquire a knowledge of the great roads of the Romans we must study the *Itinerary* of Antoninus, written by an officer of the imperial Court about 150 A.D. This valuable road-book tells us the names of the towns and stations, the distances, halting-places, and other particulars. Ptolemy’s *Geographia* also affords help in understanding the details of the *Itinerary*, and many of the roads have been very satisfactorily traced. The Romans made use of the ancient British ways, whenever they found them suitable for their purpose. The British roads resembled the trackways on Salisbury Plain, wide grass rides, neither raised nor paved, and not always straight, but winding along the sides of the hills which lie in their course. There were seven chief British ways: Watling Street, which was the great north road, starting from Richborough on the coast of Kent, passing through Canterbury and Rochester it crossed the Thames near London, and went on through Verulam, Dunstable, and Towcester, Wellington, and Wroxeter, and thence into Wales to Tommen-y-Mawr, where it divided into two branches. One ran by Beth Gellert to Caernarvon and Holy Head, and the other through the mountains to the Manai banks and thence to Chester, Northwich, Manchester, Ilkley, until it finally ended in Scotland.

The second great British road was the way of the Iceni, or Ikniel Street, proceeding from Great Yarmouth, running through Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire, Bucks, and Oxon, to Old Sarum, and finishing its course at Land’s End. We have in Berkshire a branch of this road called the Ridgeway.

The Ryknield Street beginning at the mouth of the Tyne ran through Chester-le-Street, followed the course of the Watling Street to Catterick, thence through Birmingham, Tewkesbury, and Gloucester, to Caermarthen and St. David’s.

The Ermyrn Street led from the coast of Sussex to the south-east part of Scotland.

The Akeman Street ran between the Ikniel and Ryknield Streets, and led from what the Saxons called East Anglia, through Bedford, Newport Pagnel, and Buckingham to Alcester and Cirencester, across the Severn, and ending at St. David’s.

The Upper Saltway was the communication between the sea-coast of Lincolnshire and the salt mines at Droitwich; and the Lower Saltway led from Droitwich, then, as now, a great centre of the salt trade, to the sea-coast of Hampshire. Traces of another great road to the north are found, which seems to have run through the western parts of England extending from Devon to Scotland.

Such were the old British roads which existed when the Romans came. The conquerors made use of these ways, wherever they found them useful, trenching them, paving them, and making them fit for military purposes. They constructed many new ones which would require a volume for their full elucidation. Many of

them are still in use, wonderful records of the engineering skill of their makers, and oftentimes beneath the surface of some grassy ride a few inches below the turf you may find the hard concreted road laid down by the Romans nearly eighteen hundred years ago. Roman milestones we sometimes find. There is one near Silchester, commonly called the Imp Stone, probably from the first three letters of the Latin word *Imperator*, carved upon it. Curious legends often cluster round these relics of ancient times. Just as the superstitious Saxons, when they saw the great Roman roads, made by a people who had long vanished from the land, often attributed these great works to evil spirits, and called parts of these well-made streets the Devil's Highway, so they invented a strange legend to account for the Imp Stone, and said that some giant had thrown it from the city, and left on it the marks of his finger and thumb.

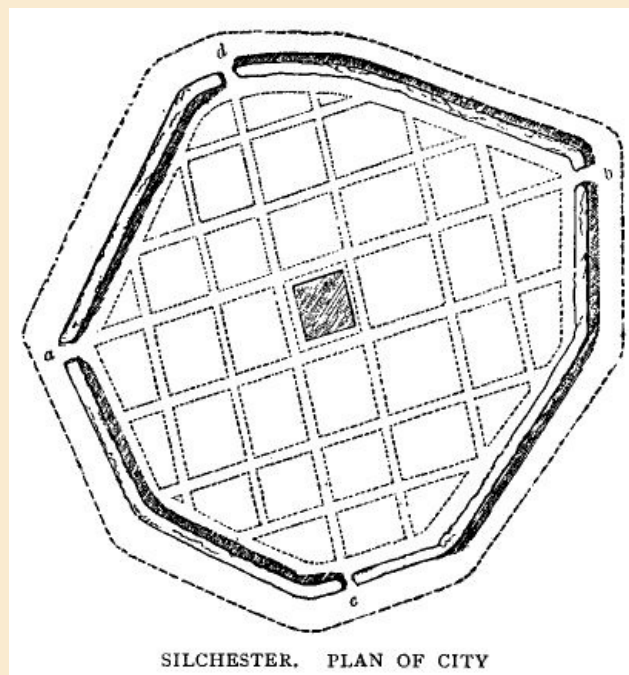
Our English villages contain many examples of Roman buildings. Where now rustics pursue their calling, and sow their crops and reap their harvests, formerly stood the beautiful houses of the Roman nobles, or the flourishing towns of Roman citizens. Upon the sites of most of these old-world places new towns have been constructed; hence it is difficult often to trace the foundations of Roman cities in the midst of the masses of modern bricks and mortar. Hence we fly to the villages; and sometimes, as at Silchester, near a little English village, we find the remains of a large, important, and flourishing town, where the earth has kept safely for us during many centuries the treasures and memories of a bygone age.

Every student of Roman Britain must visit Silchester, and examine the collections preserved in the Reading Museum, which have been amassed by the antiquaries who have for several years been excavating the ruins. The city contained a forum, or marketplace, having on one side a basilica, or municipal hall, in which prisoners were tried, business transactions executed, and the general affairs of the city carried on. On the other side of the square were the shops, where the butchers, bakers, or fishmongers plied their trade. You can find plenty of oyster shells, the contents of which furnished many a feast to the Romans who lived there seventeen hundred years ago. The objects which have been found tell us how the dwellers in the old city employed themselves, and how skilful they were in craftsmanship. Amongst other things we find axes, chisels, files for setting saws, hammers, a large plane, and other carpenters' tools; an anvil, a pair of tongs, and blacksmiths' implements; shoemakers' anvils, very similar to those used in our day, a large gridiron, a standing lamp, safety-pins, such as ladies use now, and many other useful and necessary objects.

In order to protect the city it was surrounded by high walls, which seem to defy all the attacks of time. They are nine feet in thickness, and are still in many places twenty feet high. Outside the wall a wide ditch added to the strength of the fortifications. Watch-towers were placed at intervals along the walls; and on the north, south, east, and west sides were strongly fortified gates, with guard chambers on each side, and arched entrances through which the Roman chariots were driven.

These walls inclose a space of irregular shape, and were built on the site of old British fortifications. Silchester was originally a British stronghold, and was called by them Calleva. The Celtic tribe which inhabited the northern parts of Hampshire was the Atrebates, who after a great many fights were subdued by the Romans about 78 A.D. Then within the rude fortifications of Calleva arose the city of Silchester, with its fine houses, temples, and baths, its strong walls, and gates, and streets, the great centre of civilisation, and the chief city of that part of the country.

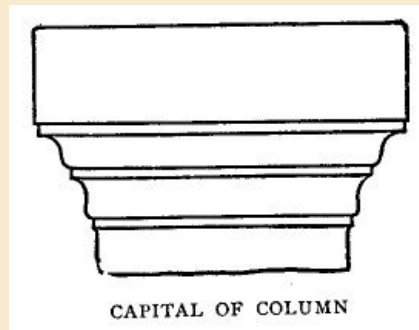
It is often possible to detect the course of Roman streets where now the golden corn is growing. On the surface of the roads where the ground is thin, the corn is scanty. Observation of this kind a few years ago led to the discovery of a Romano-British village at Long Whittenham, in Berks. In Silchester it is quite easy to trace the course of the streets by the thinness of the corn, as Leland observed as long ago as 1536. One is inclined to wonder where all the earth comes from, which buries old buildings and hides them so carefully; but any student of natural history, who has read Darwin's book on *Worms*, will cease to be astonished. It is chiefly through the action of these useful creatures that soil accumulates so greatly on the sites of ancient buildings.



Within the walls of Silchester were gardens and villas replete with all the contrivances of Roman luxury. The houses were built on three sides of a square court. A cloister ran round the court, supported by pillars. The open space was used as a garden. At the back of the house were the kitchens and apartments for the slaves and domestics. The Romans adapted their dwellings to the climate in which they lived. In the sunny south, at Pompeii, the houses were more open, and would be little suited to our more rigorous climate. They knew how to make themselves comfortable, built rooms well protected from the weather, and heated with hypocausts. These were furnaces made beneath the house, which generated hot air; and this was admitted into the rooms by earthenware flue-tiles. The dwellers had both summer and winter apartments; and when the cold weather arrived the hypocaust furnaces were lighted, and the family adjourned to their winter quarters.

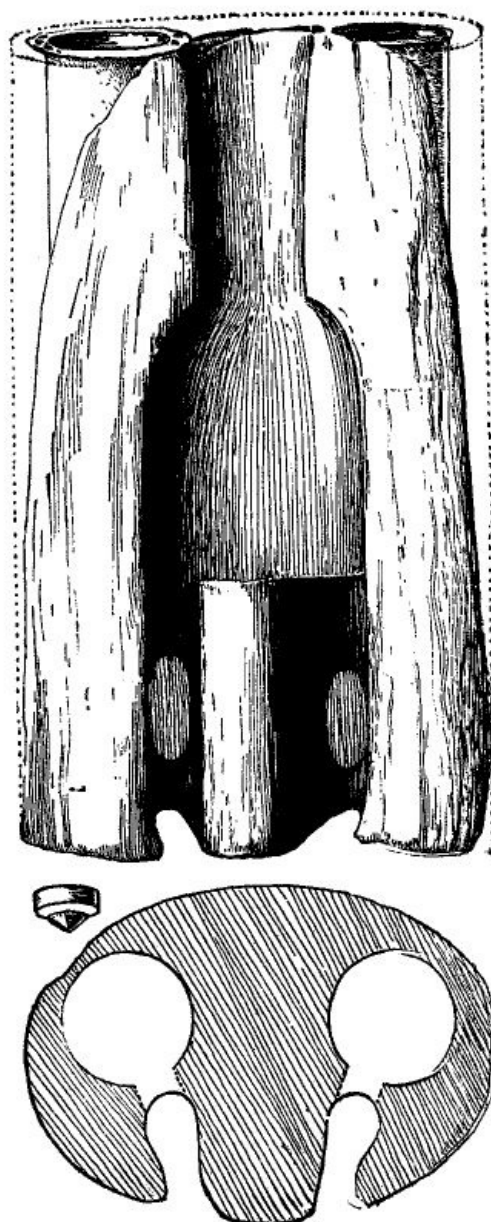
The floors were made of *tesserae*, or small cubes of different materials and various colours, which were arranged in beautiful patterns. Some of these pavements were of most elegant and elaborate designs, having figures in them representing the seasons, or some mythological characters.

The walls were painted with decorations of very beautiful designs, representing the cornfields, just as the Roman artists in Italy loved to depict the vine in their mural paintings. The mortar used by the Romans is very hard and tenacious, and their bricks were small and thin, varying from 8 inches square to 18 inches by 12, and were about 2 inches in thickness. Frequently we find the impression of an animal's foot on these bricks and tiles, formed when they were in a soft state before they were baked, and one tile recently found had the impression of a Roman baby's foot. Roman bricks have often been used by subsequent builders, and are found built up in the masonry of much later periods.



It is quite possible to build up in imagination the old Roman city, and to depict before our mind's eye the scenes that once took place where now the rustics toil and till the ground. We enter the forum, the great centre of the city, the common resort and lounging-place of the citizens, who met together to discuss the latest news from Rome, to transact their business, and exchange gossip. On the west side stood the noble basilica, or hall of justice—a splendid building, its entrance being adorned with fine Corinthian columns; and slabs of polished Purbeck marble, and even of green and white marble from the Pyrenees, covered the walls. It was a long rectangular hall, 233 feet in length by 58 feet in width, and at each side was a semicircular apse, which was called the Tribune. Here the magistrate sat to administer justice, or an orator stood to address the citizens. In the centre of the western wall was another apse, where the *curia* met for the government of the city. Two rows of columns ran down the hall, dividing it into a nave with two aisles, like many of our churches. Indeed the form of the construction of our churches was taken from these Roman basilica. Several chambers stood on the west of the hall, one of which was another fine hall, probably used as a corn exchange. The height of this noble edifice, the roof of which was probably hidden by a coffered ceiling, must have been about fifty-seven feet.

Passing along the main street towards the south gate we come to the foundations of a nearly circular temple. Two square-shaped buildings stood on the east of the city, which were probably temples for some Gaulish form of religion, as similar sacred buildings have been discovered in France. A quadrangle of buildings near the south gate, having various chambers, contained the public baths, whither the Romans daily resorted for gossip and discussion as well as for bathing. There is an ingenious arrangement for using the waste water for the purpose of flushing the drains and sewers. Nor were they ignorant of the invention of a force-pump, as the accompanying illustration on the next page shows.



ROMAN FORCE-PUMP

The amphitheatre stands outside the gate, whither the citizens flocked to see gladiatorial displays or contests between wild beasts. With the exception of one at Dorchester, it is the largest in Britain. It is made of lofty banks of earth, which surround the arena, and must have been an imposing structure in the days of its glory, with its tiers of seats rising above the level arena. It is difficult to imagine this grass-covered slope occupied by a gay crowd of Romans and wondering Britons, all eagerly witnessing some fierce fight of man with man, or beast with beast, and enthusiastically revelling in the sanguinary sport. The modern rustics, who have no knowledge of what was the original purpose of "the Mount," as they name the amphitheatre, still call the arena "the lions' den."

Silchester was a very busy place. There were dye works there, as the excavations show; hence there must have been some weaving, and therefore a large resident population. Throngs of travellers used to pass through it, and carts and baggage animals bore through its streets the merchandise from London, which passed to the cities and villas so plentifully scattered in western Britain.

By far the most important of the discoveries made in Roman Britain is the little church which stood just outside the forum. It is very similar in form to the early churches in Italy and other parts of the Roman Empire, and is of the basilican type. The orientation is different from that used after the reign of Constantine, the altar being at the west end. The churches of S. Peter and S. Paul at Rome had the same arrangement; and the priest evidently stood behind the altar facing the congregation and looking towards the east at the time of the celebration of the Holy Communion. There is an apse at the west end, and the building is divided by two rows of columns into a nave and two aisles. The nave had probably an ambon, or reading-desk, and was

mainly used by the clergy, the aisles being for the use of the men and women separately. A vestry stood at the western end of the north aisle. Across the eastern end was the narthex, or porch, where the catechumens stood and watched the service through the three open doors. Outside the narthex was the atrium, an open court, having in the centre the remains of the labrum, or laver, where the people washed their hands and faces before entering the church. We are reminded of a sermon by S. Chrysostom, who upbraided his congregation, asking them what was the use of their washing their hands if they did not at the same time cleanse their hearts by repentance. This interesting memorial of early Christianity was probably erected soon after the Emperor Constantine's Edict of Toleration issued in 313 A.D.

But not only at Silchester and at other places, once the great centres of the Roman population, do we find Roman remains. In addition to the stations, camps, and towns, there were the villas of the rich Roman citizens or Gaulish merchants on the sunny slopes of many a hillside. Although hundreds of the remains of these noble houses have been discovered, there are still many to be explored.

The villa consisted of the house of the proprietor, which occupied the centre of the little colony, together with the smaller houses of the servants and slaves, stables, cowsheds, mills, and granaries, and all the other usual outbuildings connected with a large estate. The main house was built around a central court, like an Oxford college; and resembled in architectural style the buildings which the excavations at Pompeii have disclosed. A corridor ran round the court supported by pillars, from which the rooms opened. In a well-defended town like Silchester the houses were usually built on three sides of the court; but the country villas, which had occasionally to be fortified against the attacks of wandering bands of outlaws and wild Britons, and the inroads of savage beasts, were usually built on all the four sides of the square court. They were usually of one story, although the existence of a force-pump in Silchester shows that water was laid on upstairs in one house at least. As the wells were less than thirty feet deep, a force-pump would not be needed to lift the water to the earth-level. Hence in some houses there must have been some upper chambers, a conclusion that is supported by the thickness of the foundations, which are far more substantial than would be required for houses of one story. The rooms were very numerous, often as many as sixty or seventy, and very bright they must have looked decorated with beautiful marbles and stuccoes of gorgeous hues, and magnificent pavements, statues and shrines, baths and fountains, and the many other objects of Roman luxury and comfort. The floors were made of *opus signinum*, such as the Italians use at the present day, a material composed of cement in which are embedded fragments of stone or brick, the whole being rubbed down to a smooth surface, or paved with mosaic composed of *tesserae*. In whatever land the Roman dwelt, there he made his beautiful tessellated pavement, rich with graceful designs and ever-enduring colours, representing the stories of the gods, the poetry of nature, and the legends of the heroes of his beloved native land. Here we see Perseus freeing Andromeda, Medusa's locks, Bacchus and his band of revellers, Orpheus with his lyre, by which he is attracting a monkey, a fox, a peacock, and other animals, Apollo singing to his lyre, Venus being loved by Mars, Neptune with his trident, attended by hosts of seamen. The seasons form an accustomed group, "Winter" being represented, as at Brading, by a female figure, closely wrapped, holding a lifeless bough and a dead bird. Satyrs and fauns, flowers, Graces and wood-nymphs, horns of plenty, gladiators fighting, one with a trident, the other with a net—all these and countless other fanciful representations look at us from these old Roman pavements. The Roman villa at Brading is an excellent type of such a dwelling, with its magnificent suites of rooms, colonnades, halls, and splendid mosaic pavements. As at Silchester, we see there fine examples of hypocausts. The floor of the room, called a *suspensura*, is supported by fifty-four small pillars made of tiles. Another good example of a similar floor exists at Cirencester, and many more at Silchester.



TESSELATED PAVEMENT

Here is a description of a Roman gentleman's house, as drawn by the writer of *The History of Oxfordshire*:

—
“His villa lay sheltered from wild winds partly by the rising brow of the hill, and partly by belts of trees; it was turned towards the south, and caught the full sun. In the spring the breath of his violet beds would be as soft and sweet as in Oxfordshire woods to-day; in the summer his quadrangle would be gay with calthae, and his colonnade festooned with roses and helichryse. If we are to believe in the *triclinium aestivum* of Hakewill, it says much for the warmth of those far-away summers that he was driven to build a summer dining-room with a north aspect, and without heating flues. And when the long nights fell, and winter cold set in, the slaves heaped higher the charcoal fires in the *prae-furnium*; the master sat in rooms far better warmed than Oxford country houses now, or sunned himself at midday in the sheltered quadrangle, taking his exercise in the warm side of the colonnade among his gay stuccoes and fluted columns. Could we for a moment raise the veil, we should probably find that the country life of 400 A.D. in Oxfordshire was not so very dissimilar to that of to-day, ... and that the well-to-do Roman of rustic Middle England was ... a useful, peaceful, and a happy person.”

CHAPTER VII

ANGLO-SAXON VILLAGES

Departure of Romans—Coming of Saxons—Bede—Saxon names of places—Saxon village—Common-field system—*Eorl* and *ceorl*—Thanes, *geburs*, and *cottiers*—Description of village life—Thane's house—*Socmen*—Ploughman's lament—Village tradesmen—Parish council—Hundreds—Shires.

The scene changes. The Roman legions have left our shores, and are trying to prop the tottering state of the falling empire. The groans of the Britons have fallen on listless or distracted ears, and no one has come to their succour. The rule of the all-swaying Roman power has passed away, and the Saxon hordes have poured over the hills and vales of rural Britain, and made it the Angles' land—our England.

The coming of the Saxons was a very gradual movement. They did not attack our shores in large armies on one or two occasions; they came in clans or families. The head of the clan built a ship, and taking with him his family and relations, founded a settlement in wild Britain, or wherever the winds happened to carry them. They were very fierce and relentless in war, and committed terrible ravages on the helpless Britons, sparing neither men, women, nor children, burning buildings, destroying and conquering wherever they went.

Bede tells the story of doings of the ruthless Saxons:—

“The barbarous conquerors ... plundered all the neighbouring cities and country, spread the conflagration from the eastern to the western sea without any opposition, and covered almost every part of the devoted island. Public as well as private structures were overturned; the priests were everywhere slain before the altars; the prelates and the people, without any respect of persons, were destroyed with fire and sword; nor was there any to bury those who had been thus cruelly slaughtered. Some of the miserable remainder, being taken in the mountains, were butchered in heaps. Others, spent with hunger, came forth and submitted themselves to the enemy for food, being destined to undergo perpetual servitude, if they were not killed even upon the spot. Some, with sorrowful hearts, fled beyond the seas; others, continuing in their own country, led a miserable life among the woods, rocks, and mountains, with scarcely enough food to support life, and expecting every moment to be their last.”

Many antiquaries believe that the extirpation of the Britons was not so complete as Bede asserts, and that a large number of them remained in England in a condition of servitude. At any rate, the almost entire extinction of the language, except as regards the names of a few rivers and mountains, and of a few household words, seems to point to a fairly complete expulsion of the Britons rather than to a mingling of them with the conquering race.

What remains have we in our English villages of our Saxon forefathers, the makers of England? In the first place we notice that many of the names of our villages retain the memory of their founders. When the family, or group of families, formed their settlements, they avoided the buildings and walled towns, relics of Roman civilisation, made clearings for themselves in the primeval forests, and established themselves in village communities. In the names of places the suffix *ing*, meaning *sons of*, denotes that the village was first occupied by the clan of some chief, whose name is compounded with this syllable *ing*. Thus the Uffingas, the children of Offa, formed a settlement at Uffingaston, or Uffington; the Redingas, or sons of Rede, settled at Reading; the Billings at Billinge and Billingham; the Wokings or Hocings, sons of Hoc, at Woking and Wokingham. The Billings and Wokings first settled at Billinge and Woking; and then like bees they swarmed, and started another hive of industry at Billingham and Wokingham.

These family settlements, revealed to us by the patronymic *ing*, are very numerous. At Ardington, in Berkshire, the Ardings, the royal race of the Vandals, settled; the Frankish Walsings at Wolsingham; the Halsings at Helsington; the Brentings at Brentingley; the Danish Scyldings at Skelding; the Thuringings at Thorington; and many other examples might be quoted.

Many Saxon names of places end in *field*, which denotes a forest clearing, or *feld*, made by the axes of the settlers in the primeval woods, where the trees were *felled*. These villages were rudely fortified, or inclosed by a hedge, wall, or palisade, denoted by the suffix *ton*, derived from the Anglo-Saxon *tynan*, to hedge; and all names ending with this syllable point to the existence of a Saxon settlement hedged in and protected from all

intruders. Thus we have Barton, Preston, Bolton, and many others. The terminations *yard*, *stoke*, or stockaded place, as in Basingstoke, *worth* (Anglo-Saxon *weorthig*), as in Kenilworth, Tamworth, Walworth, have much the same meaning.

Perhaps the most common of all the terminations of names denoting the presence of Anglo-Saxon settlers is the suffix *ham*. When the *a* is pronounced short the syllable denotes an inclosure, like *stoke* or *ton*; but when the *a* is long, it means home, and expresses the reverence with which the Anglo-Saxon regarded his own dwelling. England is the land of homes, and the natural affection with which we Englishmen regard our homes is to a great extent peculiar to our race. The Frenchman, the Spaniard, the Italian, do not have the same respect for home. Our Saxon forefathers were a very home-loving people, and it is from them doubtless that we inherit our love for our homes.

We find, then, the Saxon holding the lands. The clan formed settlements; sections of each clan formed branch settlements; and several members of each section cut their way through the thick forests, felled the trees, built homesteads, where they tilled the land and reared their cattle.

In early Saxon times the settlement consisted of a number of families holding a district, and the land was regularly divided into three portions. There was the village itself, in which the people lived in houses built of wood or rude stonework. Around the village were a few small inclosures, or grass yards, for rearing calves and baiting farm stock; this was the common farmstead. Around this was the arable land, where the villagers grew their corn and other vegetables; and around this lay the common meadows, or pasture land, held by the whole community, so that each family could turn their cattle into it, subject to the regulations of an officer elected by the people, whose duty it was to see that no one trespassed on the rights of his neighbour, or turned too many cattle into the common pasture.



Around the whole colony lay the woods and uncultivated land, which was left in its natural wild state, where the people cut their timber and fuel, and pastured their pigs in the glades of the forest. The cultivated land was divided into three large fields, in which the rotation of crops was strictly enforced, each field lying fallow once in three years. To each freeman was assigned his own family lot, which was cultivated by the members of his household. But he was obliged to sow the same crop as his neighbour, and compelled by law to allow his lot to lie fallow with the rest every third year. The remains of this common-field system are still evident in many parts of the country, the fields being termed "lot meadows," or "Lammas lands." Our commons, too, many of which remain in spite of numerous inclosures, are evidences of the communal life of our village forefathers.

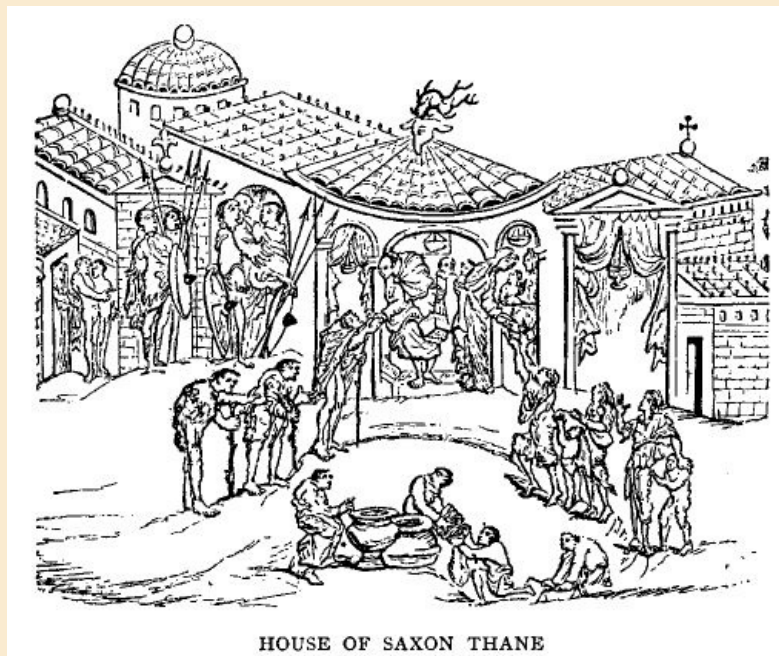
How long the Saxon villages remained free democratic institutions, we do not know. Gradually a change came over them, and we find the manorial system in vogue. Manors existed in England long before the Normans came, although "manor" is a Norman word; and in the time of Canute the system was in full force. The existence of a manor implies a lord of the manor, who exercised authority over all the villagers, owned the home farm, and had certain rights over the rest of the land. How all this came about, we scarcely know. Owing to the Danish invasions, when the rude barbarous warriors carried fire and sword into many a peaceful town and village, the villagers found themselves at the mercy of these savage hordes. Probably they sought the protection of some thane, or *eorl*, with his band of warriors, who could save their lands from pillage. In return for their services they acknowledged him as the lord of their village, and gave him rent, which was paid either in the produce of these fields or by the work of their hands. Thus the lords of the manor became the masters of the villagers, although they too were governed by law, and were obliged to respect the rights of their tenants and servants.

Saxon society was divided into two main divisions, the *eorl* and the *ceorl*, the men of noble birth, and those of ignoble origin. The chief man in the village was the manorial lord, a *thane*, who had his demesne land, and his *gafol* land, or *geneat* land, which was land held in villeinage, and cultivated by *geneats*, or persons

holding by service. These villein tenants were in two classes, the *geburs*, or villeins proper, who held the yardlands, and the *cottiers*, who had smaller holdings. Beneath these two classes there were the *theows*, or slaves, made up partly of the conquered Britons, partly of captives taken in war, and partly of freemen who had been condemned to this penalty for their crimes, or had incurred it by poverty.

There were degrees of rank among Saxon gentlemen, as among those of to-day. The thanes were divided into three classes: (i.) those of royal rank (*thani regis*), who served the king in Court or in the management of State affairs; (ii.) *thani mediocres*, who held the title by inheritance, and corresponded to the lords of the manor in the later times; (iii.) *thani minores*, or inferior thanes, to which rank *ceorls* or merchants could attain by the acquisition of sufficient landed property.

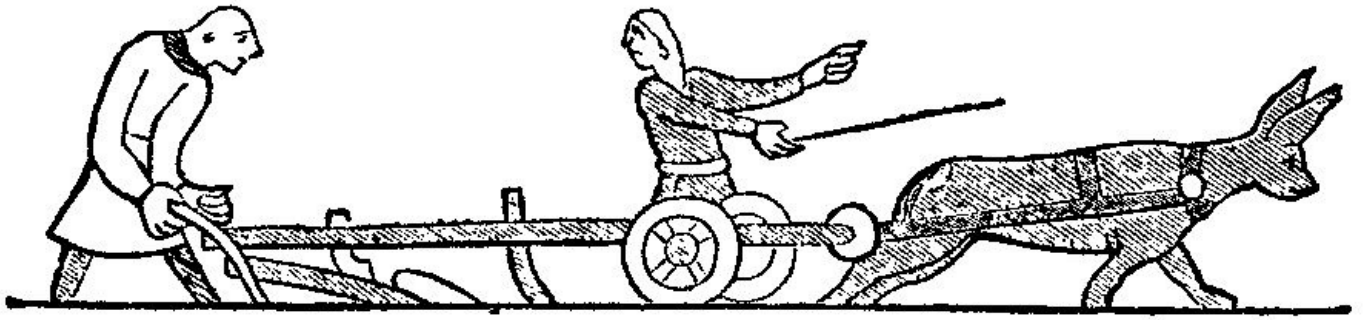
We can picture to ourselves the ordinary village life which existed in Saxon times. The thane's house stood in the centre of the village, not a very lordly structure, and very unlike the stately Norman castles which were erected in later times. It was commonly built of wood, which the neighbouring forests supplied in plenty, and had stone or mud foundations. The house consisted of an irregular group of low buildings, almost all of one story. In the centre of the group was the hall, with doors opening into the court. On one side stood the kitchen; on the other the chapel when the thane became a Christian and required the services of the Church for himself and his household. Numerous other rooms with lean-to roofs were joined on to the hall, and a tower for purposes of defence in case of an attack. Stables and barns were scattered about outside the house, and with the cattle and horses lived the grooms and herdsmen, while villeins and *cottiers* dwelt in the humble, low, shedlike buildings, which clustered round the Saxon thane's dwelling-place. An illustration of such a house appears in an ancient illumination preserved in the Harleian MSS., No. 603. The lord and lady of the house are represented as engaged in almsgiving; the lady is thus earning her true title, that of "loaf-giver," from which her name "lady" is derived.



The interior of the hall was the common living-room for both men and women, who slept on the reed-strewn floor, the ladies' sleeping-place being separated from the men's by the arras. The walls were hung with tapestry, woven by the skilled fingers of the ladies of the household. A peat or log fire burned in the centre of the hall, and the smoke hid the ceiling and finally found its way out through a hole in the roof. Arms and armour hung on the walls, and the seats consisted of benches called "mead-settles," arranged along the sides of the hall, where the Saxon chiefs sat drinking their favourite beverage, mead, or sweetened beer, out of the horns presented to them by the waiting damsels. When the hour for dinner approached, rude tables were laid on trestles, and forthwith groaned beneath the weight of joints of meat and fat capons which the Saxon loved dearly. The door of the hall was usually open, and thither came the bards and gleemen, who used to delight the company with their songs and stories of the gallant deeds of their ancestors, the weird legends of their gods Woden and Thor, their Viking lays and Norse sagas, and the acrobats and dancers astonished them with their strange postures.

Next to the thane ranked the *geburs*, who held land granted to them by the thane for their own use, sometimes as much as one hundred and twenty acres, and were required to work for the lord on the home farm two or three days a week, or pay rent for their holdings. This payment consisted of the produce of the land. They were also obliged to provide one or more oxen for the manorial plough team, which consisted of eight oxen.

There was also a strong independent body of men called *socmen*, who were none other than our English yeomen. They were free tenants, who have by their independence stamped with peculiar features both our constitution and our national character. Their good name remains; English yeomen have done good service to their country, and let us hope that they will long continue to exist amongst us, in spite of the changed condition of English agriculture and the prolonged depression in farming affairs, which has tried them severely.



WHEEL PLOUGH
From Bayeux Tapestry

Besides the *geburs* and *socmen* there were the *cottiers*, who had small allotments of about five acres, kept no oxen, and were required to work for the thane some days in each week. Below them were the *theows*, serfs, or slaves, who could be bought and sold in the market, and were compelled to work on the lord's farm.

Listen to the sad lament of one of this class, recorded in a dialogue of AElfric of the tenth century:—

"What sayest thou, ploughman? How dost thou do thy work?"

"Oh, my lord, hard do I work. I go out at daybreak, driving the oxen to field, and I yoke them to the plough. Nor is it ever so hard winter that I dare loiter at home, for fear of my lord, but the oxen yoked, and the ploughshare and the coulter fastened to the plough, every day must I plough a full acre, or more."

"Hast thou any comrade?"

"I have a boy driving the oxen with an iron goad, who also is hoarse with cold and shouting."

"What more dost thou in the day?"

"Verily then I do more. I must fill the bin of the oxen with hay, and water them, and carry out the dung. Ha! Ha! hard work it is, hard work it is! because *I am not free.*"

Evidently the ploughman's want of freedom was his great hardship; his work in ploughing, feeding, and watering his cattle, and in cleansing their stable, was not harder than that of an ordinary carter in the present day; but servitude galled his spirit, and made the work intolerable. Let us hope that his lord was a kind-hearted man, and gave him some cattle for his own, as well as some land to cultivate, and then he would not feel the work so hard, or the winter so cold.

Frequently men were thus released from slavery; sometimes also freemen sold themselves into slavery under the pressure of extreme want. A man so reduced was required to lay aside his sword and lance, the symbols of the free, and to take up the bill and the goad, the implements of slavery, to fall on his knees and place his head, in token of submission, under the hands of his master.



SMITHY

From the Cotton MS., B 4

Each trade was represented in the village community. There were the *faber*, or smith, and the carpenter, who repaired the ironwork and woodwork of the ploughs and other agricultural implements, and in return for their work had small holdings among the tenants free from ordinary services. There was the *punder*, or pound-man, who looked after the repair of the fences and impounded stray cattle; the *cementarius*, or stonemason; the *custos apium*, or bee-keeper, an important person, as much honey was needed to make the sweetened ale, or mead, which the villagers and their chiefs loved to imbibe; and the steward, or *prepositus*, who acted on behalf of the lord, looked after the interests of the tenants, and took care that they rendered their legal services. The surnames Smith, Baker, Butcher, Carter, and many others, preserve the remembrance of the various trades which were carried on in every village, and of the complete self-dependence of the community.

We have inherited many customs and institutions from our Saxon forefathers, which connect our own age with theirs. In recent years we have established parish councils in our villages. Formerly the pet theory of politicians was centralisation; everything had to be done at one centre, at one central office, and London became the head and centre of all government. But recently politicians thought that they had discovered a new plan for carrying on the internal affairs of the country, and the idea was to leave each district to manage its own affairs. This is only a return to the original Saxon plan. In every village there was a moot-hill, or sacred tree, where the freemen met to make their own laws and arrange their agricultural affairs. Here disputes were settled, plough lands and meadow lands shared in due lot among the villagers, and everything arranged according to the custom of the village.

Our county maps show that the shires are divided into hundreds. This we have inherited from our Saxon forefathers. In order to protect themselves from their neighbours, the Saxon colonists arranged themselves in hundreds of warriors. This little army was composed of picked champions, the representatives of a hundred families; men who were ready in case of war to uphold the honour of their house, and to fight for their hearths and homes. These hundred families recognised a bond of union with each other and a common inheritance, and ranged themselves under one name for general purposes, whether for defence, administration of justice, or other objects.

On a fixed day, three times a year, in some place where they were accustomed to assemble—under a particular tree,^[1] or near some river-bank—these hundred champions used to meet their chieftain, and gather around him when he dismounted from his horse. He then placed his spear in the ground, and each warrior touched it with his own spear in token of their compact, and pledged himself to mutual support. At this assembly criminals were tried, disputes settled, bargains of sale concluded; and in later times many of these transactions were inserted in the chartularies of abbeys or the registers of bishops, which thus became a kind of register too sacred to be falsified. A large number of the hundreds bear the name of some chieftain who once used to call together his band of bearded, light-haired warriors and administer rude justice beneath a broad oak's shade.^[2] Others are named after some particular spot, some tree, or ford, or stone, or tumulus, where the hundred court met.

Our counties or shires were not formed, as is popularly supposed, by King Alfred or other royal person by the dividing up of the country into portions, but were the areas occupied by the original Saxon tribes or kingdoms. Most of our counties retain to this day the boundaries which were originally formed by the early Saxon settlers. Some of our counties were old Saxon kingdoms—such as Sussex, Essex, Middlesex—the kingdoms of the South, East, and Middle Saxons. Surrey is the Sothe-reye, or south realm; Kent is the land of the Cantii, a Belgic tribe; Devon is the land of the Damnonii, a Celtic tribe; Cornwall, or Corn-wales, is the land of the Welsh of the Horn; Worcestershire is the shire of the Huiccii; Cumberland is the land of the Cymry; Northumberland is the land north of the Humber, and therefore, as its name implies, used to extend

over all the North of England. Evidently the southern tribes and kingdoms by conquest reduced the size of this large county and confined it to its present smaller dimensions. In several cases the name of the county is derived from that of its chief town, *e.g.* Oxfordshire, Warwickshire; these were districts which were conquered by some powerful earl or chieftain, who held his court in the town, and called his newly acquired property after its name.

We have seen the picture of an ordinary English village in early Saxon times, the villeins and slaves working in the fields and driving their oxen, and the thane dressed in his linen tunic and short cloak, his hose bandaged to the knee with strips of cloth, superintending the farming operations. We have seen the freemen and thanes taking an active part in public life, attending the courts of the hundred and shire, as well as the folk moot or parish council of those times, and the slave mourning over his lack of freedom. But many other relics of Saxon times remain, and these will require another chapter for their examination.

[1] Until the eighteenth century there stood a pollard oak in the parish of Shelford, Berks, where the hundred court used to be held.

[2] Other theories with regard to the origin of the hundred have been suggested. Some writers maintain that the hundred was a district whence the hundred warriors were derived, or a group of townships. But the Bishop of Oxford in his *Constitutional History* states: "It is very probable that the colonists of Britain arranged themselves in hundreds of warriors; it is not probable that the country was carved into equal districts. The only conclusion that seems reasonable is that under the name of geographical hundreds we have the variously sized *pagi*, or districts, in which the hundred warriors settled, the boundaries of these being determined by other causes."

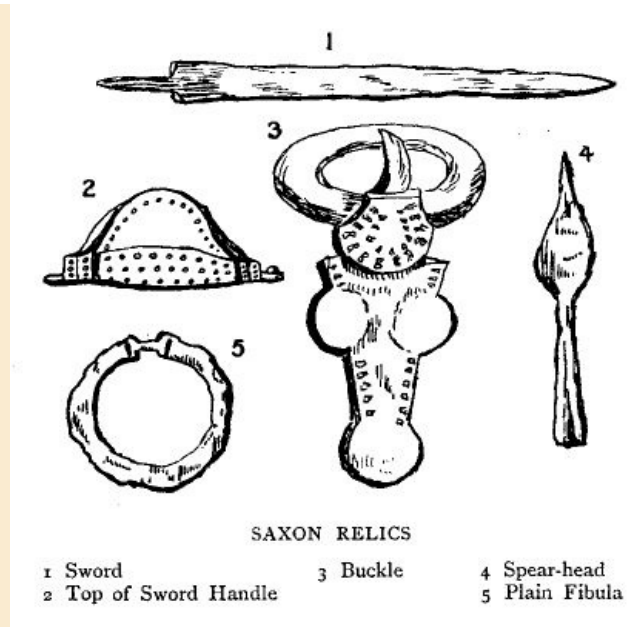
CHAPTER VIII

SAXON RELICS

Peculiarities of Saxon barrows—Their contents—Weapons—Articles of personal adornment—Cremation—Saxon Cemeteries—Jutes—Saxons—Angles—Religion of Saxons—British Church in Wales—Conversion of Saxons—Saxon crosses—Whalley—St. Wilfrid—Ruthwell cross—Bewcastle cross—Eyam cross—Ilkley cross—Hexham cross—Cross at St. Andrew's, Bishop Auckland—Cheeping crosses—Pilgrim crosses.

The earth has preserved a vast store of relics of the Saxons, and for these we must search in the barrows which contain their dead. There are certain peculiarities which characterise these memorials of the race. The larger tumuli, whether belonging to Celt or Roman, usually stand alone, or in groups of not more than two or three, and were the monuments of distinguished people; whereas the Saxon barrows form a regular cemetery, each group being the common burying-place of the people in the district. Another characteristic is the large number of articles which they contain. Moreover it was the practice of the other races to lay the body on the ground, and build up the chamber and mound above it. The Saxons on the other hand laid the body in a deep grave before they began to construct the barrow.

The body was usually stretched out on its back, but is sometimes found in a sitting position, as in graves recently discovered on Lord Wantage's estate, Berks. Coffins of hollowed trunks of trees were occasionally used, but these were not common. If the dead man was a warrior, his weapons were buried with him, and we find the head and spike of his spear, heads of javelins, a long iron broad-sword, a long knife, occasionally an axe, and over his breast the iron boss of his shield, the wooden part of which has of course decayed away.



The articles of personal adornment are very numerous. Fibulae, or brooches, and buckles, made of bronze, are very beautifully ornamented. Gold fibulae of circular form are found in the Kentish barrows, frequently ornamented with real or fictitious gems. Rings, bracelets, necklaces of beads, pendants for the neck and ears, are very common. The beads are of glass, or amber, or variegated clay. Hairpins with which the Saxon ladies bound up their tresses, chatelaines with tweezers for removing superfluous hairs, toothpicks, scissors, and small knives, are very frequent, and combs made of bone.

When cremation was used the ashes were deposited in an urn made of rude earthenware without the help of a lathe. Drinking-vessels of glass of fine and delicate workmanship, pointed or rounded at the bottom, are common. From the construction of these cups it is evident that the Saxon allowed no "heel-taps." Bronze bowls, dishes, and basins are found in Saxon barrows, and occasionally buckets.

A pair of dice was found in a grave at Kingston Down, which indicates a favourite pastime of the Saxons. The presence of a large number of Roman coins shows that they used Roman money long after the legions had left our shores. Sceattas, or Saxon silver coins, are also frequently discovered.

Many Saxon cemeteries have been discovered in various parts of England, but a vast number have never been examined; and the careful inspection of the contents of barrows must throw much light upon Saxon settlements in England. Bede tells us that there were three different branches of this race. The Jutes settled in Kent and the Isle of Wight. The Saxons settled in Essex, the country of the East Saxons, Sussex, that of the South Saxons, and Wessex, of the West Saxons. The Angles settled in East Anglia. Now an examination of barrows shows that the Angles practised cremation and urn burial, which was not so common amongst the Jutes and Saxons, and the fibulae found in the tombs of these tribes differ considerably in shape and size. The contents of these graves throw much light on the history of the people, their customs and habits. The action of the plough has often obliterated the traces of ancient barrows. It is advisable that the position of all such mounds should be carefully noted and recorded, and where possible excavations made which may help in settling many vexed questions, and enable us to understand more fully the condition of the pagan Saxon, ere the light of Christianity had dawned upon him.

Our names for the days of the week tell us of the gods of our Saxon forefathers, whom they worshipped in their pagan and unregenerate state. Sun-day, Moon-day, Tuisco's-day, Woden's-day, Thor's-day, Frya's-day, Saeter's-day, link us on to the times when these "whelps from the kennels of barbarism," as the Britons loved to call their conquerors, swept away the old British Church, and established their heathen rites and customs. Their religion resembled that of their Scandinavian neighbours. Each village had its sacred spot, some clearing in the forest, a tree, or well, whither the people resorted to pray to their gods, and practise superstitious rites and customs which lingered long after the introduction of Christianity, and even still survive. They had also a few temples whither the freemen came three times a year.

Driven out of England the ancient British Church found a refuge in the wilds of Wales and Cornwall, where it lived on and flourished vigorously, allied to the Churches of Ireland and Scotland, sending out missionaries to the Continent of Europe, having schools and colleges, monasteries, and numerous churches. Llancarvan, in Glamorganshire, was a celebrated seat of learning; and all places named Bangor, such as Bangor-Iscaed, St. Asaph, and many others, possessed schools and colleges. The village names of numerous places in Wales and Cornwall record the labours of many earnest, saintly men, who brought Christianity to the savage folk in these wild regions. There are nearly five hundred names of these holy men in Wales alone, whose memory is retained by this simple record; and Cornwall is dotted over with churches dedicated to men and women whose names are strange, and of whom we know nothing. History tells us of some of these early saints and martyrs, of St. Alban, the first British martyr, who was slain 303 A.D. during the Diocletian persecution in the city which bears his name; of St. David, a Welsh prince, who followed the active life of John the Baptist, and preached like him. The memory of early saints is enshrined in the names, St. Ives, St. Neots, St. Bees, and in St. Edmund's Bury, named after St. Edmund, who was taken prisoner by Ingvar the Viking, and having been bound to a tree, was scourged, and served as a target for the arrows of the Danes, being afterwards beheaded. All these record the bravery and zeal of the holy men of old who loved their God, and for His sake feared not to die.

Nothing need be said of the conversion of the English. That is a story which has been often told. The scene is again changed. The temples of Woden and Thor at Canterbury and Godmundingham and elsewhere, with their heathen altars and shrines and idols, have been changed into Christian churches, and other houses of God have been raised in the various kingdoms; while Paulinus, Berinus, Aidan, Winfrid, and other preachers, travelled through the country, exhorting the people to accept the Christian faith.

Memorials of these early Christian missionaries remain in many a village churchyard. Often there stands near the village church an old stone cross, its steps worn away by the rains and frosts of thirteen centuries; its head has doubtless gone, broken off by the force of the gales, or by the wild rage of human passion and Puritanical iconoclastic zeal; but it preserves the memory of the first conversion of the Saxon villagers to Christianity, and was erected to mark the spot where the people assembled to hear the new preacher, and to consecrate it for this purpose.

In the life of St. Willibald we read that it was the custom of the Saxon nation, on the estates of some of their nobles or great men, to erect, not a church, but the sign of the Holy Cross, dedicated to God, beautifully and honourably adorned, and exalted on high for the common use of daily prayer. It is recorded also that St. Kentigern used to erect a cross in any place where he had converted the people, and where he had been staying for some time. Very probably the Saxon preacher would make use of the old open-air meeting-place, where the pagan villagers used to worship Woden; and thus the spots still used for public worship are in many cases the same which used to echo with the songs of Thor and the prayers of pagan Saxons.

These crosses were the rallying-points for Christian congregations before churches arose, and the bells in their turrets summoned the people to the service of God. In Somersetshire alone there are two hundred relics of the piety of our forefathers; and the North of England and Scotland are especially rich in crosses. No two are ever quite similar. Some are of simple design or character; but many have such beautiful carving and scrollwork that we are astonished at the skill of the workmen who, with very simple and rude tools, could produce such wonderful specimens of art.

The pagan Saxons worshipped stone pillars; so in order to wean them from their ignorant superstition, the Christian missionaries, such as St. Wilfrid, erected these stone crosses, and carved upon them the figures of the Saviour and His Apostles, displaying before the eyes of their hearers the story of the cross written in stone.

The North of England has very many examples of the zeal of these early preachers of the faith, and probably most of them were fashioned by the monks and followers of St. Wilfrid, who was Archbishop of York at the beginning of the eighth century.

When he travelled about his diocese a large body of monks and workmen attended him; and amongst these were the cutters in stone who made the crosses and erected them on the spots which Wilfrid consecrated to the worship of God.

The Whalley cross is earlier than the time of Wilfrid. It is one of the crosses of Paulinus, who was one of the priests sent by Pope Gregory to help Augustine in the work of converting the Saxons, and who became Archbishop of York. Under the shadow of this very cross Paulinus, who came to England in 601 A.D., preached nearly thirteen hundred years ago. Indeed an old monkish writer wished to represent that Augustine himself came to Whalley and erected the cross, which he calls "St. Augustine's Cross"; but there is little doubt that Paulinus was the founder. In Puritan times this and other relics of early faith suffered badly, and was removed with two others from the churchyard, and used as a gatepost; but the spoiler repented, and restored it once more to its old resting-place.

But how did the founders learn to make such beautiful patterns and designs? St. Wilfrid had travelled much; he had been to Rome and seen the wonderful examples of Roman skill in the great city. The Romans had left behind them in England their beautiful pavements, rich in designs, with splendid borders of fine workmanship. These, doubtless, the monks copied on parchment in the writing-rooms of their monasteries, and gave their drawings to the monks in the stone-shed, who reproduced them in stone. The only tool they had to produce all this fine and delicate work was the pick, and this increases our wonder at the marvels they were able to accomplish.

There is a famous cross at Ruthwell, in Dumfriesshire, which for a short time formed part of the kingdom of Northumbria. Scenes from early Christian history are portrayed, and these are surrounded by bands with sentences in Latin describing them. The lowest panel is too defaced for us to determine the subjects; on the second we see the flight into Egypt; on the third figures of Paul, the first hermit, and Anthony, the first monk, are carved; on the fourth is a representation of our Lord treading under foot the heads of swine; and on the highest there is the figure of John the Baptist with the Lamb. On the opposite side are the Annunciation, the Salutation, and other scenes of gospel history. On the side of the cross is some beautiful scrollwork, which shows a wonderful development of skill and art.

In addition to the Latin sentences there are five stanzas of an Anglo-Saxon poem of singular beauty. It is the story of the crucifixion told in touching words by the cross itself, which narrates its own sad tale from the time when it was a growing tree by the woodside, until at length, after the body of the Lord had been taken down—

"The warriors left me there,
Standing defiled with blood."

On the head of the cross are inscribed the words, "Caedmon made me." This Caedmon was the holy monk, on whom the gift of writing verses was bestowed by Heaven, who in the year 680 A.D. began to pour forth his songs in praise of Almighty God, and told in Anglo-Saxon poetry the story of the creation and the life of our Lord. The Bewcastle cross is somewhat similar to that at Ruthwell. We see again the figure of our Lord standing on the heads of swine, but the lower figure is represented with a hawk, the sign of nobility, and is probably that of a person to whom the cross is a memorial. The ornamentation on this cross is very perfect and beautifully executed. The very beautiful cross at Eyam, in Derbyshire, differs both in style and workmanship from almost any other. The shaft has evidently been broken. In the panels of the head of the cross are figures of angels.

Sometimes we find some very strange beasts carved on the old crosses. On the cross at Ilkley we observe some of these curious animals with their long tails interlacing. Sometimes the tail is wound round the creature's body, and the idea of the artist was to represent the animal reduced to a state of powerlessness. One forepaw is held up in sign of submission. Above is a figure of our Lord triumphing over the powers of evil, and these animals represent probably man's lower nature owning the supremacy of the King of Heaven. On the other side of the cross are figures of the four evangelists. The upper half of the figures alone appears dressed in flowing garments; each is carrying a book; circles of glory surround their heads, which are the symbols of the evangelists. St. Matthew has a man's head; St. Mark a leopard's; St. Luke's a calf's; and St. John an eagle's head.

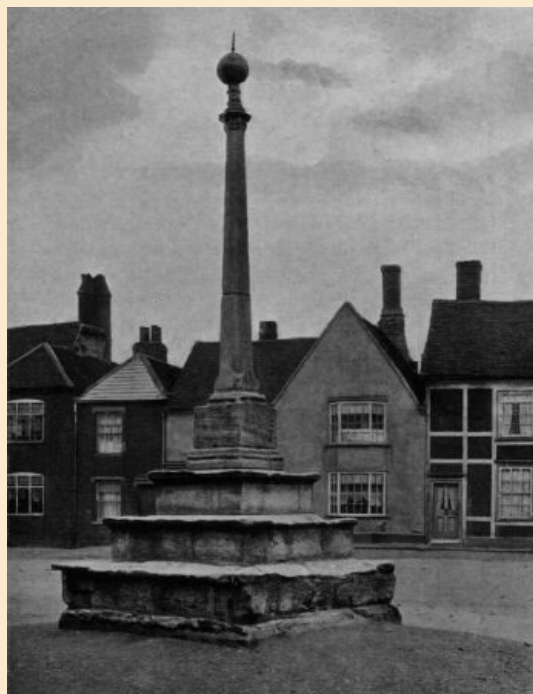
The crosses at Hexham, where Archbishop Wilfrid founded a monastery, are very ancient. We are able to tell the date of these stones, for they were placed at the head and feet of the grave of Bishop Acca, who was a follower of St. Wilfrid, and accompanied him on his missionary journeys. Acca succeeded Wilfrid as Bishop of Hexham, and according to the old chronicler Bede, "being a most active man and great in the sight of God and man, he much adorned and added to his church." Acca died in 738 A.D., and as the monastery of Hexham was soon destroyed, these crosses must have been erected eleven hundred and sixty-three years ago.

The cross at St. Andrew's, Bishop Auckland, is of much later date, and the workmanship is not nearly so fine and delicate as in the earlier crosses. The Saxons had deteriorated as a race just before the Normans came, and although the cross still appears on the flat stone, the design on the shaft of the cross merely represents a hunting scene; and a Saxon Bowman is shown shooting at some animals. The religious conceptions of an earlier and purer time have disappeared. The moustache of the sportsman also shows that the stone belonged to a period very near the Norman Conquest, when that fashion of wearing the hair was in vogue.

England is remarkable for these specimens of ancient art. On the Continent there are very few of these elaborately carved crosses; but it is noteworthy that wherever the English or Irish missionaries went, they erected these memorials of their faith. In Switzerland, where they founded some monasteries, there are some very similar to those in England.

There are several other kinds of crosses besides those in churchyards. There are market crosses, called "cheeping" crosses after the Anglo-Saxon *cheap*, to buy, from which Cheapside, in London, Chippenham and Chipping Norton derive their names. Some crosses are "pilgrim" crosses, and were erected along the roads leading to shrines where pilgrimages were wont to be made, such as the shrine of St. Thomas a Becket at Canterbury, Glastonbury, Our Lady of Walsingham. Sometimes they were erected at the places where the corpse rested on its way to burial, as the Eleanor crosses at Waltham and Charing, in order that people might pray for the soul of the deceased. Monks also erected crosses to mark the boundaries of the property of their monastery.

[ENLARGE](#)



OLD MARKET CROSS

Time has dealt hardly with the old crosses of England. Many of them were destroyed by the Puritans, who by the Parliamentary decree of 1643, ordered that all altars and tables of stones, all crucifixes, images and pictures of God and the saints, with all superstitious inscriptions, should be obliterated and destroyed. In London, St. Paul's Cross, Charing Cross, and that in Cheapside, were levelled with the ground, and throughout the country many a beautiful work of art which had existed hundreds of years shared the same fate. Place-names sometimes preserve their memory, such as Gerard's Cross, in Buckinghamshire, Crosby, Crossens, Cross Inn, Croston; these and many others record the existence in ancient times of a cross, and probably beneath its shade the first preachers of the gospel stood, when they turned the hearts of our

heathen ancestors, and taught them the holy lessons of the Cross.

CHAPTER IX

ENGLISH ARCHITECTURE

Saxon monasteries—Parish churches—Benedict Biscop—Aldhelm—St. Andrew's, Hexham—Brixworth Church—Saxon architecture—Norman architecture—Characteristics of the style—Transition Norman—Early English style—Decorated style—Perpendicular style.

The early Saxon clergy lived in monasteries, where they had a church and a school for the education of the sons of thanes. Monastic houses, centres of piety and evangelistic zeal, sprang up, the abodes of religion, civilisation, peace, and learning. They were the schools of culture, sacred and profane, of industry and agriculture; the monks were the architects, the painters, the sculptors, the goldsmiths of their time. They formed the first libraries; they taught the young; they educated women in convents, and by degrees dispersed the shades of ignorance, idolatry, and barbarism, and reformed England.

To record the number of these monastic houses which were erected in the seventh and eighth centuries would require much space; and as our chief concern is with the vestiges that remain in our English villages, and as most of these Saxon monasteries were plundered and destroyed by the Danes, or rebuilt on a grander scale by the Normans, we will not now enumerate them.

After the country had been evangelised by the itinerant monks and preachers, the next process was to establish a church in every village, and to provide a pastor to minister therein. Archbishop Theodore encouraged the thanes to build and endow churches on their estates, and introduced to this country the parochial system, by means of which all villages could have the services of a resident pastor.

Then the thane's house was not considered complete without its chapel; and in the scattered hamlets and village communities churches arose, rudely built of wood and roofed with thatch, wherein the Saxon *ceorls* and *cottiers* loved to worship.

The great Churchmen of the day were not content with such humble structures. They had travelled to Rome, and seen there some of the fine buildings dedicated for divine service; so they determined to have the like in their own country. One of these noble builders was Benedict Biscop, founder of the twin monasteries of Wearmouth and Jarrow. When he built the former, he imported foreign artists from Gaul, who constructed the monastery after the Roman style, and amongst other things introduced glazed windows, which had never been seen in England before. Nor was his new house bare and unadorned. He brought from Rome vast stores of church furniture, many books, and the "arch-chanter" John, to teach his monks the music and ritual of Rome.

Aldhelm, Abbot of Malmesbury, and first Bishop of Sherborne, was one of the foremost church-builders of the time, and the beautiful churches at Malmesbury, Sherborne, Bradford-on-Avon, Frome, and Wareham, owe their erection to his instrumentality. Wilfrid also was one of the saintly architects of the period. Here is a description of the church of St. Andrew, at Hexham, taken from the writings of Richard, prior of the monastery there:—

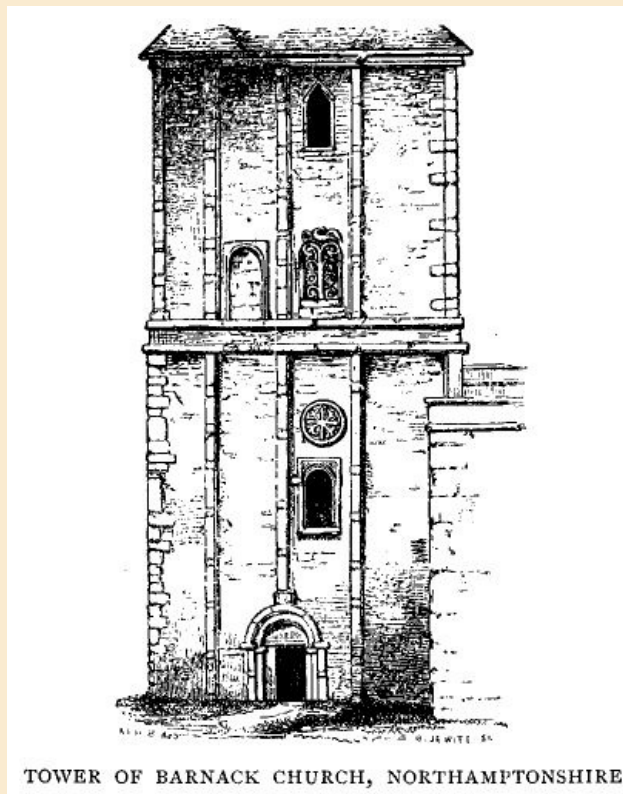
"The foundations of this church St. Wilfrid laid deep in the earth for the crypts and oratories, and the passages leading to them, which were then with great exactness contrived and built under ground. The walls, which were of great length, and raised to an immense height, and divided into three several stones or tiers, he supported by square and other kinds of well-polished columns. Also, the walls, the capitals of the columns which supported them, and the arch of the sanctuary, he decorated with historical representations, imagery, and various figures of relief, carved in stone, and painted with a most agreeable variety of colour. The body of the church he compassed about with pentices and porticoes, which, both above and below, he divided with great and inexpressible art, by partition walls and winding stairs. Within the staircases, and above them, he caused flights of steps and galleries of stone, and several passages leading from them both ascending and descending, to be so artfully disposed, that multitudes of people might be there, and go quite round the church, without being seen by anyone below in the nave. Moreover in the several divisions of the porticoes or aisles, he erected many most beautiful and private oratories of exquisite workmanship; and in them he caused to be placed altars in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Michael, St. John the Baptist, and the holy Apostles, martyrs, confessors, and virgins, with all decent and proper furniture to each of them, some of which, remaining at this day, appear like so many turrets and fortified places."



CONSECRATION OF A SAXON CHURCH

The Danish wars had a disastrous effect on such noble structures raised by these monastic architects, as well as on many a rustic village church, which fell a prey to the ruthless invading bands of pagan warriors. But frequently, as we study the history written in the stonework of our churches, we find amid the massive Norman walls traces of the work of Saxon builders, an arch here, a column there, which link our own times with the distant past when England was divided into eight kingdoms, or when Danegeld was levied to buy off the marauding strangers.

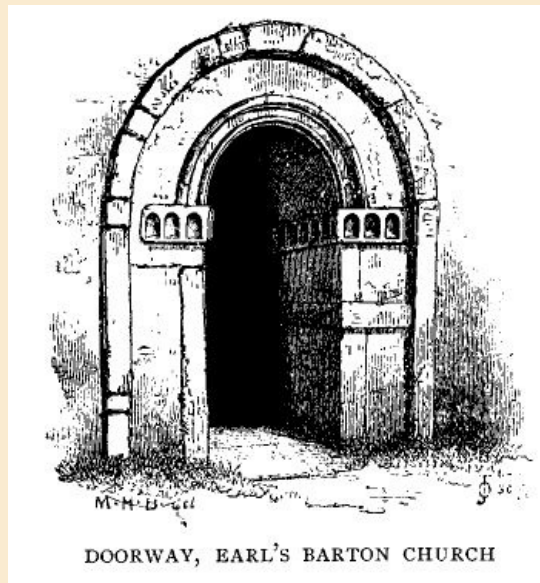
Roman buildings served as a model for our Saxon architects, and Roman bricks were much used by them. Brixworth Church is perhaps the finest specimen of our early Saxon churches. It has semicircular arches, made of Roman bricks, springing from square massive piers with single abaci.



TOWER OF BARNACK CHURCH, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

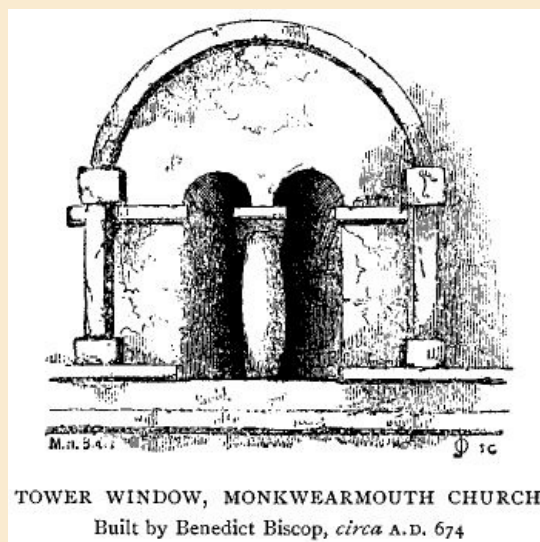
We will try to point out the distinguishing features of Saxon work, in order that you may be able to detect

the evidence of its existence in your own village and neighbourhood. The walls are chiefly formed of rubble or rag stone, having "long and short work," *i.e.* long block of cut stone laid alternately horizontally and vertically, at the corners of the building and in the jambs of the doors. Often narrow ribs of masonry run vertically up the walls, and a string-course runs horizontally. The churches of Barnack and Wittering in Northamptonshire, St. Michael's, Oxford, and the towers of Earl's Barton are good examples of this.



Saxon doorways have semicircular arches, and sometimes the head is shaped in the form of a triangle. The jambs are square-edged, the stone of the arch is plain, and a hood or arch of ribwork projecting from the surface of the wall surrounds the doorway. Belfry windows have two semicircular-headed lights divided by a *baluster* shaft, *i.e.* a column resembling a turned-wood pillar. This feature is quite peculiar to Saxon architecture.

Anglo-Saxon single-light windows have two splays, increasing in width from the centre of the wall in which the window is placed. Norman windows have only one splay on the internal side of the building. Saxon arches separating the nave from the aisles and chancel are plain. There is no sub-arch as in Norman buildings. They are often very small, sometimes only five or six feet wide, and stand on square piers.

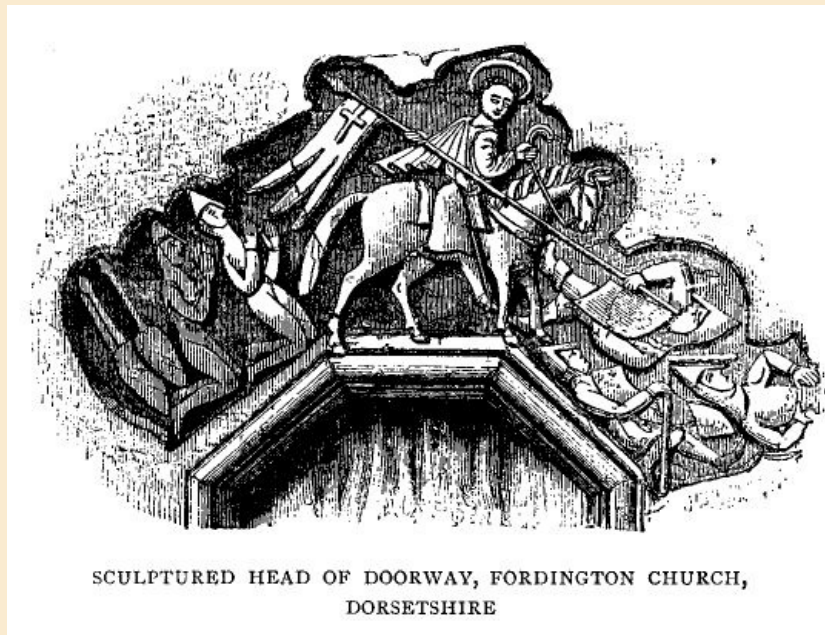


Some Saxon churches have crypts, but few of them remain. The crypt made by St. Wilfrid at Hexham, mentioned above, still exists, and also one at Ripon Cathedral, in which there is a small window called "Wilfrid's needle." There is a legend about this which states that if a maid goes through the "needle," she will be married within the year. Repton Church has a very perfect specimen of Saxon crypt.

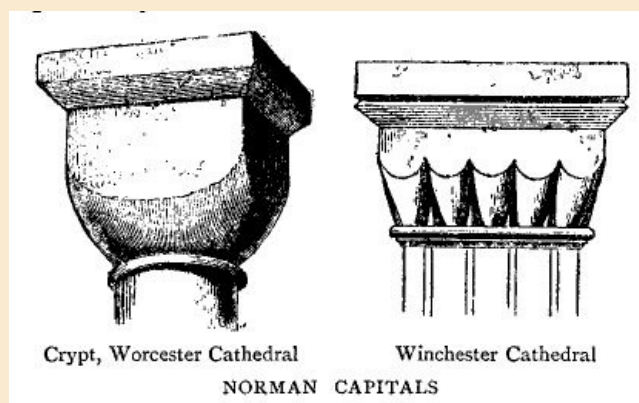
The ground plan of Saxon churches differed. Many were cruciform, and consisted of nave, transepts, and chancel. The east wall of the chancel was often semicircular or polygonal, sometimes rectangular. The church of St. Lawrence, at Bradford-on-Avon, mentioned by William of Malmesbury, is a fine specimen of a Saxon church, and also the little church at Escombe, Durham, and that of Deerhurst, Gloucestershire, recently rescued from being used as a farmstead.

After the close of the thousandth year after the birth of Christ a new impulse was given to church-building. People imagined that with that year the millennium would arrive and the Second Advent take place. It would be vain to build beautiful churches, if they were so soon to perish in the general destruction of the world, as vain as to heap up treasure by means of trade. Hence people's minds were unsettled, and the churches left in ruins. But when the millenary had safely passed away, they began to restore the fallen shrines, and build new churches, and the late Saxon or early Norman style came into vogue. Canute was a great church-builder, and Edward the Confessor rebuilt Westminster Abbey after the new fashion. Then came William the Conqueror with his Norman builders, and soon nearly every village had its church, which was constructed, according to William of Malmesbury, *novo aedificandi genere*.

We will now notice the characteristics of early Norman work, traces of which you may be able to recognise in your own church. The doorways are very remarkable, profusely adorned with richly carved ornamental mouldings and sculpture. The archways are round, and are composed of a succession of receding arches, all elaborately carved. The doorway of Malmesbury Church has eight arches, recessed one within the other. These arches are supported by one or more shafts, which are sometimes carved. Above the door and below the arch is the tympanum, covered with sculpture, representing scriptural subjects, such as the figure of the Saviour in allusion to His saying, "I am the door," or the *Agnus Dei*, or Adam and Eve, or such legendary or symbolical subjects as St. George and the Dragon, or the Tree of Life.

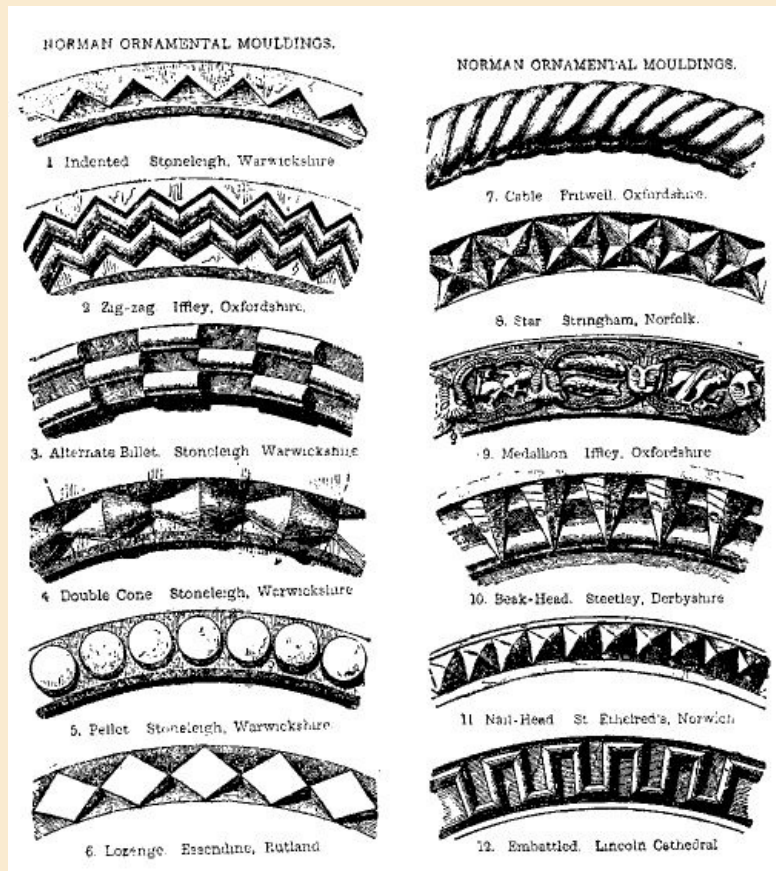


Porches are not very common in early Norman structures, but several still exist, notably at Malmesbury, Balderton, and Brixworth. The windows are usually small and narrow, the jambs being splayed only on the inside of the church. Three such windows placed together usually give light over the altar. The walls of Norman buildings are thick and massive, and are often faced with cut stone. String-courses or mouldings projecting from the walls, run horizontally along them, and are often adorned with the zigzag or other Norman patterns of ornament. The tower often stands between the nave and the chancel, and is usually low and massive. In the eastern counties are found many round towers made of flint masonry. Flat buttresses are a sure sign of Norman work, as they were not used in any of the subsequent styles of architecture.

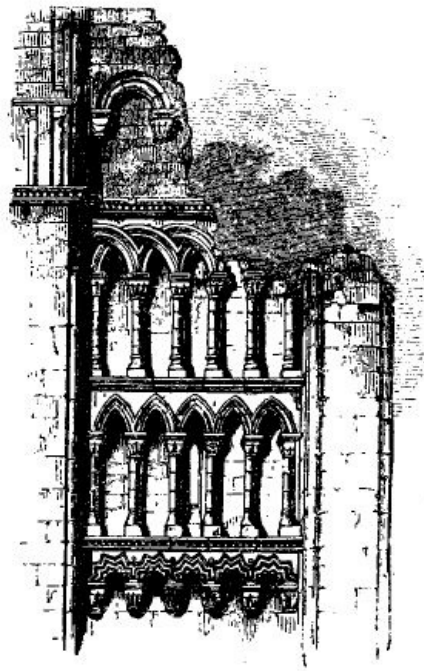


The arches of the Norman builders are easily recognised. The piers in country churches are nearly always cylindrical; but there are several examples of massive square or octagonal piers, and also a number of round

columns attached, so as to form one pier. The *cushion* capital is the most common form used in the Norman style. It is easily recognisable, but difficult to be described; and perhaps the accompanying sketch will enable the reader to discover a cushion capital when he sees it. The early Norman builders loved to bestow much labour on their capitals; and while preserving the usual cushion form, enriched them with much elaboration. The *scallop* frequently occurs, and also the *volute*, which was copied from the work of Roman builders, who themselves imitated the Greek sculptures. Sometimes the capitals are elaborately carved with figures of men, or animals, or foliage.

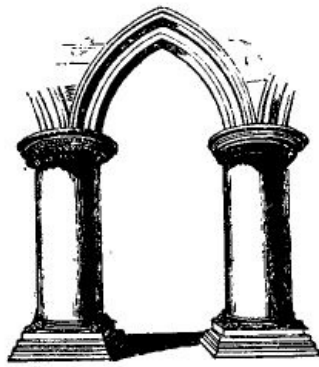


Norman arches resemble the doorways in having sub-arches recessed within an outer arch, the intrados often being decorated with mouldings such as the zigzag or the lozenge. The chancel arch is usually very elaborately ornamented with various mouldings, which are very numerous and peculiar. Those illustrated on the previous page are the most common.



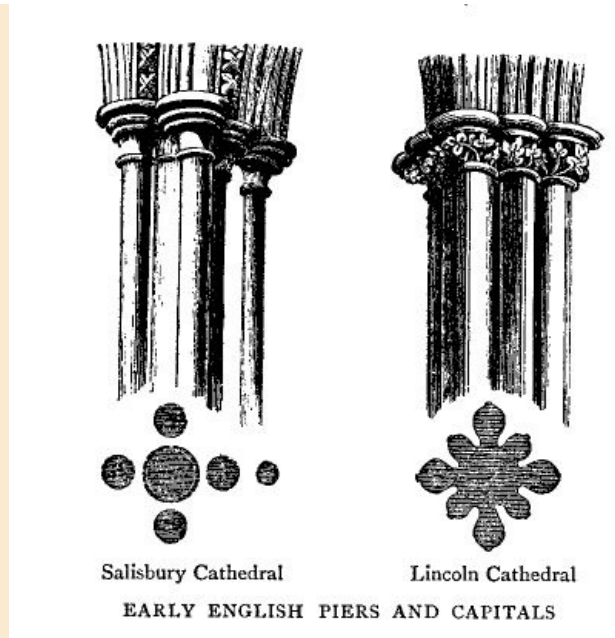
CROYLAND ABBEY CHURCH, LINCOLNSHIRE

The Normans were also much skilled in vaulting with stone, as the crypts in our churches testify. Over the vaulted roof of the aisles was the *triforium*, a kind of gallery between this roof and the external roof of the church. Very few of the wooden roofs of Norman churches remain. The fonts are large, square or cylindrical in shape, and are decorated with mouldings or sculpture, often very elaborate but rudely executed. At Winchester Cathedral the font is carved with a representation of the baptism of King Cynigils at Dorchester. Other favourite subjects were the creation of man, the formation of Eve, the expulsion from Paradise, Christ upon the cross, the Four Evangelists, the baptism of our Lord, and legendary or symbolical representations.



SEMI-NORMAN ARCH, CHURCH OF ST. CROSS

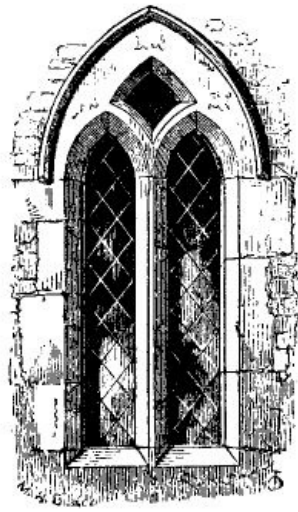
This style of architecture prevailed until about the middle of the twelfth century, when the *Transition Norman* became in vogue. It is characterised by the introduction of the pointed arch. Many conjectures as regards its origin have been made. Some suppose that the idea of making the arch pointed was suggested by the intersection of semicircular arches in ornamental arcades. Others say that the Crusaders introduced it on their return from the East, or that it was suggested by the Norman vaulting, or from the form of the *vesica piscis*, the most ancient of Christian symbols. The Cistercian monks were the first to introduce it to this country, and the Cistercian abbeys of Fountains, Kirkstall, Furness, and Tintern are noble specimens of Transition Norman work. Religious zeal and enthusiasm are often reflected in the improved condition of our churches, and the grand buildings of this period are outward and visible signs of a great religious revival. Semicircular arches, however, continued to be used for windows and for the triforium; the capitals of the piers were decorated with foliage somewhat similar to that used in a subsequent period.



Then arose the Early English style of architecture which flourished from about the year 1175 to 1275, and is characterised by a gradual abandonment of the heavy and massive features of the Norman style, and the adoption of lighter and more elegant forms of construction and decoration. Salisbury Cathedral, erected 1220-1260 A.D., is the most perfect example of this period. The arches are pointed, and the piers supporting them are often composed of an insulated cylindrical column surrounded by slender detached shafts, all uniting together under one capital, and divided into parts by horizontal bands. In small churches plain octagonal or circular piers are frequently used, as in the succeeding style, from which they can only be distinguished by the mouldings. Mouldings are often the surest guides in helping us to ascertain the date of a building. We have already studied the Norman mouldings. In this style they are composed of bold rounds and deep hollows, usually plain, or ornamented with the dog-tooth.



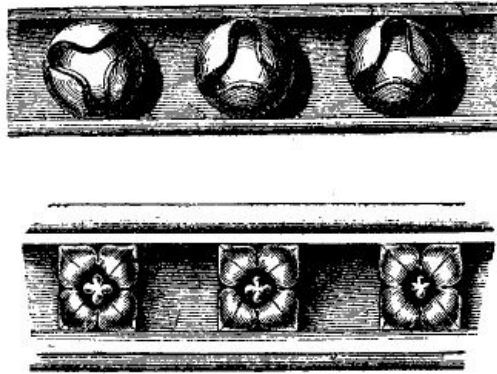
The lancet window is now introduced, at first of only one light, very narrow and long, and differing from the Norman window in having a pointed arch. At the east end of the chancel there are often three lancet windows, the centre one higher than the rest, with one dripstone over them. The first idea of window-tracery was the introduction of a plain lozenge-shaped opening over a double lancet window, the whole being covered by a single dripstone. From this simple arrangement it was not difficult to develop the beautiful bar-tracery which came into vogue in the subsequent period of English architecture. The capitals of the Early English style are bell-shaped, at first quite plain, but subsequently these are often covered with beautifully sculptured foliage of a very graceful character. Circular windows at this period came into vogue in the gables of churches. They were either plain or quatre-foiled. Norman towers were sometimes capped with spires in the thirteenth century. The walls are not so thick or massive as in the Norman period, and the buttresses are stouter and more numerous, and project further from the wall. Flying buttresses were also introduced at this period. We can generally distinguish Early English work from that of the Norman style by its lightness and elegance, as compared with the roughness and massiveness of the latter; and its plainness and simplicity sufficiently distinguish it from that of the Decorated period.



BROWNSOVER CHAPEL, WARWICKSHIRE

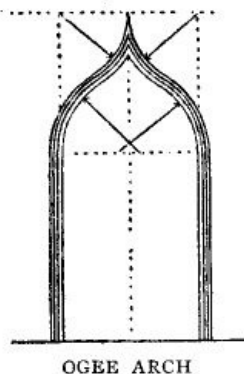
The Decorated style (1275-1375) which prevailed during the reigns of the three Edwards was ushered in by a period of Transition, during which there was gradually developed the most perfect style which English architectural skill has ever attained. In the thirteenth century our builders were striving to attain the highest forms of graceful design and artistic workmanship. In the fourteenth their work reached perfection, while in the fifteenth there was a marked decline in their art, which in spite of its elaborate details lacked the beauty of the Decorated style.

The arches of this period are usually wider, and are distinguished from those of the Early English by



MOULDINGS, TEWKESBURY ABBEY

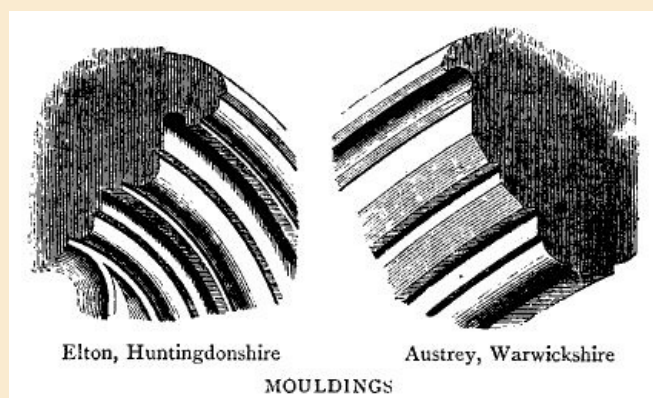
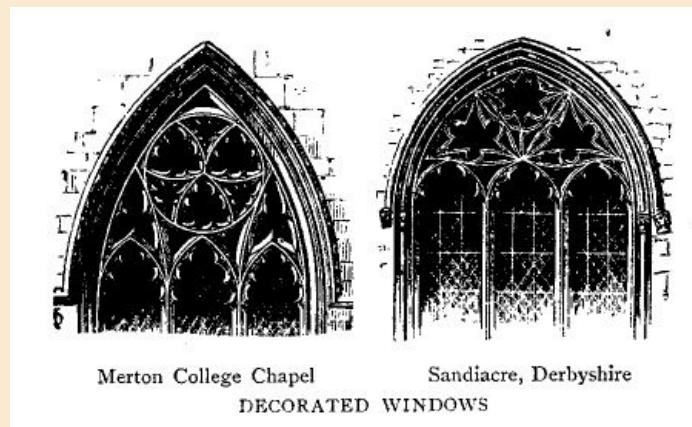
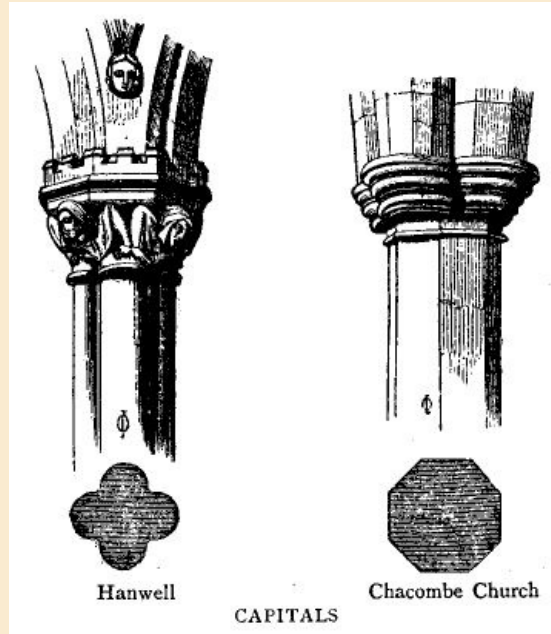
the character of the mouldings. The ball-flower, consisting of a ball inclosed by three or four leaves, somewhat resembling a rosebud, is the favourite ornament, and a four-leaved flower is often used. Roll mouldings, quarter, half, or three-quarters round, frequently occur, and produce a very pleasing effect. The form of the arch is in many instances changed, and the graceful *ogee* arch is introduced. The piers are round or



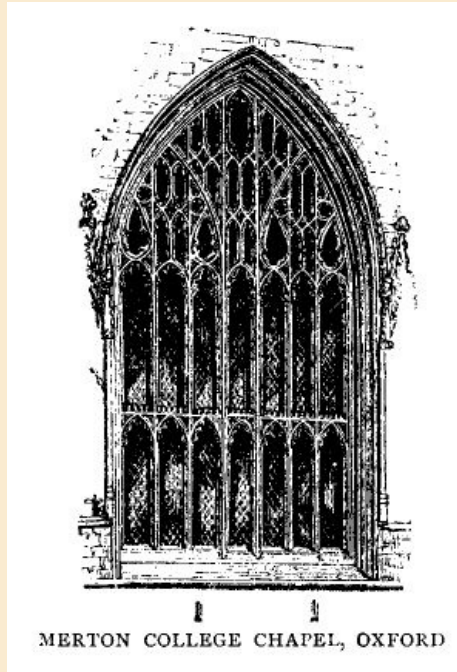
OGEE ARCH

The arches of this period are usually wider, and are distinguished from those of the Early English by the character of the mouldings. The ball-flower, consisting of a ball inclosed by three or four leaves, somewhat resembling a rosebud, is the favourite ornament, and a four-leaved flower is often used. Roll mouldings, quarter, half, or three-quarters round, frequently occur, and produce a very pleasing effect. The form of the

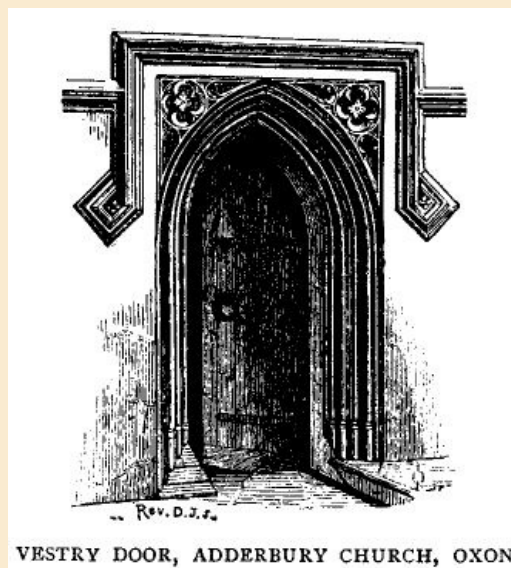
arch is in many instances changed, and the graceful *ogee* arch is introduced. The piers are round or octagonal in village churches, and in large churches are formed by a cluster of cylindrical shafts, not detached as in the preceding period, but closely united. The capitals are bell-shaped, and in large churches richly sculptured. Few of the wooden roofs remain, as they have been superseded in later times; but the marks of the old roofs may often be seen on the eastern wall of the tower. The windows are larger than those of the earlier style, and are filled with geometrical and flowing tracery of great variety and beauty. Small windows have heads shaped in the ogee or trefoil forms. Square-headed windows are not uncommon, especially in the clerestory, and in monastic churches circular windows are frequently met with. It is characteristic of this style that the carving is not so deep as in the previous work. We find groups of shallow mouldings separated by one cut deeper than the others.

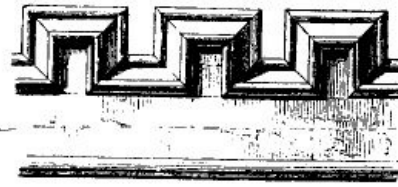


At length the glories of the Decorated period pass away and are merged and lost in the *Perpendicular* which held sway from 1375 to 1540. The work is now more elaborate and richer, but lacks the majestic beauty of the Decorated style. It is easy to distinguish Perpendicular windows. They are larger than any which we have seen before; the mullions are carried straight up through the head of the window; smaller mullions spring from the heads of the principal lights, and thus the windows are broken up into panel-like compartments, very different from the beautiful curves of the Decorated style. Simple pointed arches are still in use, but gradually they become flattened; and the arch, commonly known as the Tudor arch, is a peculiar feature of this style. In village churches the mouldings of the arch are often continued down the piers without any capital or shaft.



Piers are commonly formed from a square or parallelogram with the angles fluted, having on the flat face of each side a semicylindrical shaft. The base mouldings are polygonal. The most common doorway is the Tudor arch having a square head over it. The doors are often richly ornamented. There are a large number of square-headed windows, and so proud were these builders of their new style of window that they frequently inserted Perpendicular windows in walls of a much earlier date. Hence it is not always safe to determine the age of a church by an examination of the windows alone. Panel-work tracery on the upper part of the interior walls is a distinctive feature of this style.

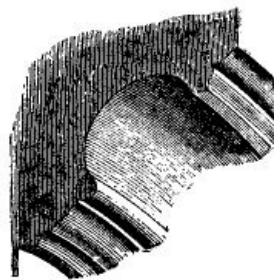




ST. ERASMUS' CHAPEL, WESTMINSTER ABBEY

The slope of the roof is much lower than before, and often the former high-pitched roofs were at this period replaced by the almost flat roofs prevalent in the fifteenth century. The parapets are often embattled.

The rose, the badge of the houses of York and Lancaster, is often used as an ornamental detail, and also rows of the Tudor flower, composed of four petals, frequently occur. One of the most distinctive mouldings is the *cavetto*, a wide shallow hollow in the centre of a group of mouldings. Also we find a peculiar wave, and a kind of double ogee moulding which are characteristic of the style.



WINDOW, CHRISTCHURCH, OXFORD

Spires of this period are not very common, and usually spring from within the parapet. The interiors of our churches were enriched at this time with much elaborate decoration. Richly carved woodwork in screens, rood-lofts, pulpits, and pews, sculptured sedilia and a noble reredos, and much exuberance of decorative imagery and panel-work, adorned our churches at this time, much of which was obliterated or destroyed by spoliators of the Reformation period, the iconoclastic Puritans of the seventeenth century, or the "restorers" of the nineteenth. However, we may be thankful that so much remains to the present day of the work of our great English church-builders, while we endeavour to trace the history of each church written in stone, and to appreciate these relics of antiquity which most of our villages possess.

CHAPTER X

NORMAN VILLAGES AND THE *DOMESDAY BOOK*

The coming of the Normans—*Domesday Book*—Its objects—Its contents—Barkham in *Domesday*—Saxon families—Saxons who retained their estates—Despoiled landowners—Village officers and artisans—Villeins—*Bordarii*—*Cottarii*—*Servi*—Socmen—Presbyter—Names of Normans—The teaching of *Domesday*.

There was a great stir in our English villages when the news was brought to them that William of Normandy had landed in England, and intended to fight for the English Crown. News travelled very slowly in those days. First the villeins and the cottiers who were not fighting with their lord heard that a great battle had been fought at Stamford Bridge, in Yorkshire, in which their gallant King Harold had defeated his own brother Tostig, aided by the King of Norway, Hardrada, and a large army. Then the news reached them that William of Normandy had arrived, and that Harold was marching night and day to meet him. Then they heard of the fatal battle of Hastings; and when it was told them that their brave King Harold was slain, and that William, the Norman, was the conqueror of England and the acknowledged king of the country, all England groaned to hear the fatal news. And then, after a few years, they found that their old lord had been deprived of his estates, and a new, haughty, proud Norman, who talked like a Frenchman, and laughed at their dear old Saxon language, came and ruled over them. He brought Norman servants with him, who took the best of the land, and made the Saxons do all the hard work on the farm, treating them like slaves.

And now we must examine a most valuable document which throws a wonderfully clear light on the

condition of England just before and after the Conquest. I refer to the *Domesday Book*, or survey of the country which William caused to be made. The Anglo-Saxon chronicler tells us that after a great Council at Gloucester the king "sent his men over all England, into every shire, and caused to be ascertained how many hundred hides were in the shire, or what land the king himself had, and cattle within the land, or what dues he ought to have in twelve months from the shire. Also he caused to be written how much land his archbishops had, and his suffragan bishops, and abbots, and earls; and though I may narrate somewhat prolixly, what or how much each man had who was a holder of land in England, in land, or in cattle, and how much money it might be worth. So very narrowly he caused it to be traced out, that there was not one single hide, nor one yard of land, nor even, it is shame to tell, though it seemed to him no shame to do, an ox, nor a cow, nor a swine was left that was not set down in his writ. And all the writings were brought to him afterwards."

The commissioners appointed by the king, among whom were Remigius, Bishop of Lincoln, and Walter Giffard, Earl of Buckingham, were to inquire the following details concerning each parish:—

Its name. Who held it in the time of King Edward the Confessor. The present possessor. Number of hides in the manor, number of ploughs, of homagers, villeins, cottars, free tenants, tenants in socage; how much wood, meadow, and pasture; number of mills and fishponds; the value in the time of the last king; and its present value.

Such a survey was of immense value. Its object, according to the king, was that every man might know and be satisfied with his rightful possessions, and not with impunity usurp the property of others. But it was also of great service to the king, so that he might know who were his vassals, the amount of taxation which he could draw from them, and the actual strength of his new kingdom.

The commissioners performed their work with much care and exactness. The survey is wonderfully complete, and was compiled in a very short time. It is of great value to the historians of subsequent ages. The writing of the book is very clear and beautiful, the abbreviations alone presenting some difficulty to an unaccustomed reader. No illuminations adorn the text. At the head of each page the name of the county is written in red ink. The book is preserved in an ancient chest in the Public Record Office, where it was removed from the Chapter House at Westminster.

As an example we may take the *Domesday* description of the parish of Barkham, which runs as follows:—

"IN CERLEDONE HD.

"Rex ten in dno Bercheha. AElmer Tenuit de rege. E. Te 7 m iii hid. Tra e iii car. In dno e una, 7 vi uilli 7 iiii bord cu iii car. Ibi v. ac pti. Silua de XL pore. Valuit iiii lib. T.R.E. 7 m: iii. lib."

TRANSLATION.

"In the hundred of Charlton.

"The king holds Barkham in demesne. AElmer held it of King Edward. Then, as now, it was rated for three hides. The land is three ploughlands. In demesne there is one ploughland. There are six villeins, four borderers with three ploughs. There are five acres of pasture. Wood for the pasturage of forty hogs. It was worth 4l. in the time of King Edward, afterwards, and now, 3l."

King Edward here mentioned was Edward the Confessor. A hide, when it is used as a measure of land, may be taken at about one hundred and twenty acres. A ploughland was as much land as one plough with oxen could plough in a year. The villeins were men who tilled their lord's land, and in return for certain services had holdings under him. The borderers were cottagers who also worked for their lord and held smaller holdings, from one to ten acres. In other entries we find the number of serfs recorded, and also mention of the hall of the lord of the manor, where the manorial courts were held, the church, the priest's house, the names of landowners and tenants, the mill, and of the various officers and artisans who made up the village community.

Domesday tells us of the old Saxon families, many of whom lost their estates when the Conqueror came, and were supplanted by the favourites of the new king. Some of them contrived to weather the storm and retain their lands. Almer, or Almar, the lord of Barkham, who succeeded his brother Stigand as Bishop of Elmham in 1047, when the latter became archbishop, was among the number of the dispossessed, and probably found shelter with many of his compatriots in the cloister. Several of William's Norman adventurers married the heiresses of the old Saxon gentry, and thus became possessed of great estates. Thus Robert D'Oili married the daughter of Wigod, lord of Wallingford, and soon gained possession of his father-in-law's property.

However, the names of the fortunate Saxons who retained their estates are few in comparison with those who were dispossessed. We find Edgar Atheling, real heir to the throne, retaining a small estate; but he was a feeble prince, and therefore not to be feared by William. His sister Cristina had also land in Oxfordshire. Bishop Osbern, of Exeter, a kinsman of the late king, also held his estates; and amongst the list we find Seward the huntsman, of Oxfordshire; Theodric the goldsmith; Wlwi the huntsman, of Surrey; Uluric the huntsman, of Hampshire, who were not deprived of their lands, their occupations being useful to the king.

The list of despoiled landowners is a long one, and need not here be recorded. One Brictric was very unfortunate. When ambassador to Baldwin of Flanders he refused to marry the count's daughter Maud. The slighted lady became the Conqueror's consort, and in revenge for her despised love caused Brictric to be imprisoned and his estates confiscated, some of which were given to the queen. The luckless relations and connections of the late royal house were consistently despoiled, amongst them Editha, the beautiful queen of King Edward, and daughter of Earl Godwin, of whom it was written: "*Sicut spina rosam genuit Godwynus Editham*"; and Gida, the mother of Harold; Godric, his son; and Gwith, his brother. Harold himself—the earl, as he is called, and not the king, who fought and died at Senlac, if he did not, as the romance states, end his life as a holy hermit at Chester—had vast estates all over England, which went to enrich William's hungry followers. Hereward the Wake, the English hero, also held in pre-Norman days many fat manors. Few of the Saxon landowners were spared, and it is unnecessary here to record the names of the Uchtreds, Turgots, Turchils, Siwards, Leurics, who held lands "in the time of King Edward," but whose place after *Domesday* knows them no more.

Domesday tells us also the names of the officers and artisans who played important parts in the old village communities. The *villani*, or villeins, corresponding to the Saxon *ceorls*, were the most important class of tenants in villeinage, and each held about thirty acres in scattered acre or half-acre strips, each a furlong in length and a perch or two in breadth, separated by turf balks. The villein thus supported himself and his family, and in return was bound to render certain services to the lord of the manor, to work on the home farm, and provide two or more oxen for the manorial plough-team. He was not a free tenant, could acquire no property, and his lord's consent was needed for the marriage of his daughters. But the law protected him from unjust usage; his holdings were usually regranted to his son. He could obtain freedom in several ways, and by degrees acquired the rights and privileges of a free tenant.

Next to the villeins were the *bordarii*, who lived in *bords* or cottages, *i.e.* boarded or wooden huts, and ranked as a lower grade of villeins. They held about five acres, but provided no oxen for the manorial plough-team. Below them were the *cottarii*, or cottiers, who were bound to do domestic work and supply the lord's table. They corresponded to the modern labourer, but lacked his freedom. The lowest class of all were the *servi*, or serfs, who corresponded to the Saxon *theows*. In Norman times their condition was greatly improved; they mingled with the cottiers and household servants, and gradually were merged with them.

The *sochemanni*, or socmen, our yeomen, who abounded chiefly in the Danish district of England, were inferior landowners who had special privileges, and could not be turned out of their holdings, though they rendered certain services to the lord of the manor, and in this respect differed little from the villeins. *Domesday Book* also mentions a class of men called *burs* or *geburs*, who were the same as *coliberti*; also the *commendati*, who received privileges in return for services rendered to the lord of the manor.

Each village community was self-contained, and had its own officers. Although *Domesday Book* was not compiled in order to ascertain the condition of the Church and its ministers, and frequently the mention of a parish church is omitted where we know one existed, the *presbyter*, or priest, is often recorded. Archbishop Egbert's *Excerptiones* ordained that "to every church shall be allotted one complete holding (*mansa*), and that this shall be free from all but ecclesiastical services." According to the Saxon laws every tenth strip of land was set aside for the Church, and *Domesday* shows that in many villages there was a priest with his portion of land set apart for his support.

Then there was a *prepositus*, bailiff or reeve, who collected the lord's rents, assisted by a *bedellus*, beadle or under-bailiff. *Bovarii*, or oxherds, looked after the plough-teams. The *carpentarius*, or carpenter; the *cementarius*, or bricklayer; the *custos apium*, or beekeeper; the *faber*, or smith; the *molinarius*, or miller—were all important officers in the Norman village; and we have mention also of the *piscatores* (fishermen), *pistores* (bakers), *porcarii* (swineherds), *vicarii* (cowmen), who were all employed in the work of the village community.

Domesday Book enables us to form a fairly complete picture of our villages in Norman and late Saxon times. It tells us of the various classes who peopled the village and farmed its fields. It gives us a complete list of the old Saxon gentry and of the Norman nobles and adventurers who seized the fair acres of the despoiled Englishmen. Many of them gave their names to their new possessions. The Mandevilles settled at Stoke, and called it Stoke-Mandeville; the Vernons at Minshall, and called it Minshall-Vernon. Hurst-Pierpont, Neville-Holt, Kingston-Lysle, Hampstead-Norris, and many other names of places compounded of Saxon and Norman words, record the names of William's followers, who received the reward of their services at the expense of the former Saxon owners. *Domesday Book* tells us how land was measured in those days, the various tenures and services rendered by the tenants, the condition of the towns, the numerous foreign monasteries which thrived on our English lands, and throws much light on the manners and customs of the people of this country at the time of its compilation. *Domesday Book* is a perfect storehouse of knowledge for the historian, and requires a lifetime to be spent for its full investigation.

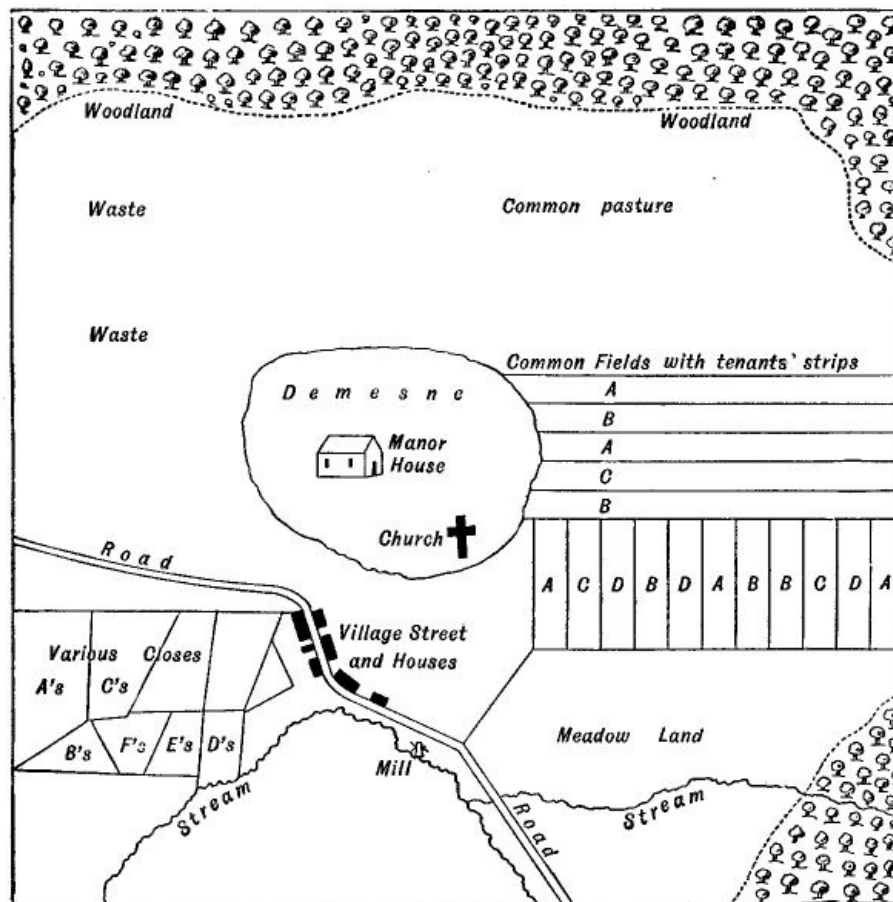


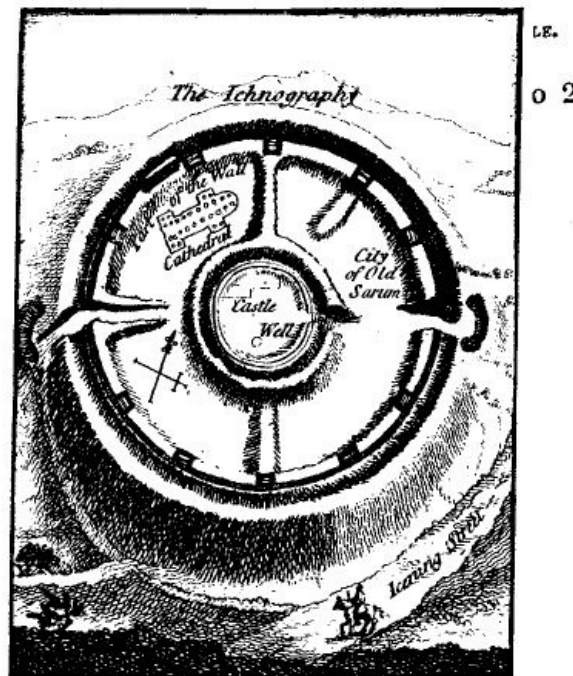
DIAGRAM OF A MANOR

CHAPTER XI

NORMAN CASTLES

Castle-building—Description of Norman castle—A Norman household—Edwardian castles—Border castles—Chepstow—Grosmont—Raglan—Central feature of feudalism—Fourteenth-century castle—Homes of chivalry—Schools of arms—The making of a knight—Tournaments—Jousts—Tilting at a ring—Pageants—“Apollo and Daphne”—Pageants at Sudeley Castle and Kenilworth—Destruction of castles—Castles during Civil War period.

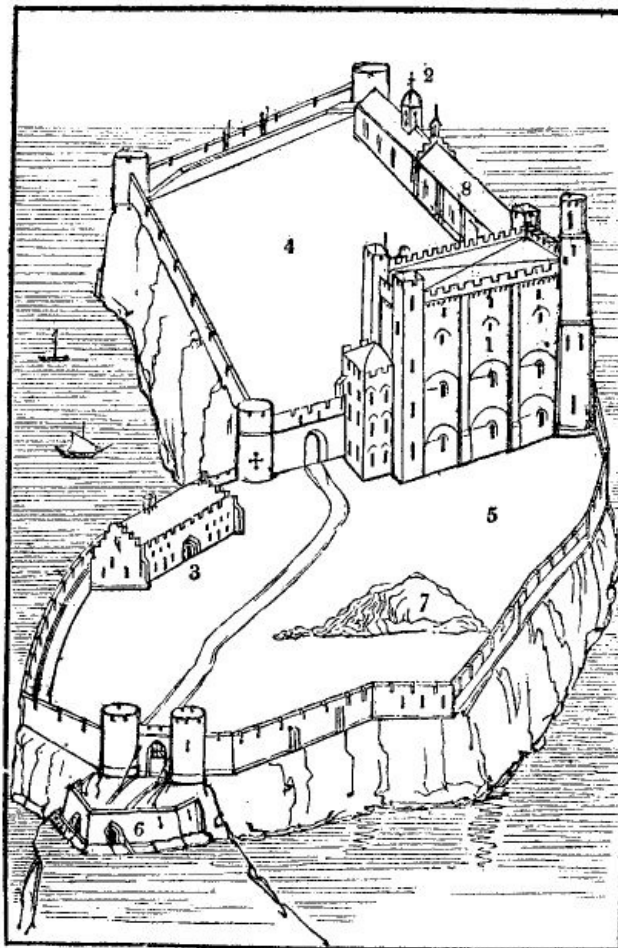
Many an English village can boast of the possession of the ruins of an ancient castle, a gaunt rectangular or circular keep or donjon, looking very stern and threatening even in decay, and mightily convincing of the power of its first occupants. The new masters did not feel very safe in the midst of a discontented and enraged people; so they built these huge fortresses with strong walls and gates and moats. Indeed before the Conquest the Norman knights, to whom the weak King Edward the Confessor granted many an English estate, brought with them the fashion of building castles, and many a strong square tower began to crown the fortified mounds. Thence they could oppress the people in many ways, and the writers of the time always speak of the building of castles with a kind of shudder. After the Conquest, especially during the regency of William's two lieutenants, Bishop Odo and Earl William Fitz-osbern, the Norman adventurers who were rewarded for their services by the gift of many an English manor, built castles everywhere. The wretched men of the land were cruelly oppressed by forced labour in erecting these strongholds, which were filled “with devils and evil men.” Over a thousand castles were built in nineteen years, and in his own castle each earl or lord reigned as a small king, coining his own money, making his own laws, having power of life and death over his dependants, and often using his power most violently and oppressively.



OLD SARUM

The original Norman castle consisted of a keep, "four-square to every wind that blew," standing in a bailey court. It was a mighty place with walls of great thickness about one hundred and fifty feet high. It contained several rooms, one above the other. A deep well supplied the inhabitants with water. Spiral stone steps laid in the thickness of the wall led to the first floor where the soldiers of the garrison resided. Above this was the hall, with a chimney and fireplace, where the lord of the castle and his guests had their meals, and in the thickness of the wall there were numerous chambers used as sleeping-apartments and garderobes, and the existence of a piscina in one of these shows that it was a small chapel or oratory. The upper story was divided by wooden partitions into small sleeping-rooms; and unlike our modern houses, the kitchen was at the top of the keep, and opened on the roof.

Descending some stone steps which led from the ground floor in ancient time we should visit the dungeons, dark, gloomy, and dreadful places, where deep silence reigns, only broken by the groans of despairing captives in the miserable cells. In one of these toads and adders were the companions of the captive. Another poor wretch reposed on a bed of sharp flints, while the torture-chamber echoed with the cries of the victims of mediaeval cruelty, who were hanged by their feet and smoked with foul smoke, or hung up by their thumbs, while burning rings were placed on their feet. In Peak Castle, Derbyshire, a poor, simple squire, one Godfrey Rowland, was confined for six days without either food or drink, and then released from the dungeon with his right hand cut off. In order to extract a heavy ransom, to obtain lands and estates, to learn the secrets of hidden treasure, the most ingenious and devilish tortures were inflicted in these terrible abodes.



A NORMAN CASTLE

(1) The dungeon. (2) Chapel. (3) Stable. (4) Inner bailey. (5) Outer bailey.
(6) Barbican. (7) Mount. (8) Soldiers' lodgings

The same style of castle-building continued for a century and a half after the Norman Conquest. It is possible to distinguish the later keeps by the improved and fine-jointed ashlar stonework, by the more frequent use of the stone of the district, instead of that brought from Caen, by the ribs upon the groins of the vaulting of the galleries and chambers in the walls, and by the more extensive use of ornaments in the bosses, windows, doors, and fireplaces. The style of the decoration approaches the Early English character.

The walls of the keep were not the only protection of the fortress. A moat surrounds the whole castle, crossed by a drawbridge, protected on the side remote from the castle by a barbican. High walls with an embattled parapet surround the lower court, or ballium, which we enter by a gate defended by strong towers. A portcullis has to be raised, and a heavy door thrown back, before we can enter; while above in the stone roof of the archway there are holes through which melted lead and pitch can be poured upon our heads, if we attempt to enter the castle as assailants. In the lower court are the stables, and the mound where the lord dispenses justice, and where criminals and traitors are executed. Another strong gateway flanked by towers protects the inner court, on the edge of which stands the keep which frowns down upon us as we enter.

An immense household was supported in every castle. Not only were there men-at-arms, but also cooks and bakers, brewers and tailors, carpenters, smiths, masons, and all kinds of craftsmen; and all the crowd of workers had to be provided with accommodation by the lord of the castle. Hence a building, in the form of a large hall, was erected sometimes of stone, usually of wood, in the lower or upper court for these soldiers and artisans, where they slept and had their meals.

A new type of castle was introduced during the reigns of the three Edwards. The stern, massive, and high-towering keep was abandoned, and the fortifications arranged in a concentric fashion. A fine hall with kitchens occupied the centre of the fortress; a large number of chambers was added, and the inner and outer courts both defended by walls, as we have already described, were introduced. The Edwardian castles of Caernarvon and Beaumaris belong to this type of fortress.

[ENLARGE](#)



BROUGHTON CASTLE

The border counties of Wales are remarkable for the number and beauty of their ancient castles. On the site of British earthworks the Romans established their camps. The Saxons were obliged to erect their rude earthen strongholds in order to keep back the rebellious Welsh, and these were succeeded by Norman keeps. Monmouthshire is famous for its castles; out of the eleven hundred erected in Norman times twenty-five were built in that county. There is Chepstow Castle, with its early Norman gateway spanned by a circular arch flanked by round towers. In the inner court there are the gardens and ruins of a grand hall, and in the outer the ruins of a chapel with evidences of beautifully groined vaulting, and also a winding staircase leading to the battlements. In the dungeon of the old keep at the south-east corner of the inner court Roger de Britolio, Earl of Hereford, was imprisoned for rebellion against the Conqueror, and in later times Henry Martin, the regicide, lingered as a prisoner for thirty years, employing his enforced leisure in writing a book in order to prove that it is not right for a man to be governed by one wife. Then there is Grosmont Castle, the fortified residence of the Earl of Lancaster; Skenfrith Castle; White Castle, the *Album Castrum* of the Latin records, the Landreilo of the Welsh, with its six towers, portcullis, and drawbridge flanked by massive tower, barbican, and other outworks; and Raglan Castle, with its splendid gateway, its Elizabethan banqueting-hall ornamented with rich stone tracery, its bowling-green, garden terraces, and spacious courts, an ideal place for knightly tournaments in ancient days. Raglan is associated with the gallant defence of the castle by the Marquis of Worcester in the Civil War.

The ancient castles of England were the central feature of feudal society. They were the outward and visible sign of that system. M. Guizot in his *History of Civilisation* says, "It was feudalism which constructed them; their elevation was, so to speak, the declaration of its triumph." On the Continent they were very numerous long before castle-building became the fashion in England, and every suzerain saw with displeasure his vassal constructing his castle; for the vassal thus insured for himself a powerful means of independence. The Norman barons in the troublous times of Stephen lived a life of hunting and pillage; they were forced to have a fortified retreat where they might shut themselves up after an expedition, repel the vengeance of their foes, and resist the authorities who attempted to maintain order in the country.

Others followed the example of the barons. The townsfolk fortified their towns, monks their monasteries; and even within the town-walls many houses had their towers and gates and barriers in order to keep back troublesome visitors.

Here is a description of a French castle in the fourteenth century:—

"First imagine to yourself a superb position, a steep mountain, bristling with rocks, furrowed with ravines and precipices; upon the declivity is the castle. The small houses which surround it set off its grandeur; the river seems to turn aside with respect; it forms a large semicircle at its feet. This castle must be seen when, at sunrise, the outward galleries glimmer with the armour of the sentinels, and the towers are shown all brilliant with their large new gratings. Those high buildings must be seen, which fill those who defend them with courage, and with fear those who should be tempted to attack them.

"The door presents itself covered with heads of boars or wolves, flanked with turrets and crowned with a high guard-house. Enter, there are three inclosures, three moats, three drawbridges to pass. You find yourself in a large square court, where are cisterns, and on the right and left the stables, hen-houses, pigeon-houses, coach-houses; the cellars, vaults, and prisons are below; above are the dwelling-apartments; above these are the magazines, larders, or salting-rooms, and arsenals. All the roofs are bordered with machicolations, parapets, guard-walks, and sentry-boxes. In the middle of the court is the donjon, which contains the archives and the treasure. It is deeply moated all round, and can only be entered by a bridge, almost always raised. Although the walls, like those of the castle, are six feet thick, it is surrounded up to half its height with a chemise, or second wall, of large cut stones. This castle has just been rebuilt. There is something light, fresh, laughing about it, not possessed by the heavy massive castles of the last century."

One would scarcely expect to hear a castle described as "light, fresh, laughing"; yet so a fourteenth-century castle seemed to eyes accustomed to the gloomy, stern, and massive structures of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. In these no beauty or display of art was attempted. Defence and safety were the only objects sought after in the construction of our ancient strongholds.

Strange as it may seem, these castles were the birthplaces and homes of chivalry. Women were raised to an exalted position, and honoured and revered by knights and warriors. A prize won in a tournament was

esteemed of vastly greater value, if it were bestowed upon the successful combatant by some lady's hand. "Queens of Beauty" presided at these contests of knightly skill and daring. The statutes and ordinances for jousts and tournaments made by John Tiptoft, Earl of Worcester, at the command of Edward IV., conclude thus: "Reserving always to the queenes highness and the ladyes there present, the attributing and gift of the prize after the manner and forme accustomed." If a knight was guilty of any impropriety of conduct, he was soundly beaten by the other knights, in order to teach him to respect the honour of the ladies and the rights of chivalry.

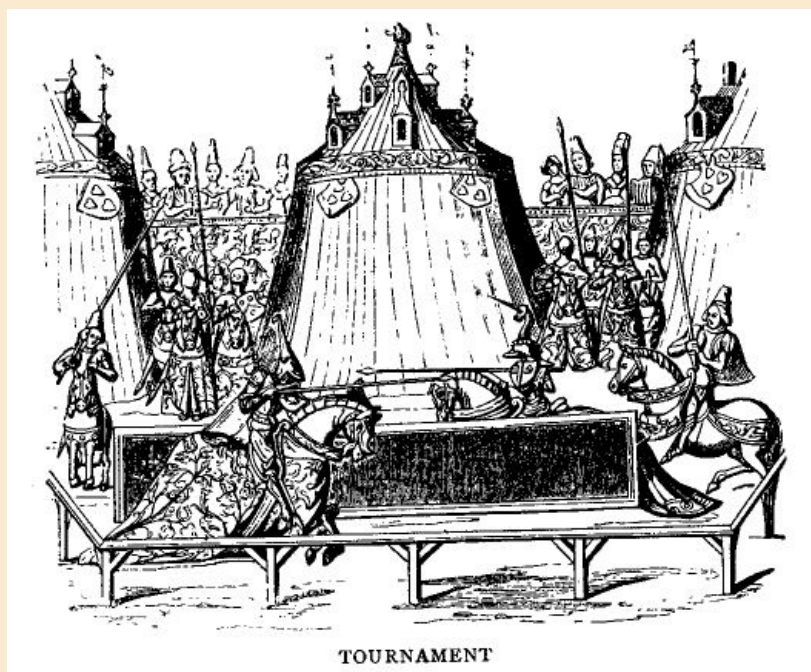
In the days of chivalry a knight vowed in somewhat extravagant language eternal love to his particular lady fair, wore her glove or her guerdon on his helmet, and swore to protect it with his life. Family ties and domestic joys were cultivated. The wife of a knight was often herself a warrior. Fair ladies have donned armour and followed their lords to the Crusades; and often during her lord's absence at the wars in France, or Scotland, or the Holy Land, the wife would defend his fief and castle, and sometimes was called upon to withstand a siege, when some neighbouring lord coveted the fair estates of the absent warrior, and sought to obtain them by force of arms.

The castles also were schools, not of learning, but of arms and chivalry, where the sons of vassals were trained in all the qualites that become a knight. The sons of vassals were sent to the castle of the suzerain to be brought up with his sons. Numerous reasons have been assigned for the origin of this custom, which we need not now enumerate. The practice, however, became general, and concerning it an ancient work entitled *L'ordre de la Chevalerie* records:—

"It is fitting that the son of the knight, while he is a squire, should know how to take care of a horse; and it is fitting that he should serve before and be subject to his lord; for otherwise he will not know the nobleness of his lordship when he shall be a knight; and to this end every knight shall put his son in the service of another knight, to the end that he may learn to carve at table and to serve, and to arm and apparel a knight in his youth. According as to the man who desires to learn to be a tailor or a carpenter, it is desirable that he should have for a master one who is a tailor or a carpenter; it is suitable that every nobleman who loves the order of chivalry, and wishes to become and be a good knight, should first have a knight for a master."

When the young squire attained the age of manhood he was admitted to the honour of knighthood, which was bestowed upon him with much ceremony and dignity. First he was divested of his garments and put in a bath, a symbol of purification; then they clothed him in a white tunic, a symbol of purity, in a red robe, a symbol of the blood which he was bound to shed in the service of the faith; and then in a close black coat, a reminder of the death which awaited him. Then he was obliged to observe a fast for twenty-four hours, and in the evening entered the church and there passed the night in prayer. On the morrow after confession and the receiving of Holy Communion, he heard a sermon upon the duties of knighthood, and then advancing to the altar presented his sword to the priest, who blessed it. Kneeling before his lord he was asked, "With what design do you desire to enter into the order? If it is in order to become rich, to repose yourself, and to be honoured without doing honour to chivalry, you are unworthy of it, and would be to the order of chivalry what the simoniacal priest is to the prelacy."

His answers being satisfactory, knights, or ladies, advance and clothe him with the equipments of his order, spurs, the hauberk or coat of mail, the cuirass, the vambraces and gauntlets, and lastly his sword. Then his lord gives him three blows of a sword on his shoulder, saying, "In the name of God, of Saint Michael, and Saint George I dub thee knight," adding, "Be brave, adventurous, and loyal." He then mounts his horse, caracoles about, brandishing his lance, and afterwards in the courtyard he repeats the performances before the people ever eager to take part in the spectacle.



The young knight was now able to take part in the jousts, and all kinds of chivalric displays, which were common and frequent. Many castles have, like that at Carisbrooke, a tilting-ground within the walls; but

great and important tournaments were held outside the castle. Richard I. appointed five special places for the holding of tournaments, namely between Sarum and Wilton, between Stamford and Wallingford, between Warwick and Kenilworth, between Brakely and Mixeberg, and between Blie and Tykehill. There was much pomp and ceremony attached to these knightly exercises. The lists, as the barriers were called which inclosed the scene of combat, were superbly decorated, and surrounded by pavilions belonging to the champions, ornamented with their arms and banners. The seats reserved for the noble ladies and gentlemen who came to see the fight were hung with tapestry embroidered with gold and silver. Everyone was dressed in the most sumptuous manner; the minstrels and heralds were clothed in the costliest garments; the knights who were engaged in the sports and their horses were most gorgeously arrayed. The whole scene was one of great splendour and magnificence, and, when the fight began, the shouts of the heralds who directed the tournament, the clashing of arms, the clang of trumpets, the charging of the combatants, and the shouts of the spectators, must have produced a wonderfully impressive and exciting effect upon all who witnessed the strange spectacle.

The regulations and laws of the tournament were very minute. When many preliminary arrangements had been made with regard to the examination of arms and helmets and the exhibition of banners, etc., at ten o'clock on the morning of the appointed day, the champions and their adherents were required to be in their places. Two cords divided the combatants, who were armed with a pointless sword and a truncheon hanging from their saddles. When the word was given by the lord of the tournament, the cords were removed, and the champions charged and fought until the heralds sounded the signal to retire. It was considered the greatest disgrace to be unhorsed. A French earl once tried to unhorse our King Edward I., when he was returning from Palestine, wearied by the journey. The earl threw away his sword, cast his arms around the king's neck, and tried to pull him from his horse. But Edward put spurs to his horse and drew the earl from the saddle, and then shaking him violently, threw him to the ground.

The joust (or just) differed from the tournament, because in the former only lances were used, and only two knights could fight at once. It was not considered quite so important as the grand feat of arms which I have just described, but was often practised when the more serious encounter had finished. Lances, or spears without heads of iron, were commonly used, and the object of the sport was to ride hard against one's adversary and strike him with the spear upon the front of the helmet, so as to beat him backwards from his horse, or break the spear. This kind of sport was of course rather dangerous, and men sometimes lost their lives at these encounters. In order to lessen the risk and danger of the two horses running into each other when the knights charged, a boarded railing was erected in the midst of the lists, about four or five feet high. The combatants rode on separate sides of this barrier, and therefore they could not encounter each other except with their lances. Sometimes two knights would fight in mortal combat. If one knight accused the other of crime or dishonour, the latter might challenge him to fight with swords or lances; and, according to the superstition of the times, the victor was considered to be the one who spoke the truth. But this ordeal combat was far removed from the domain of sport.

When jousts and tournaments were abandoned, tilting on horseback at a ring became a favourite courtly amusement. A ring was suspended on a level with the eye of the rider; and the sport consisted in riding towards the ring, and sending the point of a lance through it, and so bearing it away. Great skill was required to accomplish this surely and gracefully. Ascham, a writer in the sixteenth century, tells us what accomplishments were required from the complete English gentleman of the period:—

“To ride comely, to run fair at the tilt or ring, to play at all weapons, to shoot fair in bow, or surely in gun; to vault lustily, to run, to leap, to wrestle, to swim, to dance comely, to sing, and play of instruments cunningly; to hawk, to hunt, to play at tennis, and all pastimes generally which be joined to labour, containing either some fit exercises for war, or some pleasant pastime for peace—these be not only comely and decent, but also very necessary for a courtly gentleman to use.”

In the days of pageants and royal progresses these old castles were the scenes of very lively exhibitions of rustic histrionic talent. The stories of Greek and Roman mythology were ransacked to provide scenes and subjects for the rural pageant. Shepherds and shepherdesses, gods and goddesses, clowns and mummers, all took part in the rural drama which kings and queens delighted to honour. When Queen Elizabeth visited the ancient and historic castle of Sudeley, great preparations were made for the event, and a fine classical pageant was performed in her presence, a sketch of which may not be without interest.

The play is founded on the old classical story of Apollo and Daphne. The sun-god Apollo was charmed by the beauty of the fair Daphne, the daughter of a river-god, and pursued her with base intent. Just as she was about to be overtaken, she prayed for aid, and was immediately changed into a laurel tree, which became the favourite tree of the disappointed lover. The pageant founded on this old classical legend commenced with a man who acted the part of Apollo, chasing a woman who represented Daphne, followed by a young shepherd bewailing his hard fate. He, too, loved the fair and beautiful Daphne, but Apollo wooed her with fair words, and threatened him with diverse penalties, saying he would change him into a wolf, or a cockatrice, or blind his eyes. The shepherd in a long speech tells how Daphne was changed into a tree, and then Apollo is seen at the foot of a laurel tree weeping, accompanied by two minstrels. The repentant god repeats the verse:—

“Sing you, play you; but sing and play my truth;
This tree my lute, these sighs my note of ruth:
The laurel leaf for ever shall be green,
And chastity shall be Apollo's queen.
If gods may die, here shall my tomb be placed,
And this engraven, 'Fond Phoebus, Daphne chaste.'”

A song follows, and then, wonderful to relate, the tree opens, and Daphne comes forth. Apollo resigns her to the humble shepherd, and then she runs to Her Majesty the Queen, and with a great deal of flattery wishes her a long and prosperous reign.

Such was the simple play which delighted the minds of our forefathers, and helped to raise them from sordid cares and the dull monotony of continual toil. In our popular amusements the village folk do not take

part, except as spectators, and therefore lose half the pleasure; whereas in the time of the Virgin Queen the rehearsals, the learning the speeches by heart, the dresses, the excitement, all contributed to give them fresh ideas and new thoughts. The acting may not have been very good; indeed Queen Elizabeth did not always think very highly of the performances of her subjects at Coventry, and was heard to exclaim, "What fools ye Coventry folk are!" But I think Her Majesty must have been pleased at the concluding address of the players at Sudeley. After the shepherds had acted a piece in which the election of the King and Queen of the Bean formed a part, they knelt before the real queen, and said—

"Pardon, dread Sovereign, poor shepherds' pastimes, and bold shepherds' presumptions. We call ourselves kings and queens to make mirth; but when we see a king or queen we stand amazed. At chess there are kings and queens, and they of wood. Shepherds are no more, nor no less, wooden. In theatres workmen have played emperors; yet the next day forgotten neither their duties nor occupation. For our boldness in borrowing their names, and in not seeing Your Majesty for our blindness, we offer these shepherds' weeds; which, if Your Majesty vouchsafe at any time to wear, it shall bring to our hearts comfort, and happiness to our labours."

When the queen visited Kenilworth Castle, splendid pageants were performed in her honour. As she entered the castle the gigantic porter recited verses to greet Her Majesty, gods and goddesses offered gifts and compliments on bended knee, and the Lady of the Lake, surrounded by Tritons and Nereids, came on a floating island to do homage to the peerless Elizabeth and to welcome her to all the sport the castle could afford. For an account of the strange conduct of Orion and his dolphin upon this occasion, we refer our readers to Sir Walter Scott's *Kenilworth*; and the lover of pageants will find much to interest him in Gascoigne's *Princely Progress*.

The glories of our ancient castles have passed away; some indeed are preserved, and serve as museums, or barracks, or the country house of some noble lord; but most of them are in ruins. All traces of many a Norman castle have completely vanished. There was once a castle at Reading, but the only relics of it are the names Castle Hill and Castle Street. The turbulent barons made such terrible use of their fortresses during the troublous times of the civil war in Stephen's reign that in the more settled reign of Henry II. they were deprived of this means of oppression and their castles destroyed wholesale. The civil war in the reign of Charles I. was also another great cause of the destruction of these old fortresses. They were of great service during the progress of the war to those who were fortunate enough to possess them, and many of them in spite of Cromwell's cannon were most gallantly held and stoutly defended. Donnington Castle, Berkshire, was bravely held in spite of a prolonged siege during all the time that the war lasted by gallant Colonel Boys, who beat off the flower of the Parliamentary army; and when in obedience to the King's command he yielded up the castle, he and his brave garrison marched out with all the honours of war, having earned the respect of both friend and foe. Many other castles could tell the story of similar sieges in the days when "the gallants of England were up for the King."

But these brave sieges were the cause of their destruction. Cromwell when in power recognised their strength; they were too dangerous, these castles, and must be destroyed. His cannon-balls had rattled against their stone walls without much effect during the war; but their fate was sealed with that of their King, and the gunpowder of Cromwell's soldiers was soon employed in blowing up the walls that resisted him so long, and left them battered and smoking ruins.

Since then the ivy has grown over them to hide their nakedness. Forlorn and lonely the ruined castle stands. Where once loud clarion rang, the night owls hoot; vulgar crowds picnic where once knights fought in all the pride and pomp of chivalry. Kine feed in the grass-grown bailey court; its glory is departed. We need no castles now to protect us from the foes of our own nation. Civil wars have passed away, we trust, for ever; and we hope no foreign foeman's foot may ever tread our shores. But if an enemy threatened to attack England her sons would fight as valiantly as in the brave days of old, though earthen ramparts have replaced the ancient castles and iron ships the old wooden walls of England.

CHAPTER XII

MONASTERIES

Beautiful surroundings—Benefits conferred by monasteries—Charity— Learning—Libraries—Monks not unhappy—Netley—Cluny—Alcuin— Monastic friendships—St. Bernard—Anselm—Monks shed happiness around them—Desecration—Corruption of monasteries—Chaucer's prior—Orders of monks—Plan of a monastery—*Piers Ploughman's* description of a monastery—A day in a monastery—Regulations as regards blood-letting—The infirmary—Food—Hospitium—Chapter-house.

In the neighbourhood of many of our villages stand the ruins of an old monastery. Who were the builders of these grand and stately edifices? What kind of men lived within those walls? What life did they lead? We will try to picture to ourselves the condition of these noble abbeys, as they were in the days of their glory, before the ruthless hands of spoilers and destroyers robbed them of their magnificence.

It has often been remarked that the monks knew well how to choose the most beautiful spots for their monastic houses, establishing them by the banks of some charming river, surrounded by beautiful scenery and fertile fields.

They loved the beauties of nature, and had a keen sense for discovering them. They had a delicate and profound appreciation of the delights of the country, and loved to describe the beauties that surrounded their habitations. Nature in its loveliness and wild picturesqueness was a reflection of God's beauty, a temple of His light and goodness. Moreover they built their monasteries amidst forests and wild scenery, far from the

haunts of men, seeking solitude, wherein they could renew their souls by the sweetness of a life of contemplation, and consecrate their energies to the service of God. In the days of war and bloodshed, of oppression and lawlessness, holy men found it very difficult to be "in the world and yet not of it." Within the monastic walls they found peace, seclusion, solitude; they prayed, they worked, they wrote and studied. They were never idle. To worship, to labour, to fight as the *milites Christi* with weapons that were not carnal, these were some of the duties of the monks.

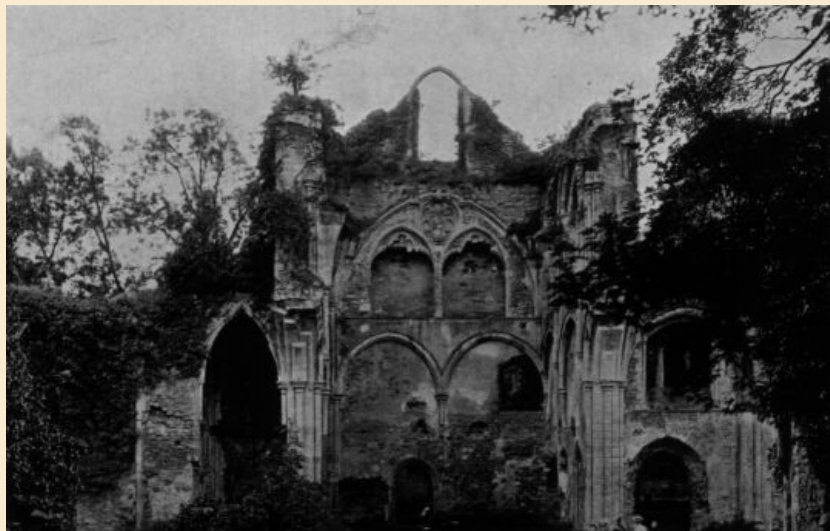
The world owes much to these dwellers in monasteries. They rescued the people from barbarism, and uplifted the standard of the cross. They emerged from their cells to direct councils, to preach and teach at the universities, to build churches and cathedrals, and astonish the world by their skill and learning. Who can tell what services they rendered to their nation and to all mankind by pouring forth that ceaseless stream of intercession day and night for the averting of the judgments of divine wrath which the crimes and follies of men so richly deserved? "What the sword is to the huntsman, prayer is to the monk," says St. Chrysostom; and well did they use this weapon for the spiritual and material benefit of all.

Another great benefit they conferred upon the world was that of charity. They were the true nurses of the poor. There were no poor laws, and union workhouses, and hospitals. The monks managed to supply all the wants of all who suffered from poverty, privation, and sickness. "The friendship of the poor constitutes us the friends of kings," says St. Bernard; "but the love of poverty makes kings of us." They welcomed in their ranks poor men, who were esteemed as highly as those of noble birth on entering the cloister. All men were equal who wore the monk's robe.

Amongst other services the monks rendered was the cultivation of learning and knowledge. With wonderful assiduity they poured forth works of erudition, of history, of criticism, recorded the annals of their own times, and stored these priceless records in their libraries, which have done such good service to the historians of modern times. The monasteries absorbed nearly all the social and intellectual movement of the thirteenth century. Men fired with poetical imagination frequently betook themselves to the cloister, and consecrated their lives to the ornamentation of a single sacred book destined for the monastery which gave them in exchange all the necessaries of life. Thus the libraries of the monastic houses were rich in treasures of beautifully illuminated manuscripts, which were bound by members of the community. The Abbot of Spanheim in the fifteenth century gives the following directions to his monks:—

"Let that one fasten the leaves together, and bind the book with boards. You, prepare those boards; you, dress the leather; you, the metal plates, which are to adorn the binding."

[ENLARGE](#)



NETLEY ABBEY, SOUTH TRANSEPT

Terrible is it to think of the dreadful destruction of these libraries at the time of the spoliation of monasteries and of the priceless treasures which they contained.

We are apt to suppose that the lives of the monks were gloomy, hard, severe, and that few rays of the sunshine of happiness could have penetrated the stern walls of the cloister. But this does not appear to have been the case. The very names of monasteries show that they rejoiced in their solitude and labour. Netley Abbey was called the Joyous Place, *loeto loco*; and on the Continent there are many names which bear witness to the happiness that reigned in the cloister. Moreover the writings of the monks proclaim the same truth. Cluny is called by Peter Damien his *hortus deliciarum* (garden of delights), and it is recorded that when Peter de Blois left the Abbey of Croyland to return to France he stopped seven times to look back and contemplate again the place where he had been so happy. Hear how Alcuin laments on leaving the cloister for the Court of Charlemagne:—

"O my cell! sweet and well-beloved home, adieu for ever! I shall see no more the woods which surround thee with their interlacing branches and aromatic herbs, nor thy streams of fish, nor thy orchards, nor thy gardens where the lily mingles with the rose. I shall hear no more those birds who, like ourselves, sing matins and celebrate their Creator, in their fashion—nor those instructions of sweet and holy wisdom which sound in the same breath as the praises of the Most High, from lips and hearts always peaceful. Dear cell! I shall weep thee and regret thee always."

The life was very peaceful, entirely free from care, and moreover lighted by the whole-hearted friendships which existed between the brethren. A chapter might be written on the love of the cloister, which like that of David for Jonathan, was "wonderful, passing the love of women." Thus St. Bernard burst out in bitter grief at the loss of a brother monk:—

"Flow, flow, my tears, so eager to flow! he who prevented your flowing is here no more! It is not he who is dead, it is I who now live only to die. Why, oh, why have we loved, and why have we lost each other?"

The letters of Anselm to Lanfranc and Gondulph, his dearest friends, abound in expressions of the most affectionate regard and deep true friendship. He writes:—

"How can I forget thee? Can a man forget one who is placed like a seal upon his heart? In thy silence I know that thou lovest me; and thou also, when I say nothing, thou knowest that I love thee. What can my letter tell thee that thou knowest not already, thou who art my second soul?"

The monks' lot was not sad and melancholy. They loved God and His service, and rejoicing in their mutual regard and affection were happy in their love and work. Orderic Vitalis writes, "I have borne for forty-two years with happiness the sweet yoke of the Lord." Moreover they shed happiness on those who dwelt around them, on the crowds of masons and carpenters, traders and workmen, who dwelt under the shadow of the monastery or farmed the fields of the monastic estates. No institution was ever more popular; no masters more beloved. They took a hearty interest in the welfare of all their tenants, and showed an active sympathy for all. The extent of their charity was enormous. In a French abbey, when food was scarce, they fed 1,500 to 2,000 poor in the course of the year, gave monthly pensions to all the families who were unable to work, entertained 4,000 guests, and maintained eighty monks—a wonderful record truly.

The influence of the monastery was felt in all the surrounding neighbourhood—the daily services, the solemn and majestic chants, the processions, must have created a deep impression on the minds of people. Many of the great writers and thinkers of subsequent ages have appreciated the wonderful labours of the monks. Dr. Johnson wrote:—

"I never read of a hermit, but in imagination I kiss his feet; never of a monastery, but I fall on my knees and kiss the pavement."

And now these noble buildings, hallowed by a thousand memories, exist only as dishonoured ruins. Some have been pulled down entirely, and the site used for gaols or barracks. Convicts labour where once monks prayed. The renowned abbey of Cluny is a racing stable, and Le Bec, the home of Anselm, has suffered a like profanation. Factories have invaded some of these consecrated sites. Many have been used as quarries for generations. All the carved and wrought stone has been cut off, and used for making bridges and roads and private houses. Nature has covered the remains with clinging ivy, and creeping plants, and wild flowers, and legends cluster round the old stones and tell the story of their greatness and their ruin. The country folk of western Ireland show the marks on the stones furrowed by the burning tears of the monks when they were driven out of their holy home. I am describing the condition of the monasteries in the days of their glory, when the spirit of the religious orders was bright and pure and enthusiastic. It cannot be denied that often the immense wealth which kings and nobles poured into the treasury of the monks begat luxury and idleness. Boccaccio in Italy, and even Dante, and our own Chaucer, write vigorously against the corruption of the monks, their luxury, love of sport, and neglect of their duty. Thus Chaucer wrote of a fourteenth-century prior:—

"Therefore he was a pricke as a right:
Greiounds he hadde as swift as foul of flight:
Of pricking and of hunting for the hare
Was all his lust, for no cost wolde he spare.
I saw his sleeves purfiled at the hond
With gris, and that the finest in the lond.
And for to fasten his hood under his chinne,
He hadde of gold ywrought a curious pinne:
A love-knotte in the greter end ther was.
His head was balled, and shone as any glas,
And eke his face, as it had been anoint.
He was a lord full fat and in good point
His eye stepe, and rolling in his bed,
That stemed as a forneis of led.
His botes souple, his hors in gret estat,
Now certainly he was a fayre prelat.
He was not pale as a forpined gost.
A fat swan loved he best of any rost.
His palfrey was as broune as is a bery."

Many were the efforts to reform the abuses which crept into the monastic houses. Holy men grieved over the scandals of the times in which they lived. Many monasteries remained until the end homes of zeal and religion, and the unscrupulous tools of Henry VIII. could find naught to report against them. The only charge they could fabricate against one monastery was "that the monks would do evil, if they could."

The foundation of the various orders of monks shows the efforts which were from time to time made by earnest men to revive the zeal and religious enthusiasm characteristic of the early dwellers in monasteries. The followers of St. Benedict and St. Columba were the first monks of the western Church who converted the peoples of England, Germany, Belgium, and Scandinavia. The Benedictines had many houses in England in Saxon times. In the tenth and eleventh centuries flourished a branch of the Benedictines, the order of Cluny, who worked a great religious revival, which was continued in the twelfth by the order of the Cistercians, founded at Citeaux in Burgundy. Some of our most beautiful English abbeys—Fountains, Kirkstall, Rievaulx, Tintern, Furness, and Byland—all belonged to this order. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the new orders of preaching friars founded by St. Francis and St. Dominic arose, and exercised an immense influence

in the world. They did not shut themselves up in the cloister, but went everywhere, preaching in the market-places, and tending the sick, the lepers, and the outcasts. At first they were immensely popular, but the orders degenerated like their predecessors, and long before the Reformation laid themselves open to the derision and the scoffs of the more enlightened men of the age. Since the days of the Friars there has been no building of monasteries in England. Wealth, luxury, and corruption had destroyed the early piety of the monks, and rich men preferred to give their wealth for the purpose of founding colleges and hospitals, rather than in increasing the number of religious houses.



We will now visit these monasteries, and try to picture them as they stood in the days of their glory, and see the daily life which the monks led. The rules of the orders differed somewhat, some being stricter than others; and likewise the arrangements of the buildings were not all based upon one plan. The Carthusian monasteries differ widely from those of the other orders, owing to the rule that each monk should have his separate cell, wherein he lived and had his food, and only met his brethren in church and in the chapter-house. We will examine the usual plan of a monastery, the main buildings of which clustered round the cloister-court. This was called the paradise, around which was a covered ambulatory. Here the monks read and wrote, and sometimes had little spaces partitioned off for studies, with bookstands and cupboards. It was the great centre of the monastic life. The earlier ambulatories were open, but in the fourteenth century they had windows looking on to the cloister-court, filled with stained glass. The monks must have found the open cloister a somewhat chilly place for writing, and although their fingers were endured to hardness, had sometimes to abandon their tasks. Orderic Vitalis tells us that his fingers were so numbed by the cold in a hard winter that he was obliged to leave his writing until a more congenial season.

On the north of the cloister-court stood the monastic church, the grandest and noblest of the monastic buildings, adorned with shrines, and tombs, and altars. Several of our cathedrals were monastic churches, and afford us some idea of the splendour and magnificence of these stately buildings. Many other churches built by the monks, quite as large and noble as any of our cathedrals, are now in ruins, with only a wall or a buttress remaining to mark the site of the once noble minster. The church was usually cruciform, with nave and aisles. East of the high altar in the choir stood the lady-chapel, and round the choir a retro-choir, or presbytery. There was a door on the south side of the church, opposite the eastern ambulatory, for the entrance of the monks. The south transept formed part of the eastern side of the cloister. On the same side stood the chapter-house, a large chamber richly ornamented with much architectural detail, and adorned with mural paintings. Between the chapter-house and the church there is a narrow room, which was the sacristy, and on the south of the chapter-house a building in two stories, the ground floor being the frater-house, where the monks retired after meals to converse, the upper room being the dortor, or dormitory, where they slept. A passage often separated the chapter-house from this building.

On the south side of the cloister-court stood the refectory, a long room in which the monks took their meals; and on the west was a range of buildings the use of which differed in various monasteries, in some for cellars and larders, in others for dormitories. Sometimes this western building was the *domus conversorum*, or house of the lay brethren. The abbot's lodging was a fine house, consisting of hall, chambers, kitchen, buttery, and cellars, capable of entertaining a large number of guests, and frequently stood on the east side of the chapter-house quite separate from the other buildings. In small monastic houses governed by a prior his residence often formed the western side of the cloister-court. The farmery, or infirmary, where sick monks were nursed during illness, was a separate building, having its own kitchen, refectory, and chapel. The hospitium was also a separate building near the outer gate of the abbey, and consisted of a hall, dormitories, and a chapel, in which each night a goodly company of guests were entertained and courteously welcomed by the hospitaller. A high wall surrounded the abbey precincts, in which was the outer gate, consisting of a porter's lodge, a prison, and a large room in which the manorial court was held, or the abbot met the representatives of the townsfolk in order to direct their affairs and choose their chief magistrate or settle their differences.

The author of *Piers Ploughman* gives a description of the appearance of a monastery in the fourteenth century. As he approached the monastic buildings he was so bewildered by their greatness and beauty that for a long time he could distinguish nothing certainly but stately buildings of stone, pillars carved and painted, and great windows well wrought. In the centre quadrangle he notices the stone cross in the middle of grass sward. He enters the minster, and describes the arches as carved and gilded, the wide windows full

of shields of arms and merchants' marks on stained glass, the high tombs under canopies, with armed effigies in alabaster, and lovely ladies lying by their sides in many gay garments. He passes into the cloister, and sees it pillared and painted, and covered with lead, and conduits of white metal pouring water into bronze lavatories beautifully wrought. The chapter-house was like a great church, carved and painted like a parliament-house. Then he went into the refectory, and found it a hall fit for a knight and his household, with broad tables and clean benches, and windows wrought as in a church. And then he wandered and wondered at "the halls full high and houses full noble, chambers with chimneys and chapels gay," and kitchens fit for a king in his castle, and their dorter or dormitory with doors full strong, their fermerye (infirmary) and frater, and many more houses, and strong stone walls, enough to harbour the queen. The author was evidently amazed at all the sights which he witnessed in the monastery.

We will now see the monks at work, and spend a day with them in their monastic home. It is not easy definitely to map out a monk's day. The difficulty arises in a measure from the want of distinct marks of time. A monastic day was divided into twelve hours of uncertain length, varying according to the season; but the religious observances began at midnight, when the brethren rose at the sound of a bell in the dorter for the continuous service of Mattins and Lauds. They then retired to sleep, until the bell again summoned them at sunrise, when Prime was said, followed by the morning Mass, private masses and confessions, and the meeting of the Chapter; after this, work; then Tierce; then High Mass, followed by Sext. A short time was then devoted to reading, during which the *ministri* and the reader at table dined; and then the monks sat down to dinner. This was the first food of the day, though the weaker brethren were allowed to sustain themselves with wine and water, or bread steeped in wine. Dinner was followed by a brief rest in the dormitory. If the monks did not wish to sleep they could read in the dorter; but they were to be careful not to disturb their resting brethren by any noise, such as that caused by turning over the leaves of their books. At one o'clock the bell rang for None, a short service consisting of a hymn, two psalms, some collects, the Lord's Prayer, and versicles. Then the brethren washed themselves, had a stoup of wine in the frater, and worked until Evensong, which was followed by supper. After supper they read in the cloister until the bell rang for Collation, which consisted of a reading in the chapter-house, whence they retired to the fraternity for a draught of wine or beer. Then followed Compline, and then the monks were ready for bed, and retired to the dorter. Even there rules followed them, and directed them how they were to take off their shoes, and "to behave with more quiet, self-restraint, and devotion than elsewhere."

I have not exhausted all the services which the monks attended. In addition to the principal ones there were several minor functions, at which devotion to the Blessed Virgin was the chief feature. The life was hard and the discipline severe; and lest the animal spirits of the monks should rise too high, the course of discipline was supplemented by periodical blood-letting. The doctors of the day were firm believers in the utility of this practice, and perhaps it had special advantages for dwellers in monasteries. According to the mediaeval metrical treatise on medicine, *Flos Medicinæ, or Regimen Sanitatis Salerni*—

"Spiritus uberius exit per phlebotomiam."

"It maketh cleane your braine, releeveth your eie,
It mends your appetite, restoreth sleep,
Correcting humours that do waking keep;
And inward parts and senses also clearing
It mends the voyce, touch, smell, taste, hearing."

According to the *Observances* of the Augustinian Priory at Barnwell, Cambridge, each brother was compelled to be bled seven times a year. It was probably a welcome duty, as the monks enjoyed a regular holiday, and were solaced with unwonted good fare.

Those who wished to be bled asked leave in Chapter, and having received a formal licence, attended High Mass. After the gospel they left the quire, and were bled in the farmery, where they remained three days. During this period they were excused attendance at the daily services, except on very special occasions; and minute directions are given for their personal comfort. They were allowed fire and lights, with suitable food, eggs and vegetables being specially mentioned; and they might take exercise within the precincts, and even beyond them, should the prelate give them leave. The infirmary seems to have been the most cheerful place in the monastery. Its inmates were "to lead a life of joy and freedom from care, in comfort and happiness." Conversation was freely permitted, though sarcastic and abusive language was strictly forbidden. "Games of dice and chess, and other games unsuitable to those who lead a religious life, were forbidden"; "because beyond all doubt they are offensive to God, and frequently give occasion to strife and contention among those who play them." We notice that invalids were allowed to walk in the "vineyards"; evidently the monks grew their own grapes, and made their own wine. The infirmary must have been well frequented. The complaints which are often specially mentioned as likely to compel the monks to resort to it are "irksomeness of life in the cloister," "long continuance of silence," "fatigue in the quire or extension of fasting," and "sleeplessness and overwork."

With regard to blood-letting the various orders had different customs. The Benedictines and Cluniacs had no stated times or seasons for the operation. The Cistercians prescribe bleeding four times in the year. The Carthusians were bled five times, and the Dominicans four times in the year.

The food of the monastery was varied and plentiful. Fish and flesh were brought to the table, the former being obtained from the monastic stew-ponds. Fruit was supplied, both raw and cooked, and a good supply of beer and wine. Wine seems to have been very commonly used, and some relaxation was evidently permitted in the matter of drink.

The hospitium, or guest-house, is worthy of a visit. Thither flocked a mixed crowd of knights and dames, monks and clerks, palmers, friars, traders with their wares, minstrels with their songs, and beggars, enjoying to the full the hospitality of the monks, who recognised it as one of their duties "to entertain strangers." The religious houses were, to a great extent, the inns of the Middle Ages; and when they were situated on the high roads, the guests were numerous and their entertainment costly. We are reminded, however, by the *Observances* of Barnwell Priory that "by showing hospitality to guests the reputation of the monastery is

increased, friendships are multiplied, animosities are blunted, God is honoured, charity is increased, and a plenteous reward in heaven is promised." It was enjoined that the hosteller, or brother in charge of the hospitium, should have "facility of expression, elegant manners, and a respectable bringing up; and if he have no substance to bestow he may at any rate exhibit a cheerful countenance and agreeable conversation, for friends are multiplied by agreeable words." He had to provide clean cloths and towels, cups without flaws, spoons of silver, mattresses, blankets and untorn sheets, pillows, quilts, etc. His duties are laid down with much minuteness; every morning he was required to go through the inventory, lest anything should be missing.

The meeting in the chapter-house we must not omit to describe. When all the brethren had taken their seats, one monk went to the pulpit and read aloud the martyrology for the day. Then some psalms and collects were read, and a portion of the monastic rule, and briefs announcing the deaths of persons in whom the brethren were interested. The *tabula*, or notice-board, recording the names of those who were responsible for certain duties, was read; and a sermon followed. After the precentor had given minute instructions with regard to the reading and singing of the services for the day, the abbot said: "Speak of your own order." This was the call to confession; and any brother who was conscious that he had transgressed any rule, or neglected his duty, came forward and asked pardon for his fault. This was followed by the report of the *circator*, whose duty was to play the spy, and discover the faults of the monks. And after this the brethren accused each other. One brother started up saying: "I accuse — a brother." The accused came forward and stood before the abbot, waiting patiently for the charge. The accuser then stated the charge, which was admitted, or denied, by the accused. If the abbot judged him to be flogged, the culprit might not be flogged by his accuser. He rose from his knees and modestly divested himself of his garments, remaining covered from his girdle downwards; and he who flogged him might not cease till the abbot bade him. Then he helped the brother to put on his clothes, who bowed to the abbot and went back to his place. The Chapter, after this exciting interlude, proceeded to transact the temporal business of the house, and then adjourned.

The chapter-house was often the scene of great events in the history of England. At Reading Abbey in this noble chamber parliaments were held. Here Heraclius, the patriarch of Jerusalem, presented to Henry II. the keys of the Holy Sepulchre, and invoked his aid in the crusade against the Saracens. Here the bishops assembled and excommunicated Longchamp, Chancellor and Regent of the country. Here the marriage contract between John of Gaunt and Blanche of Lancaster was signed, when there were great rejoicings in the ancient town, and tilts and tournaments took place daily. These gay scenes must have greatly disturbed the tranquil life of the monks, and contrasted strangely with their normal condition.

The picture of monastic life, which a study of the records of a monastery brings before us, is strange and alien to our present ideas; but it is brightened by a spirit of sincere religion and true charity, and helps us to understand the attraction of the convent walls in turbulent and troublous times.

CHAPTER XIII

THE MANOR-HOUSE

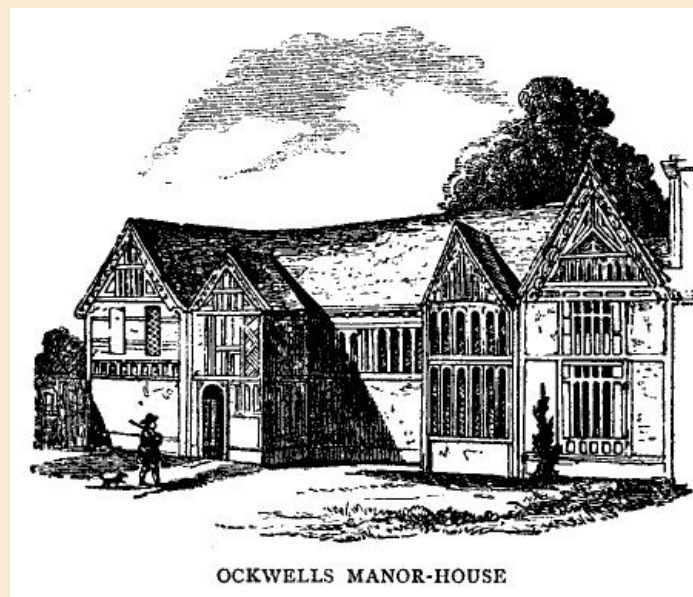
Evolution of a country house—Saxon house—Addition of separate sleeping-chambers—Castles—Tudor houses—Old manor-houses—Secret chambers—Rectories and vicarages—Duty of hospitality—Kelvedon Rectory—Allington—Tithe-barns—Alfriston clergy-house—Almshouses— Hermitages—Little Budworth—Knaresborough—Recluserium or anchor-hold—Laindon—Rattenden—Female recluses—Whalley.

The two principal houses in an English village are the manor-house and the rectory, wherein according to the theories of the modern political Socialist and agitator "the two arch-tyrants" of the labourers dwell, the squire and the parson. There is much of interest in the growth and evolution of the country house, which resulted in the construction of these old, pleasant, half-timbered granges and manor-houses, which form such beautiful features of our English villages.

[ENLARGE](#)



SOUTHCOTE MANOR SHOWING MOAT AND PIGEON-HOUSE



OCKWELLS MANOR-HOUSE

In our description of the village in Anglo-Saxon times we gave a picture of a house of a Saxon gentleman, which consisted mainly of one large hall, wherein the members of the household lived and slept and had their meals. There was a chapel, and a kitchen, and a ladies' bower, usually separated from the great hall, and generally built of wood. In Norman times the same plan and arrangements of a country house continued. The fire still burnt in the centre of the hall, the smoke finding its way out through a louvre in the roof. Meals were still served on tables laid on trestles, which were removed when the meal was finished. The lord and lady, their family and guests, dined at the high table placed on the dais, as in a college hall, the floor of which was boarded. The household and retainers dined in the space below, which was strewn with rushes and called "the marsh," which, according to Turner's *History of Domestic Architecture*, "was doubtless dirty and damp enough to deserve that name." The timbers of the roof in the better houses were moulded, the walls hung with tapestry, and at the lower end of the hall was a screen, above which in later times was the minstrels' gallery. The screen formed a passage which led into a separate building at right angles to the hall, containing the cellar, buttery, and kitchen. Parallel with this at the upper end of the hall was a building of two stories, one used as a parlour, and the other was called the "great chamber," where the lady and her guests retired after dining in the hall.



RICHMOND PALACE

Later on a greater refinement of domestic customs was introduced. In the twelfth century a separate sleeping-chamber for the lord was added. The next century saw him and his lady dining in a room apart from his servants, a custom which was much satirised by the author of *Piers Ploughman*, who wrote—

“Now hath each rich a rule
To eaten by themselves,
In a privy parlour
For poor man sake,
Or in a chamber with a chimney;
And leave the chief hall,
That was made for meals
Men to eaten in.”

Evidently the author did not approve of the new fashion. But the advantages of the custom were much appreciated by the squires and ladies of the day, and this process of development led to a multiplication of rooms, and the diminution of the size of the great hall. The walls were raised, and an upper room was formed under the roof for sleeping accommodation. There are many old farmhouses throughout the country, once manor-houses, which retain in spite of subsequent alterations the distinguishing features of this mediaeval style of architecture.



DOORWAY AND STAIRCASE,
UFTON COURT

The nobles built their castles as late as the fourteenth century; but under the Tudor monarchs, when the government of the country was strong and more settled, fortified dwellings were deemed no longer necessary, and the great landowners built splendid country houses. English domestic architecture then reached the period of its highest perfection. Instead of castles men built palaces, the noblest specimens of our English style, before it became corrupted. Hatfield House and Hampton Court are its best examples.

During the fifteenth century the common hall had decreased in importance; and now in smaller houses it

disappeared altogether, and a grand entrance hall usually took its place. The number of rooms was increased enormously, and corridors were introduced. The principal features of an Elizabethan house are the gallery and noble staircase.



THE PORCH, UFTON COURT

Early in the seventeenth century Inigo Jones introduced the revived classic style of architecture into England, and entirely altered the appearance and arrangement of our manor-houses. Palladio was the originator of this style. The old English model was declared obsolete, and fashion dictated that Italian villas must supersede the old houses. These new buildings were very grand with their porticos and colonnades; but the architects cared little for comfort and convenience. Indeed a witty nobleman suggested to the owner of one of these new houses that he had better hire a lodging over the way and look at it.

[ENLARGE](#)



OLD MANOR HOUSE, UPTON COURT

The old manor-houses are often surrounded by a moat, and not unfrequently contain secret rooms and

underground passages, which were often used as places of refuge in troublous times. Those held by recusants usually had two or three hiding-places ingeniously contrived, which must have baffled all pursuers, and were needed for the concealment of the Roman Catholic priest, in the days when his services were proscribed. There are two cleverly designed hiding-places at Ufton Court, Berkshire, which was held by the Roman Catholic family of Perkins. In a subterranean vault under an old house at Hurley, in which the bones of monks were discovered, the supporters of Orange used to meet to plan his succession to the English Crown. The walls of many of the manor-houses and halls in Lancashire and Yorkshire could tell of many a plot for the restoration of the Stuarts to the throne, and of many a deep health drunk to "Bonnie Charlie," while the chorus rang—

"He's over the seas and far awa',
He's over the seas and far awa',
But of no man we'll stand in awe,
But drink his health that's far awa'."

The rectories and vicarages scattered over the country have passed through the same transformation as the manor-houses, which they much resembled. The rectory was often surrounded by a moat, with an entrance protected by a gatehouse. The duty of entertaining strangers and travellers was always duly recognised by the clergy, and entailed a heavy charge upon their income. Those who lived off the main roads used to provide accommodation for an occasional guest, but the rectors in the more frequented districts had frequently to entertain many travellers. There *is* a description of the rectory-house of Kelvedon, Essex, in a deed dated 1356, which runs as follows:—

"One hall situate in the manor of the said abbot and convent [Westminster] near the said church, with a soler and chamber at one end of the hall, and with a buttery and cellar at the other. Also one other house in three parts, namely a kitchen with a convenient chamber in the end of the said house *for guests*, and a bakehouse. Also one other house in two parts next the gate at the entrance of the manor for a stable and cow-house. He [the vicar] shall also have a convenient grange, to be built within a year at the expense of the prior and convent. He shall also have the curtilage with the garden adjoining the hall on the north side enclosed as it is with hedges and ditches."



WINDOW OF SOUTH WING, UFTON COURT

Here the house for guests is an important feature of the clergyman's house; and about the same date, in 1352, we find the Bishop of Winchester ordering the prior and convent of Merton to provide "a competent manse for the vicar, viz. a hall with two rooms, one at one end of the hall, and the other at the other end, with a drain to each, and a suitable kitchen with fireplace and oven, and a *stable for six horses*, all covered with

tiles, and completed within one year, such place to remain to the use of the said vicar and his successors." Unless the vicar was a very sporting parson he would not require a stable for six horses, and this was doubtless intended for the accommodation of the steeds of his guests.

The descriptions of these old rectory-houses are interesting. The Rector of Allington, Kent, possessed a house consisting of "a hall, parlour, and chamber over the parlour, stairs-head, beside the parson's bedchamber, parson's lodging-chamber, study, chamber behind the chimney, chamber next adjoining westward, buttery, priest's chamber, servants' chamber, kitchen, mill-house, boulding-house, larder, entries, women's chamber; gatehouse, still beside the gate, barn next the gate; cartlage, barn next the church, garden-house, court." The barn next the church was probably the tithe-barn. Tithe was then paid in kind; hence a barn was required to contain the dues of the parishioners. Sometimes these tithe-barns are very large and long, especially when the tithe-owner was the abbot of some monastery. Near Reading there is still standing the barn of the abbey, and at Cholsey, in Berkshire, there is one of the finest specimens of the kind in England.

[ENLARGE](#)



STONE TITHE BARN, BRADFORD-ON-AVON

There still remain several of these old pre-Reformation parsonages and rectories. The most noted is the clergy-house at Alfriston, Sussex, which has been carefully preserved. It follows the usual type of fourteenth-century house, and consists of a fine hall, the lower part divided off by a screen, a solar of two stories at one end, and a kitchen at the other. It is built of oak framework, filled in with "wattle and daub." There is a large chimney and grate in the hall, and huge beams support the thatched roof. Parsonages of mediaeval times remain at West Dean, Sussex; at King's Stanley and Notgrove, Gloucestershire; Wonstone, Hants; Helmsley, Yorkshire; and at several other places. The Rectory of Shellingford, Berks, though much disguised by modern additions, is an original fourteenth-century house.

In many villages there are old almshouses founded by pious benefactors for "poor brethren and sisters." As we enter the quiet courtyard paved with cobble stones, the spirit of olden days comes over us. The chapel where daily prayer is said morning and evening; the panelled dining-hall, with its dark oaken table; the comfortable rooms of the brethren; the time-worn pump in the courtyard—all recall the memory of old times, when life was more tranquil, and there was less hurry and busy bustling.

Sometimes we meet with a curious little house built of stone or timber, erected along the great highways, near some bridge or ford, wherein a "holy hermit" once dwelt, and served his generation by directing travellers to the nearest monastery or rectory, and spent his days in seclusion and prayer. Such indeed is the traditional idea of the hermit's life; but the real hermit of the Middle Ages did not always live a very lonely or ascetic life. He was supported by the alms of the charitable and did no work, but lived an idle life, endured no hardships, and escaped not the scoffs of the satirical. *Piers Ploughman* tells us of workmen—"webbers and tailors, and carters' knaves, and clerks without grace, who liked not long labour and light wages; and seeing that lazy fellows in friars' clothing had fat cheeks, forsook their toil and turned hermits. They lived in boroughs among brewers and begged in churches." They had a good house, with sometimes a chaplain to say daily Mass for them, a servant or two to wait on them, and plenty of food and drink provided by a regular endowment or the donations of the charitable. They did not shut themselves up in their cells and hold no intercourse with their fellow-men; and herein they differed from the recluses who were not supposed to go outside the doors of their anchorages. Both males and females were enrolled as recluses, but only the latter seem to have taken upon themselves the vows of complete seclusion.

Several of these hermitages remain. There is one at Little Budworth, in Cheshire, in the park of Sir Philip Egerton. Warkworth has a famous one, consisting of a chapel hewn out of the rock, with an entrance porch, and a long, narrow room with a small altar at the east end, wherein the hermit lived. At Knaresborough, Yorkshire, there is a good example of a hermitage, hewn out of the rock, consisting of a chapel, called St. Robert's Chapel, with groined roof, which was used as the living-room of the hermit. This chapel was the scene of Eugene Aram's murder. At Wetheral, near Carlisle; Lenton, near Nottingham; on the banks of the Severn, near Bewdley, Worcestershire, there are anchorages, and also at Brandon, Downham, and Stow Bardolph, in Norfolk. Spenser in the *Faery Queen* gives the following description of a hermit's cell:—

“A little lowly hermitage it was,
Down by a dale, hard by a forest’s side,
Far from resort of people that did pass
In travell to and froe; a little wyde
There was an holy Chappell edifyde,
Wherein the hermite dewly wont to say
His holy things, each morne and eventyde;
Hereby a chrystall streame did gently play,
Which from a sacred fountaine welled forth alway.”

Within the churchyard of many a town or village church, and usually attached to the church, stood a reclusorium, or anchor-hold, wherein a recluse, male or female, once resided. At Laindon Church, Essex, there is a fine specimen of a house of this kind attached to the west end. Generally the anchor-hold was a small room, built of wood, connected with the church. Frequently there is a room over the porch of a church which may have been used for this purpose, the recluse living usually in the church. At Rettenden, Essex, there is a room over the vestry which has evidently been an anchor-hold. There was a window, now blocked up, through which the recluse could see the high altar, and the celebration of the holy mysteries, and another for him to look out, hold converse with his friends, and receive their alms. The church of St. Patricio, near Crickhowel, South Wales, has an anchor-hold; also Clifton Campville Church, Staffordshire; Chipping Norton Church, Oxfordshire; Warmington Church, Warwickshire; and many churches have rooms over the porch which were formerly used by recluses. The church itself was frequently the habitation of the anchorite. There is a notice of a hermit who lived in St. Cuthbert’s Church, Thetford, and performed divine service therein.

Of female recluses we gather many details in the *Ancren Riewle* of Bishop Poore of Salisbury, who left very minute directions for the regulation of their austere and solitary lives. The little cell had an altar where the anchoress frequently prayed, and through a window saw the elevation of the Host in the daily Mass. The walls were covered with mural paintings. There was a table, a fire, and a cat lying before it. An unglazed window with a shutter was covered by a black curtain, through which she could converse with anyone outside without being seen. She was not allowed to put her head out of the open window. “A peering anchoress, who is always thrusting her head outward, is like an untamed bird in a cage,” says the good bishop. The long hours of solitude were spent in devotion, working embroidery, reading her few books, talking to her servant or to those who desired to speak with her through the curtained window.

The poor caged birds must often have wished to break the bars of their cage, and occasionally they escaped from their solitary confinement. In the churchyard of Whalley, Lancashire, there are two cottages which stand upon the site of a reclusorium, founded by Henry, Duke of Lancaster, in 1349. Here in the reign of Henry VI. lived one Isole de Heton, who wearied of her lot, and left the anchor-hold, an example which was followed by several of her successors. A scandal having arisen, the hermitage was dissolved.

Many a sad story of ruined hopes and broken hearts could these walls tell, which were the living tombs of many a devout or erring sister, who, wounded in the world’s war, sought the calm seclusion of a cell, and found there the peace which elsewhere they had failed to find.

CHAPTER XIV

PARISH CHURCHES

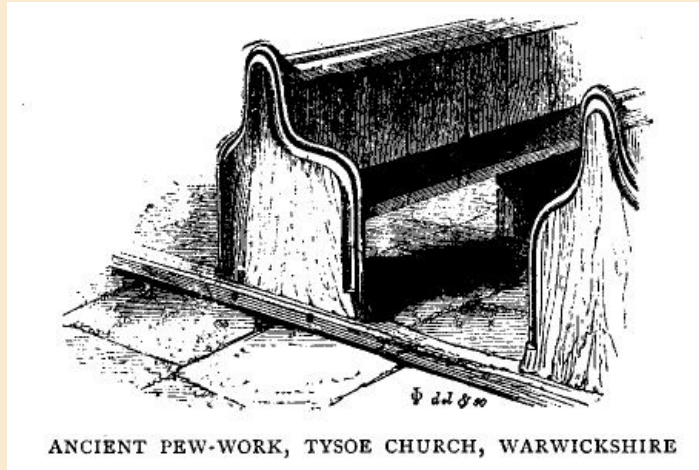
The Porch—Font—Stone benches—Pews—Pulpits—Rood-lofts—Destruction of—Screens—Royal arms—Chancel—Stalls—*Misereres*—Lectern—High altar and its furniture—Piscina—Credence—Aumbry—Sedilia—Easter sepulchre—Reredos—Shrines—Numerous altars—Chantry chapels—Hagioscopes—Images—Low side windows—Vestries—Vestments—Churches in olden times—Reading pews—Galleries—Destruction and profanation—Evils of “restoration.”

In the centre of our village stands the church, always the most important and interesting building in the place. We will suppose that it has not suffered overmuch at the hands of the “restorers” of the nineteenth, or the Puritans of the seventeenth, or the spoliators of an earlier century, so that we may observe all those details which characterise an ancient church. In spite of all the vandalism which has taken place, in spite of the changes in ceremonial and forms of worship, our beautiful old churches still retain relics of the past which time has spared.

We will enter the church and notice first the porch, often a large structure with a chamber above. Why was it made so large? According to the Sarum use several services took place in the porch. Parts of the baptismal service and of the marriage service and the churching of women were there performed; hence the porch was an important building, and it was necessary to make it rather large. Above the door there is frequently a niche for the image of the patron saint of the church, which has not usually escaped the destructive hand of the Puritan. The room over the porch was frequently inhabited by a recluse, as I have already recorded in the previous chapter. Near the door always stands the font, signifying that baptism is the entrance to the Church of Christ. Ancient fonts are large enough to allow the infant to be totally immersed, and are made of stone or lead. Childrey Church, in our county of Berks, has a fine cylindrical, leaden font, of Norman date, carved with figures of bishops. Norman fonts are frequently carved, the favourite subjects being the Baptism of our Lord, the Twelve Apostles, and the evangelistic symbols. Early English and Decorated fonts are not usually carved, but in the Perpendicular style they are rich with ornamentation, the Seven Sacraments being a not uncommon design. We have sometimes noticed the symbols of Freemasonry carved on fonts, as at Bray, in

Berkshire. To the same period belong the splendid spire-shaped font-covers, of immense weight, of which I am sometimes a little fearful, lest the mechanism by which they are raised should become damaged, and terrible disaster follow during the progress of a baptismal service. At Sonning, Berks, there is a small stone desk attached to a pillar for the service-book to rest on.

The nave of the church is now filled with seats for the use of the congregation. In early times they do not seem to have been considered necessary, and until the fourteenth century the stone benches ranged against the walls were the only seats provided. Even as late as the fourteenth century it does not appear that many churches had pews, but in the fifteenth they became general. The hideous monstrosities of post-Reformation times did not then disfigure our churches. The pews were low open seats made of oak, sometimes carved at the back, and panelled, with the ends higher than the rest, and often richly carved. Many rich men left money in their wills for the *puying* of churches.



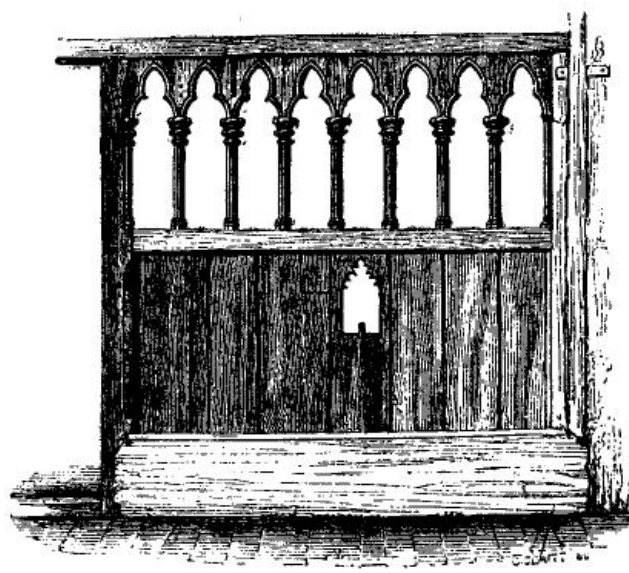
ANCIENT PEW-WORK, TYSOE CHURCH, WARWICKSHIRE

It was not until the beginning of the seventeenth century that the fashion of erecting high pews set in, which so disfigured our churches, and were frequently censured by the authorities. Some of these (as at Whalley) resemble four-posted beds; others are like cattle-pens, large square boxes with seats all round, wherein the occupants sit and sleep, screened from the rest of the congregation. The carving of the woodwork of these erections is often very elaborate. Modern pews are happily based upon the more primitive fashion.

Preaching not being considered such an important part of the service in pre-Reformation times, pulpits in churches of that period were not so usual as in modern churches. Monastic refectories had pulpits, which the reader occupied when he read to his brethren during meals. Beaulieu Abbey has the most ancient pulpit in this country, which evidently belongs to the thirteenth century.

The churches of Devonshire and Norfolk have wooden pulpits of the fifteenth century, which were painted and gilded, the figures of the four doctors of the church—SS. Augustine, Ambrose, Gregory, and Jerome—being the favourite subjects. In 1603 the churchwardens were ordered to provide in every church “a comely and decent pulpit.” Hence most of our pulpits date from this period. The sides were panelled and carved with scrollwork; and at the same time a sounding-board was introduced. Occasionally the hour-glass which regulated the length of the preacher’s discourse remains, with its beautiful scroll-worked stand.

The most striking feature of the pre-Reformation Church was the rood-loft, a narrow long gallery above the beautifully decorated screen, which separated the chancel from the nave. In this loft was erected the rood, or figure of our blessed Lord on the cross, together with figures of the Virgin and St. John on each side. Both the screen and the loft were richly panelled and ornamented with tracery and carvings, and before them hung one or more lamps. Sometimes tall candlesticks stood on pillars on each side of the figures. A staircase of stone, constructed in the wall near the chancel-arch, led to the rood-loft, and the blocked-up archway of this rood-stair frequently remains. The priest stood in the rood-loft to read the gospel and epistle, and sometimes preached there; official notices were read, and from it the bishop used to give the Benediction. The rood-cloth, or veil, hid the rood during Lent, and in some churches we have seen the roller which was used to raise this veil. A special altar, called the rood-altar, used to stand under the screen.



EARLY ENGLISH SCREEN, THURCASTON, LEICESTERSHIRE

The Reformers played havoc with these old rood-lofts and screens, which were regarded as monuments of idolatry and superstition. The churchwardens' account-books of many churches bear witness to this destruction. Those of St. Giles', Reading, tell of certain *items* "for pulling down the rood and carting away the rubbish." Instead of the figure of our Lord they put up the royal arms; and one John Serjente, of Hytchen, is licensed in 1614—

"to paynte in all the Churches and Chappells, within this Realme of England, the Kinges Majesties armes in due forme with helme creste mantell and supporters as they oughte to be—and to wright in fayre text letters the tenn commandments, the believe, and the Lord's prayer, with some other fruitfull and profitable sentences of holye scripture."

In spite of this destruction of the ancient roods, several lofts still remain, *e.g.* at Bradninch, Cullompton, Dartmouth, Hartland, Kenton, Ugborough, and Plymtree, in Devonshire; in several places in Somersetshire, and at Charlton-on-Otmoor (erected in 1485) and Handborough, Oxfordshire. A very large number of the old screens remain, ornamented with the arms of Elizabeth or James I.

Proceeding eastward we enter the chancel, so called because it is inclosed with *cancelli*, or the lattice-work of the screen. If the church was formerly connected with some monastery we shall see some beautifully carved wooden stalls with rich canopies over them. The seats are curiously constructed. They can be turned up, and beneath the seats is a projecting bracket of wood, commonly adorned with carved work—animals, birds, leaves, and flowers, and often with grotesque, satirical, and irreverent devices. They are called miserere-stalls, and were used by the monks or canons to lean against during the portions of the long mediaeval services, when they were not allowed to be seated. As this practice was a concession to human weakness or infirmity, the seats were called in France *misericordes*, and in England *misereres*. The subjects of the sculptures are often extremely curious. Domestic scenes, fables, such as the "Fox and the Grapes," demons carrying off monks, "The Seven Deadly Sins," are some of these subjects. Miss Phipson has published a learned work on *Choir Stalls and their Carvings*, which contains reproductions of three hundred of her sketches of curiously wrought *misereres*.

[ENLARGE](#)



VILLAGE CHURCH IN THE VALE

The lectern formerly stood in the chancel; and then, as now, was often in the form of a large eagle, emblematic of St. John. Most of these reading-desks belong to the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, and are made of wood, latten, iron, or stone, as well as of brass. There is a very curious wooden one at East Hendred, Berks, representing a foot resting on the head of a dragon, emblematic of the word of God conquering the powers of evil. Ancient wooden double reading-desks are not uncommon. The ornamentation usually denotes the period when they were constructed.

And now we approach the high altar of the church, made of stone, covered with a beautifully worked frontal and cloth, and inclosed at the sides with curtains suspended on iron rods projecting from the wall. A crucifix hangs above the altar, and two candlesticks stand, one on each side. The furniture and accessories of the altar in pre-Reformation times were numerous. There was the pyx, a box or vessel of precious metal, in which the Host was reverently preserved for the purpose of giving communion to the sick and infirm. There were two small cruets or vessels for containing the wine and water used in Holy Communion, one engraved with the letter "V" (*vinum*), and the other "A" (*aqua*). An *osculatorium*, or pax tablet, of ivory or wood, overlaid with gold, was used for giving the kiss of peace during the High Mass just before the reception of the Host. Of church plate generally we shall write in a subsequent chapter.



NORMAN PISCINA, ROMSEY CHURCH, HANTS

On the south we see the piscina, which is contained in a beautifully carved niche—a hollow basin with a stone drain, wherein the priest washed his hands before consecrating the elements, and poured the water from the rinsed chalice. Above it in the niche was the credence, a shelf of stone, on which were placed the chalice and paten and all things necessary for the celebration. In some churches there is a separate credence table. On the north side was the aumbry, or locker, where the sacred vessels, altar linen, and service books were kept, guarded by a strong wooden door. The doors have usually disappeared, but a very large number of churches have the hole in the wall which was formerly the aumbry.

On the south side are the sedilia, or stone seats, for the assistant clergy, frequently with canopies richly carved, and usually three in number. Opposite to the sedilia in the north wall is a large arch, within which the holy sepulchre was set up at Easter. This was a wooden structure made for the deposition of the consecrated elements of the Eucharist from the evening of Good Friday until the morning of Easter Day; during which time it was watched by a quasi-guard, after the manner of our Lord's sepulchre. The books of St. Lawrence, Reading, record:—

"Anno 1498. In primis payed for Wakyng of the Sepulchre viii'd."

*"Anno 1510. It. payed to Walter Barton to the new Sepulchur iiiii'li
xiii's x'd."*

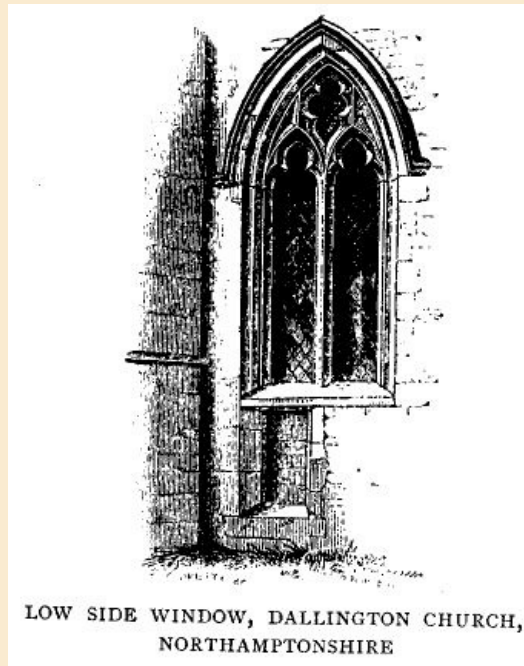
As this sum of money was a considerable one at that period, the sepulchre must have been an object of unusual magnificence. Sometimes it was a permanent structure of stone, carved with figures of soldiers watching the tomb of our Lord. Behind the altar was the reredos. In village churches these screens were made up of recessed stone panels, surrounded by sculptured wallflowers and other devices; but in large churches they were very ornate, enriched with niches, statues, tabernacle-work, and other adornments. Many of them were destroyed at the Reformation, together with the stone altars. Some were covered up and concealed by plaster, in order to preserve them from iconoclastic violence. They were buried and forgotten, until by some happy accident their existence was revealed in modern times. Nearly all large churches, and some village churches, especially those connected with a monastery, had shrines, or receptacles for the body or relics of a saint. Some of them were fixed, and made of stone or wood, adorned with rich tabernacle-work, such as the shrine of St. Cuthbert at Durham, or of St. Frideswide at Oxford; and others were portable, shaped like coped boxes, covered with precious metal, enamels, and engraving. Sculptured stones in the walls of our churches often mark the spot in the building where relics were stored.

It is evident from the existence of niches and piscinas in other parts of the church, besides in the south wall near the high altar, that there formerly existed many altars in the sacred building. At the east end of each aisle we usually find these indications of the existence of an altar, which belonged to a chantry chapel, separated from the rest of the church by a screen. Here a priest said Mass daily for the soul of the founder of the chantry, his ancestors, and posterity. Ancient stone altars still remain in some of our churches. Sometimes they have been removed from their place, and used as tombstones, or in paving the floor of the

church. They can be recognised by the five crosses engraved on them, one at each corner, and one in the centre of the stone.

Hagioscopes, or squints, are openings in the thickness of the wall, enabling worshippers in the chantry chapels to witness the elevation of the Host at the high altar. They are usually plain; but in some churches we find these curious apertures moulded and decorated with architectural designs.

Pre-Reformation churches had several wooden images of saints, most of which were destroyed by the iconoclastic zeal of the Reformers or Puritans. The brackets on which these figures stood often remain, though the images have disappeared.



Low side windows, commonly called "Lepers' windows," are very frequently found in our churches, and usually on the south wall of the chancel. Their object has been, and is, much disputed among antiquaries. The vulgar idea is that poor lepers used to come to this window to see the celebration of the Mass; but unfortunately it is quite impossible in many cases to see the high altar through this window, and moreover lepers were not allowed to enter a churchyard. Another idea is that they were used as confessionals, the priest in the church hearing the confession of the penitent who knelt on the grass in the churchyard. A more inconvenient arrangement could not have been devised; and this idea might be at once dismissed, were it not that one of Henry's commissioners for suppressing monasteries and chantries wrote: "We think it best that the place where these friars have been wont to hear outward confession of all-comers at certain times of the year, be walled up, and that use to be done for ever." It appears that sometimes at any rate the low side windows were used for this purpose. However, I am inclined to think that they were intended for the use of the anchorites or recluses, who dwelt in churches. The windows were not glazed, but had iron bars on the outside, and a wooden shutter on the inside of the church. These windows were probably their means of communication with the outside world.

Many village churches then, as now, had no vestry. Where a *vestiarium* existed it was usually on the north side of the chancel, and its contents were more elaborate than the plain surplice stole and hood of recent times. In the vestry press we should find an alb of fine white linen, somewhat similar to a surplice, ornamented with "apparels," *i.e.* embroidery, on the cuffs and skirts; a girdle made of white silk embroidered with colours; an amice, or oblong piece of fine linen, worn on the head or as a collar; a stole with embroidered ends; a maniple, or strip of ornamented linen worn by the priest in his left hand during celebrations; dalmatic, chasuble and other vestments which the ornate ritual of the mediaeval church required.

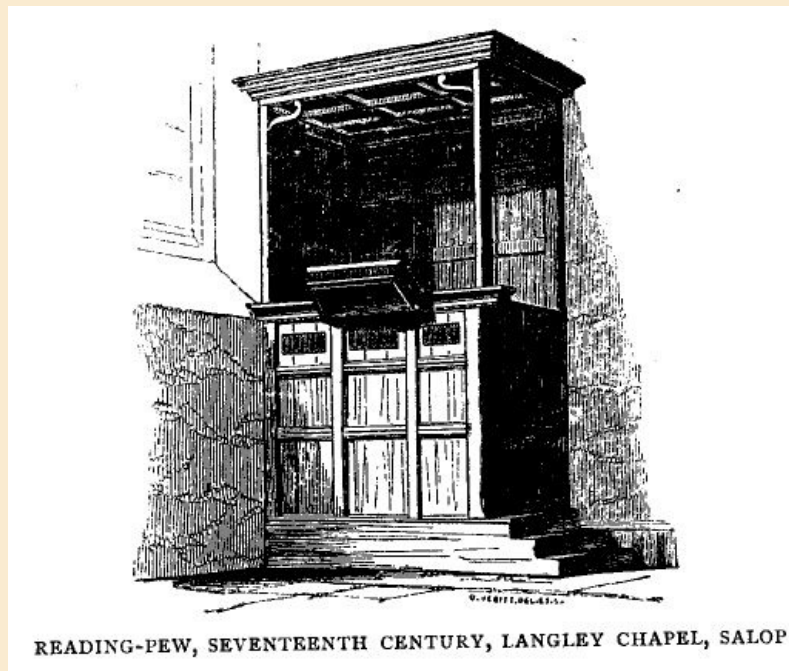
Before the Reformation the appearance of our churches was certainly splendid, and differed much from the Puritan simplicity of later times. The walls were covered with mural paintings. The windows, soon to be

"Shorn of their glass of a thousand colourings,
Through which the deepened glories once could enter,"

were then resplendent with stained glass. Above, the rood looked down on all the worshippers. Everywhere there was beautifully carved woodwork, gilded and painted, tombs of knights and dames all painted and adorned, altars with rich embroidered hangings. The floor was composed of encaustic tiles, and had many memorial brasses. Armour, crests, and banners hung upon the walls. Lights burned before numerous images, and the whole appearance of our churches was gorgeous and magnificent.

Many changes have taken place since. Coatings of whitewash hide the mural paintings. Sacrilegious hands "have broken down all the carved work with axes and hammers." The stone altars have disappeared, and instead we have "an honest table decently covered." Reading-pews for the clergy were set up, and in the last century the hideous "three decker," which hid the altar and utterly disfigured the sacred building. Instead of the low open seats great square high pews filled the nave. Hideous galleries were erected which obstructed

the windows and hid the architectural beauties of former days. The old timber roofs were covered, and low flat ceilings substituted. Brasses were torn up and sold by dishonest churchwardens, and old monuments broken and defaced. The old stained-glass windows were destroyed. The Communion table was taken from the east end of the chancel, and seats erected round it. Crosses were defaced everywhere, and crucifixes destroyed. Puritan profanation and wanton destruction devastated our churches to a degree which has never been equalled since the hordes of heathens and barbaric Danish invaders carried fire and sword into the sanctuaries of God.



Much harm was done by the Goths and Vandals of the nineteenth century. Many old churches, replete with a thousand memories of the past, were pulled down entirely, and modern structures of "Victorian Gothic" style erected in their place, which can have none of the precious associations which the old churches had. Much harm was done to the old features of many churches by so-called "restoration," carried out by men ignorant of architecture and antiquities. But we are learning better now. The Society of Antiquaries has done much to prevent injudicious restoration and the destruction of our old churches, and if any incumbent and his parishioners are thinking of restoring their church, they cannot do better than to consult the secretaries of that learned body, who will show how best to preserve the interesting memorials of the past which time has spared.

CHAPTER XV

CHURCH PLATE

Spoliation—Few remains of pre-Reformation plate—Testimony of inventories—Plate found in graves of bishops—Characteristics of chalices in different periods—Inscriptions—Devices on patens—Censers—Pyx—Monstrance—Chrismatory—Pax—Sacring bell—Elizabethan chalice—Bridal cup—Post-Reformation plate—Hall marks.

We have already mourned over the wanton destruction of much that was of intense interest and value in our churches; but the most systematic robbery and spoliation of our church goods at the time of the Reformation were carried out in the matter of church plate. Henry VIII. stripped our cathedrals and conventual churches of almost all that was valuable, and the unscrupulous commissioners of Edward VI. performed a like office for our parish churches and chantries. A large number of the old chalices were also melted down and converted into Communion cups during the reigns of Edward VI. and Elizabeth. Hence of all the vast store of church plate which our churches possessed before the Reformation, at the present time throughout all England only thirty-four chalices and seventy-three patens remain. It is true that not all the ancient vessels fell into the hands of the commissioners of the king. In the churchwardens' account books of the period we read of sundry sales of church plate. Evidently the parishioners had some presentiment of the coming spoliation; so they sold their valuables, and kept the proceeds of the sale for "the paving of the streets," or other parochial necessities.

The ancient inventories of church goods show the deplorable loss of the valuables of the church which has taken place. Thus at the church of St. Lawrence, Reading, in the year 1517, the inventory tells us of the

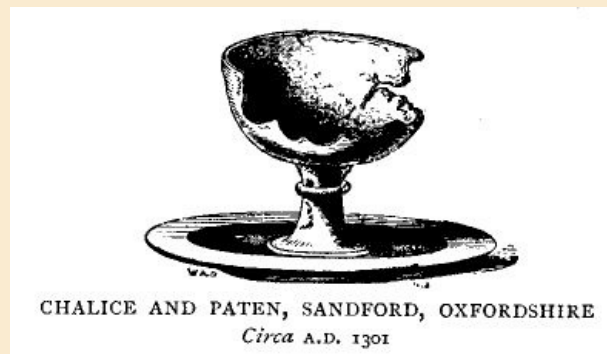
following: a cross of silver and gilt; a censer of silver gilt; another censer; a ship of silver for holding incense; another ship of silver; two candlesticks of silver; two books bound in silver; two basins of silver; a pyx of silver gilt, with a silver pin; a monstrance of silver gilt; a silver gilt chrismatory for the holy oil; a pax; two cruets; a bell; a chalice, with a crucifix enamelled on the foot and the Trinity on the paten; another chalice, with a crucifix engraved on the foot and a hand on the paten; another chalice similarly described; another similar to first chalice; and two others, with a crucifix on the foot and a vernicle, or *vera icon* (a representation of our Lord's face miraculously delineated on the napkin of St. Veronica). All these vessels were made of silver or silver gilt. Nor were these all the treasures. There were several reliquaries of silver gilt containing parts of the holy cross; a gridiron, with a bone of St. Lawrence, and other articles contained in silver boxes; and many books bound with silver clasps. The total weight of silver in this church amounted to seven hundred ounces.

Village churches were, of course, less sumptuously furnished than this important town church, which being situated under the shadow of one of the largest and most important abbeys in the kingdom, would receive many costly gifts and benefactors. But the inventories of village churches show that there was no lack of plate, rich altar hangings, copes, and vestments, which helped to swell the goodly heap of spoil. In country churches in Oxfordshire there were silver chalices and patens, pyxes, censers, candlesticks, chrismatories, crosses, sanctus bells, and other articles of plate.

It was the practice in mediaeval times to place in the coffin of a bishop a chalice and paten; hence some of the earliest specimens of church plate which we possess have been recovered from episcopal graves.[3] The Rites of Durham enjoin that on the death of a bishop he was to be buried "with a little chalice of silver, other metal, or wax" laid upon his breast within the coffin.[4] Most of these were made of pewter or lead, but some have been found of silver gilt, latten, and tin. It is perhaps scarcely necessary for our present purposes to describe these early specimens of sacred vessels, as the number of them is so limited; and few of my readers will be able to discover any mediaeval examples amongst the plate of their own church. However, I will point out a few peculiarities of the plate of each period.

The earliest chalice, used in the church of Berwick St. James, Wilts, until a few years ago, and now in the British Museum, dates from the beginning of the thirteenth century. Its bowl is broad and shallow, the stem and knot (by which the vessel was held) and foot being plain and circular. Then the makers (from 1250 to 1275) fashioned the stem and knot separately from the bowl and foot, and shaped them polygonally. During the remaining years of the century the foot was worked into ornate lobes. Then the bowl is deepened and made more conical. About 1350 the custom arose of laying the chalice on its side on the paten to drain at the ablutions at Mass; and as the round-footed chalices would have a tendency to roll, the foot was made hexagonal for stability. Henceforth all the mediaeval chalices were fashioned with a six-sided foot. By degrees the bowl became broader and shallower, and instead of the base having six points, its form is a sexfoil without any points. Several old chalices are engraved with the inscription—

Calicem salutaris accipiam et nomen Domini inbocabo.

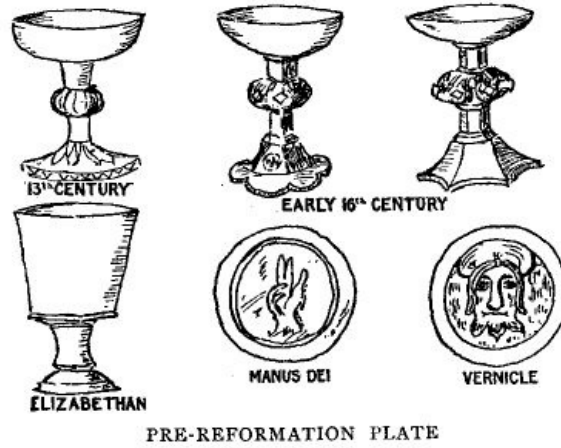


In one of the compartments of the base there was a representation of a crucifix, or the Virgin, or ihc, or xpc.

The usual devices on ancient patens were the *Manus Dei*, or hand of God, in the act of blessing; on later ones the vernicle, or face of our Lord; the Holy Trinity; the Holy Lamb; the sacred monogram. The oldest paten in existence is that found at Chichester Cathedral in a coffin, and its date is about the year 1180. In the centre is a rude engraving of the *Agnus Dei*, and it bears the inscription—

Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi miserere nobis.

✠ *Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi miserere nobis.*



The grave of Bishop Grostete at Lincoln yielded up an ancient paten (1230-53), which has the figure of a bishop vested, the right hand raised in the act of blessing, the left holding a crozier. The oldest piece of church plate still in use is a remarkable paten at Wyke Church, near Winchester, the date of which is about 1280. It bears an engraving of the *Agnus Dei* holding a banner, and around the rim is the legend—

CUNTA: CREO: VIRTUTE: REGO: PIETATE REFORMO.

Another favourite inscription was *Benedicamus patrem et filium cum spiritu sancto*; but on the paten in the church of Great Waltham, Essex, the important word *spiritu* is omitted for want of room.



We have already mentioned several of the important pieces of church plate which were in use in mediaeval times. Censers, or thuribles, were common in all our ancient parish churches, sometimes of gold or silver, more usually of brass or latten, and were in the shape of a covered vase or cup, perforated so as to allow the fumes of burning incense to escape. Most of our English censers are now in museums, but several ancient ones are still in use in the private chapels of Roman Catholic families.

Old inventories always mention a pyx, a box or vessel of gold or silver, in which the Host was reserved for the sick and infirm. It often resembles a chalice, except that instead of the bowl there is a covered receptacle for the Host. A beautiful specimen was dug up a few years ago in the churchyard of Yateley, Hants. Another vessel was the monstrance, in which the Blessed Sacrament was carried in procession, and exposed on the altar. The form varied. Sometimes monstrances were made in the shape of a tower, or a covered chalice; sometimes in the form of images carrying silver pyxes, elaborately ornamented with many jewels. Processions were always a great feature of mediaeval worship; hence the monstrance was frequently in use, especially on such occasions as the celebrations of Corpus Christi Day.

Holy oil was much used in the services, as in the Roman Catholic Church at the present time. It was blessed

by a bishop on Maundy Thursday, and used in Baptism, Confirmation, and Extreme Unction, as well as at the Consecration of Churches, Ordination, and the Coronation of Kings. The vessel for holding the oil was an important piece of church plate, and was called a chrismatory. Usually there were three distinct vessels, one for holding the oil for the sick, a second for use at confirmations, and a third for the baptismal oil. Sometimes these vessels are labelled with the words EXT. UNC., CAT., and CHR., according to the recommendation of St. Charles Borromeo, in order that each oil might be kept for its proper use, and that no confusion might arise.

The pax was a small tablet of silver or other precious metal, used for giving the kiss of peace during High Mass. The celebrant kissed the tablet, and held it aloft before all the people. It was usually adorned with a representation of the *Agnus Dei*. Of the cruets containing wine and water for the celebration we have already written. Then there was a sacring bell, often made of silver, which was rung during the service at the time of the elevation of the Host, and at the sound the congregation knelt.

We have now examined the aumbry, and noted its contents, upon which the commissioners in the reign of Edward VI. made such shameful inroads. Henceforth the plate was confined to a chalice and paten, alms-dish, and usually a large silver flagon. The form of the chalice was entirely changed. As we have noticed, the bowl of the pre-Reformation chalices became smaller and shallower, on account of the gradually introduced practice of refusing the wine to the laity. Now in the year 1562 the size of the bowl was greatly enlarged, and the "Communion cup" took the place of the "Massing chalice." Some poor parishes were obliged to content themselves with pewter vessels. St. Lawrence's Church, Reading, had a curious bridal cup, which was carried before all brides who were married in that church. The custom of drinking wine in the church at marriages is enjoined in the Hereford Missal, and the Sarum Missal ordered that the bread immersed in the wine, and consumed by the company, should first be blessed by the priest. Some of these post-Reformation vessels are extremely interesting. They record the thankofferings of pious donors on the occasion of some great event in the national annals, such as the Restoration, or of some private mercy vouchsafed to the individual. They record the connection of some family with the parish, the arms they bore; and the Hall marks tell us of their date, which is often anterior to the date of the inscription.

Hall marks were first introduced in 1300 by Edward I. in order to keep up the purity of silver, and consisted of the lion's or leopard's head crowned. This was called the king's mark. The maker's mark was introduced in 1363, and was some initial or badge chosen by the silversmith. To these were added in 1438 the year letter or assayer's mark, a different letter being chosen for each year. When the alphabet was exhausted, another with differently shaped letters was begun. In 1545 the lion passant was introduced, and since 1784 the portrait of the reigning sovereign has appeared. With the assistance of Mr. Cripps' *Old English Plate*, which contains a list of the alphabets used in marking plate, it is not very difficult to discover the date of any piece of silver. Inventories of church plate are being made in many counties and dioceses, and no more useful work can be undertaken by our local antiquarian societies.

[3] *Mediaeval Chalices and Patens*, by W.H. St. John Hope and T.M. Fallow.

[4] *Surtees Society*, vol. xv. pp. 45, 49.

CHAPTER XVI

MONUMENTAL EFFIGIES AND BRASSES

Reverence for the dead—Cists—Stone coffins—Devices—Introduction of effigies—Cross-legged effigies—Wooden effigies—Incised effigies—Brasses—Essentially English—Vast number of brasses—Palimpsests—Destruction—Costumes and fashions—Ecclesiastics—Lawyers—Soldiers—Canopies and inscriptions—Punning inscriptions—Contractions—Emblems—Heraldry.

The pious care which we all love to bestow on the mortal remains of our nearest and dearest, and the respect and honour with which all men regard the bodies of departed heroes, kings, saints, and warriors, have produced a remarkable series of sepulchral monuments, examples of which may be found everywhere. The cairns and tumuli of the primitive races which inhabited our island were the results of the same feelings of reverent regard which inspired the beautifully carved mediaeval monuments, the memorial brass, or the cross-shaped tombstone of to-day.

I have already mentioned the cromlechs and barrows and other memorials of the early inhabitants of Britain. We have seen the cists of Saxon times, the coffins formed of several stones placed together in the form of a table. The Normans introduced stone coffins for the sepulchre of their great men, many of which may be seen in our cathedrals and old conventual churches. On the lids of their coffins they frequently cut a single cross. When the style of architecture changed to that of the Early English and Decorated periods, monumental slabs were ornamented with much greater richness and elaboration, and inscriptions were added, and also some device which showed the trade, rank, or profession of the departed. Thus the chalice and paten denoted a priest; a sword showed the knight; an axe, a forester; an ink-horn, a notary; shears, a wool merchant.

At the beginning of the thirteenth century it occurred to someone to preserve the likeness of his departed friend as well as the symbols of his rank and station. So effigies were introduced upon the surface of the slabs, and were carved flat; but ere fifty years had passed away the art of the sculptor produced magnificent

monumental effigies. Knights and nobles lie clad in armour with their ladies by their sides. Bishops and abbots bless the spectators with their uplifted right hands. Judges lie in their official garb, and merchants with the emblems of their trade. At their feet lie animals, usually having some heraldic connection with the deceased, or symbolical of his work—*e.g.* a dragon is trodden down beneath the feet of a bishop, signifying the defeat of sin as the result of his ministry. The heads of effigies usually rest on cushions, which are sometimes supported by two angels.

A peculiar characteristic of the military effigies in England is that the knights are often represented with the legs crossed. Many speculations have been made with regard to the meaning of this fashion of cross-legged effigy. It is a popular superstition, in which for some years the writer shared, that such effigies represented Crusaders. We were told in our young days that when the knight had his legs crossed at the feet he had gone to the Crusades once; when at the knees, that he had been to two Crusades; and when crossed at the thighs, he had been thrice to rescue the Holy City from the hands of the infidels. All this seemed very plausible and interesting, but it is undoubtedly a myth. Many known Crusaders have their effigies with uncrossed legs, and many who never went to the Crusades have cross-legged effigies. Moreover, there are no such monuments in any foreign country which swelled the army of Crusaders. Hence we must abandon the pleasing superstition, and reconcile ourselves to the fact that no particular signification can be assigned to these cross-legged effigies, and that only fashion prompted the mediæval sculptors to adopt this attitude for their figures. This mode prevailed until about the year 1320.

At the close of the fifteenth century the art of making monumental effigies degenerated together with the skill of the architects of that period. We see the husband and wife kneeling facing each other, with a faldstool before each figure. A company of small figures below the effigies represent the children, the boys on one side, the girls on the other.

Early wooden effigies were also in use. There is one much battered by the careless hands of former generations of villagers in the rural church of my parish of Barkham. The artists often used much colour, gilding, and enamel in making these effigies; and often rich canopies were erected over them, containing fine tabernacle-work and figures of saints in niches.

Another form of effigy was commonly in use, in addition to the figures just described. These are called incised effigies, which were cut in outline upon flat slabs of stone, the lines being filled in with enamelled metals. Thorton Abbey, Lincolnshire, and Brading, in the Isle of Wight, have examples of this work. But the great expense of these enamels, and also their frailty when exposed in the pavements of churches, led to the use of brass; and hence arose the introduction of memorial brasses for which our country is famous.

We owe the application of brass to memorial tablets to the artists of Flanders, and the date of their introduction is about the middle of the thirteenth century. The execution of almost all of our English brasses is due to native artists. Foreign brasses are usually of great size, and consist of a quadrangular sheet of metal, on which is engraved the figure, usually under a canopy, the background being ornamented with rich diaper, foliage, or scrollwork, and the incisions filled with colouring. Several brasses in England conform to this style of workmanship, and are evidently the production of foreign artists. The English brasses, on the contrary, consist of separate pieces, with an irregular outline, corresponding with that of the figure. They have no brass background; and for delicacy of engraving and general appearance the English brasses are by far the best.

The names of the makers of brasses have been almost entirely lost. Two only bear marks which are supposed to be those of the engraver. No other country can boast of so large a number of these memorials as England, in spite of the hard usage they have received and their wanton destruction. About four thousand remain; and constantly we find the matrices cut in stone slabs, from which brasses have been torn; so that we may assume that quite as many have been destroyed as those which survive. The southern and eastern counties are most richly furnished with these monuments, whereas the western and northern counties have but few brasses. Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, and Kent are the most rich in this respect. The earliest brass of which we have any record is that of Simon de Beauchamp, who died before 1208. This is mentioned by Leland. The earliest brass now in existence is that of Sir John D'Aubernown at Stoke Dabernon, Surrey, which was fashioned in 1277. In the fourteenth century a very large number of brasses, remarkable for their beauty of form and execution, were made. The artistic workmanship began to decline in the fifteenth century, and in the following became utterly degenerate.

It was not an uncommon practice for subsequent generations to appropriate the memorials of their predecessors. Such brasses are called palimpsests. By the carelessness of churchwardens, by fraud, or spoliation, brasses were taken from the churches, and acquired by some maker in the town. When a new one was required, the tradesman would take from his stock, and on the reverse engrave the figure of the individual whose memory he was called upon to perpetuate. Hence when brasses are taken up from the pavements, frequently the remains of a much earlier memorial are found on the reverse side. There is an example of this curious method of procedure at St. Lawrence's Church, Reading, where on the reverse of a brass to the memory of Walter Barton was found the remains of the brass of Sir John Popham, who was buried at the Charterhouse, London. This monastery was dissolved in 1536, the monuments sold, Sir John Popham's brass among them, which was evidently soon converted into a memorial of Walter Barton.

Sometimes the original brass was appropriated as it lay, the figure being slightly altered to suit the style of costume prevalent at the later date. In other cases the engraver did not even trouble himself to alter the figure, and simply added a new inscription and shield of arms.

The wanton destruction and gross neglect of churchwardens, both before and after the Reformation, were very great. At St. Mary's Church, Reading, the accounts tell a sad tale of the disgraceful damage in the year 1547:—

“Receyvid of John Saunders for iii cwt lacking ix'li of metall that was taken upp of the graves, and of olde candlestycks at vi's the hundred xlvj's ii'd.”

Evidently a clean sweep was made of most of the memorial brasses in the church, and few escaped destruction. The tale is too familiar. Most churches have suffered in the same way.

The study of brasses throws much light upon the costumes and fashions of the day when they were engraved. We see priests, who may be recognised by the tonsure and vestments, amongst which we find the alb, amice, stole, maniple, and chasuble. The pastoral staff, ring, mitre, sandals, tunic, dalmatic, and gloves mark the graves of bishops and mitred abbots.

A close skull-cap, a long robe with narrow sleeves, a hood, tippet, and mantle buttoned on the right shoulder, compose the dress of judges and officers of the law, as depicted on brasses. The changes in the fashion and style of armour, which took place between the fourteenth and the seventeenth centuries, are all accurately represented in these memorials; and also the picturesque costumes of ladies with their curious headgear; and the no less various fashions of the male civilian's dress. A study of brasses is an admirable guide to the prevailing style of dress during the periods of their construction.

The beautiful canopies over the heads of the figures are well worthy of attention, and also the inscriptions. These usually take the form of Latin verses; and although many were written by learned abbots and scholars, the classical knowledge displayed is somewhat faulty. Here are a few examples:—

Respice quid prodest precentis temporis aebum
Omne quod est, nichil est, preter amare deum.

Sometimes the author of the inscription recorded his name, as did the learned Dame Elizabeth Hobby on a brass at Shottesbrooke, which runs—

O multum dilecte senex, pater atqz bocate,
Del quia grandaebis, bel quia probus eras.
Annos bixisti nobies decem, atqz satelles
Fidus eras regum, fidus erasqz tuis.
Iam satis functus baleas, sed tu, deus alme,
Sic mihi concedas bibere siqz mori.

Variety was added sometimes by jumbling together various languages, Norman-French, Latin, and English being often oddly combined.

People in the Middle Ages loved punning and playing upon the sound of words. Thus a brass to the memory of Thomas Hylle (or Hill) has some verses beginning "*Mons* in valle jacet." John Day, the printer, had a very extravagant and jocular epitaph beginning—

"Here lies the Daye that darkness could not blynd."
"He set a Fox to wright how Martyrs runne
By death to lyfe"—

alluding to his publication of Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*. His widow probably married a man named Stone. Hence we read—

"Als was the last encreaser of his store,
Who mourning long for being left alone,
Sett upp this tombe, her self turned to a Stone."

"Orate pro anima," or "of your charite pray for the soul of ——" were usual inscriptions.

It is somewhat difficult for the unpractised eye to read inscriptions on brasses, owing to the contractions and omissions of letters. Thus *m* and *n* are often omitted, and a line is placed over the adjoining letter to indicate the omission. Thus *a=ia* stands for *anima*, *leg=u* for *legum*. The letter *r* is also left out. *Z* stands for *que*, and there are many other contractions, such as *D=ns* for *Dominus*, *D=s* for *Deus*, *E=ps* for *Episcopus*, *g=ia* for *gratia*, *m=ia* for *miser cordia*, and many others.

The study of the emblems and devices is full of interest. Of ecclesiastical emblems we have the symbols of the Holy Trinity—God the Father represented as an aged person, holding a crucifix on which the dove, an emblem of the Holy Spirit, is alighting—representations of our Lord, angels, saints,[5] evangelists, the fylfot cross, roses, and figures of Death. Sometimes the figure on the brass holds a heart in his hand, which indicates a response on the part of the deceased to the old invitatory "*Sursum corda*."

The armorial bearings of the deceased are usually represented on brasses, and also personal or professional devices. The founders of churches hold representations in miniature of the churches which they founded. Bishops and abbots have a pastoral staff; priests, a chalice, or a book; wool merchants have woolpacks beneath their feet, and other tradesmen have similar devices denoting their special calling. Merchants' marks also frequently appear; and the mediaeval taste for punning is shown by frequent rebuses formed on the names of the deceased, *e.g.* a peacock, for one named Pecok; a fox, for a Foxley; four tuns and a cross, for Master Croston.

England may well be proud of the brass memorials of her worthy sons and daughters. It is, however, terribly sad to see the destruction which fanatical and greedy folk have wrought on these beautiful monuments. As we have already noticed, the spoliators of the Reformation period accomplished much wanton destruction, and removed tombs "for greedinesse of the brasse." Cromwell's soldiers and commissioners did a vast deal more damage, violating sepulchres and monuments, and destroying brasses everywhere. A third cause of the defacement and loss of these valuable memorials has been the gross carelessness of churchwardens and incumbents, who during any alterations or restoration of their churches have allowed them to be sold, destroyed, or appropriated by the builders. Truly we have entered upon a diminished inheritance. It behoves us to preserve with the utmost vigilance and care the memorials which fanaticism, greed, and carelessness have spared.

[5] The following are the principal emblems of the Apostles:— St. Andrew, a cross saltier; St. Bartholomew, a knife; St. James the Great, a pilgrim's staff, wallet, scallop shell; St. James the Less, a fuller's bat, or saw; St. John, a chalice and serpent; St. Jude, a boat in his hand, or a club; St. Matthew, a club, carpenter's

square, or money-box; St. Matthias, a hatchet, battle-axe, or sword; St. Paul, a sword; St. Peter, keys; St. Philip, a tau cross, or a spear; St. Simon, fishes; St. Thomas, an arrow or spear.

CHAPTER XVII

THE PARISH CHEST

Contents of the parish chest—Parish registers—Effect of Civil War—Burials in woollen—"Not worth £600"—Care bestowed upon registers—Curious entries—Astrology—Gipsies—Jester—Heart-burial—Plagues—Royal visits—Licences for eating flesh, for to be touched for king's evil—Carelessness of custody of registers—Churchwardens' account books—Their value—Curious entries—Sports and pastimes—Paschall money—Brief books—Strange entries in registers and account books—Dog-whippers—King's evil—Treating bishops and poor scholars of Oxford.

The parish chest in the vestry usually contains many documents, which are of profound interest to the student of village antiquities. It contains the old churchwardens' account books, the parish registers, lists of briefs, and often many other papers and records which bear on the history of the parish. The old register books record the names of past generations of villagers, and many curious facts about the parish and its people, which are not found in the dull dry columns of our modern books.

Parish registers were first ordered by Thomas Cromwell in the year 1538, and from that date many of our registers begin.^[6] But all vicars did not obey the injunctions of Viceregent Cromwell; they were renewed by Edward VI. in 1547 and by Queen Elizabeth in 1559, and most of our old register books begin with this date. James I. ordered that the registers should be written over again in a parchment book, the entries previously having been recorded on paper. Hence many of our books, although they begin with the year 1538, are really copies of the paper records made previous to 1603.

The disturbances of the Civil War period caused much neglect in the keeping of the registers. The incumbent was often driven away from his flock, and parish registrars were chosen by the parishioners and approved and sworn before a justice of the peace. Here is a record of this business taken from the books of this parish:—

"Whereas Robtr Williams of the prish of Barkham in the County of Berks was elected and chosen by the inhabitants of the same prish to be there prish Register, he therefore ye sd Ro: Wms was approved and sworne this sixteenth day of November 1653. Ri: Bigg, J.P."

Henceforth the children are registered as having been *born*, not *baptised*, until the Restoration brought back the clergyman to his flock again, and the entries are written in a scholarly hand, and the disorder of the previous years ceases.

In 1679 an Act was passed requiring that the dead should be buried in woollen, the purpose being to lessen "the importation of linen from beyond the seas, and the encouragement of the woollen and paper manufacturers of this kingdom." A penalty of £5 was inflicted for a violation of this Act; and as frequently people preferred to be buried in linen, a record of the fine appears—*e.g.* at Gayton, Northamptonshire, where we find in the register—

"1708. Mrs. Dorothy Bellingham was buryed April 5, in *Linnen*, and the forfeiture of the Act payd fifty shillings to ye informer and fifty shillings to ye poor of the parishe."

Pope wrote the following lines on the burial of Mrs. Oldfield, the actress, with reference to this custom:—

"Odious! in woollen! 'twould a saint provoke
(Were the last words that poor Narcissa spoke);
No, let a charming chintz and Brussels lace
Wrap my cold limbs, and shade my lifeless face."

Sometimes after the name in the register is added the words, "Not worth £600." This refers to the Act of William III. in 1694, which required that all persons baptised, married, or buried, having an estate of that value, should pay a tax of twenty shillings. The money was required for carrying on the war with France, and the Act was in force for five years. This description of the personal estate was not intended to be invidious, but was of practical utility in enforcing the Act.

The parish registers reflect with wonderful accuracy the life of the people, and are most valuable to the student of history. Clergymen took great pride in recording "the short and simple annals of the poor." A Gloucestershire rector (1630 A.D.) wrote in his book the following good advice which might with advantage be taken in many other villages:—

"If you will have this Book last, bee sure to aire it att the fier, or in the Sunne, three or four times a yeare—els it will grow dankish and rott, therefore look to it. It will not be amisse when you find it dankish to wipe over the leaves with a dry wollen cloth. This Place is very much subject to dankishness; therefore I say looke to it."

A study of the curious entries which we occasionally find conveys much remarkable information. Sometimes, in the days of astrology, in order to assist in casting the nativity, it is recorded that at the time of the child's birth "the sun was in Libra," or "in Taurus." Gipsies were evidently numerous in the sixteenth century, as we constantly find references to "the roguish AEGyptians." The domestic jester finds his record in the entry: "1580. March 21, William, fool to my Lady Jerningham." The suicide is "infamously buried." Heart-burial is often recorded, as at Wooburn, Bucks: "1700. Cadaver Edi Thomas, equitis aurati, hic inhumatum

fruit vicessimo tertio die Junii."

Records of the visitations of the plague are very numerous in all parts of England, as at Eggescliffe, Durham: "1644. In this year there died of the plague in this towne one and twenty people; they are not all buried in the churchyard, and are not in the Register." Sometimes masses of human bones are found buried in fields outside towns and villages, memorials of this devastating plague.

Parish clerks have not always had very musical voices when they shout out the "Amens." The Rector of Buxted, Sussex (1666 A.D.), records with a sigh of relief the death of his old clerk, "whose melody warbled forth as if he had been thumped on the back with a stone."

Sometimes royal visits to the neighbourhood are recorded, even a royal hunt, as when James I. hunted the hare at Fordham, Cambridgeshire. The register of Wolverton gives "a license for eating flesh on prohibited days granted to Sir Tho. Temple, on paying 13s. 4d." Storms, earthquakes, and floods are described; and records of certificates granted to persons to go before the king to be touched for the disease called the king's evil.

The Civil War is frequently mentioned, and also caused the omission of many entries. At Tarporley, Cheshire, there is a break from 1643 to 1648, for which the rector thus accounts:—

"This intermission hapned by reason of the great wars obliterating memorials, wasting fortunes, and slaughtering persons of all sorts."

Parish registers have fared ill and suffered much from the gross carelessness of their custodians. We read of the early books of Christ Church, Hants, being converted into kettle-holders by the curate's wife. Many have been sold as waste paper, pages ruthlessly cut out, and village schoolbooks covered with the leaves of old registers. The historian of Leicestershire writes of the register of Scraftoft:—

"It has not been a plaything for young pointers—it has not occupied a bacon scratch, or a bread and cheese cupboard—it has not been scribbled on within and without; but it has been treasured ever since 1538, to the honour of a succession of worthy clergymen."—*O si sic omnes!*

The churchwardens' account books are even of greater value to the student of history than the registers, priceless as the latter are for genealogical purposes. The Bishop of Oxford states that "in the old account books and minute books of the churchwardens in town and country we possess a very large but very perishable and rapidly perishing treasury of information on matters the very remembrance of which is passing away, although their practical bearing on the development of the system of local government is indisputable, and is occasionally brought conspicuously before the eye of the people by quaint survivals.... It is well that such materials for the illustration of this economic history as have real value should be preserved in print; and that the customs which they illustrate should be reclaimed by History from the misty region of folklore, whilst they can." Many of these account books date from pre-Reformation times, and disclose the changes which took place in the fabric of our churches, the removal of roods and other ecclesiastical furniture, during the Reformation. They are usually kept with great exactness, and contain an accurate record of the receipts and expenditure for each year. Some of the entries are very curious, and relate to the sports and pastimes of our ancestors, the mystery plays, and church ales, which were all under the patronage of the churchwardens. The proceeds of these entertainments were devoted to the maintenance of the church, and were included in the accounts, as well as the necessary cost of the merry diversions. Thus in the books of St. Lawrence's Church, Reading, we find such items as the following:—

	<i>s. d.</i>
"1499. Paid for a coat for Robin Hood	5 4
" for a supper to Robin Hood and his company	1 6
" for making the church clean against the day of drinking in the said church	4"
"1531. Paid for five ells of canvass for a coat for Maid Marian	1 6-1/4"

"Bells for the Morris dancers," "liveries and coats," "bread and ale," "horse-meat of the horses for the kings of Colen on May Day," are some of the items which appear in these books.

Another book tells us about the "Gatherings" at Hock-tide, when on one day the men stopped the women, and on the next the women the men, and refused to let them go until they gave money. The women always succeeded in collecting the most money.

	<i>s. d.</i>
"It'm. receyved of the men's gatherynge	7 3
" " " women's gatherynge	37 5"

Traces of this custom are still found in many country places. The practice of "hocking" at Hungerford and "lifting" in Lancashire subsist still, but the money collected is no longer devoted to any pious uses.

The item "Paschall money at Easter" frequently occurs. This was originally a collection for the Paschal taper, which burned before the high altar at Eastertide. When, in the reign of Elizabeth, the taper was no longer used, the money was devoted to buying the bread and the wine for the Easter Communion. Another item which often appears is a payment of "Smoke farthings" to the bishop of the diocese at his Visitation Court. This is another name for Peter's pence, formerly given to the Pope. In the accounts of Minchinhampton we find the entry under the year 1576: "For Pentecost money, otherwyse peter pence, sometyme payed to Antecryst of Rome xvi'd." After the Reformation the tax was collected, but given to the bishop.

There are very many other points of interest which a study of the churchwardens' books presents. In more recent times we find constant payments for the slaughter of sparrows, and many other items which scarcely come under the head of ecclesiastical charges.[7] But of course the vestry was then the council chamber of the parish, which managed all the temporal affairs of the village community. Possibly, in these days of Poor Law Unions, District and County Councils, our affairs may be managed better; but there is much to be said in favour of the older system, and Parish Councils are not much of an improvement on the old vestries.

Another book which our parish chest contains is the Brief Book. Briefs were royal letters which were sent to the clergy directing that collections be made for certain objects. These were very numerous and varied. The building of St. Paul's Cathedral after the Great Fire, a fire at Drury Lane Theatre, rebuilding of churches, the redemption of English slaves taken by pirates, the construction of harbours in Scotland, losses by hail, floods, French refugees, Reformed Episcopal churches in Great Poland and Polish Prussia, Protestants in Copenhagen, loss by fire, colleges in Philadelphia—these and many other objects were commended to the liberality of Churchmen. The sums collected were usually very small, and Pepys wrote in his *Diary*, June 30th, 1661:—

"To church, when we observe the trade of briefs is come now up to so constant a course every Sunday that we resolve to give no more to them."

The granting of briefs gave rise to much abuse, and they were finally abolished by the advice of Lord Palmerston.

The contents of the parish chest afford an unlimited mass of material for those who love to study the curious customs of our forefathers and their strange usages. Here is a record of a much-married person:—

"Mary Blewitt, ye wife of nine husbands successively, buried eight of ym, but last of all ye woman dy'd and was buried, May 7th 1681."

In the margin of the register is written, "This was her funeral text."

The register of Sparsholt, Berks, records an instance of the body of a dead man being arrested for debt. The entry is:—

"The corpse of John Matthews, of Fawler, was stopt on the churchway for debt, August 27, 1689. And having laine there fower days, was by Justices warrant buryied in the place to prevent annoyances—but about sixe weekes after it was by an order of Sessions taken up and buried in the churchyard by the wife of the deceased."

A dog-whipper was an ancient parish official, whose duty was to drive out all dogs from the church. The Wakefield accounts contain the items:—

"1616. Paid to Gorby Stork for whippinge
doggs s. d.
2 6"

"1703. For hatts shoes and hoses for sexton
and dog-whipper 18 6"

Another official was the person appointed to arouse members of the congregation from their slumbers during divine service. The parish accounts of Castleton record:—

"1702. Paid to sluggard waker s. d.
10 0"

Sometimes the cost of a journey to London was defrayed by the parish in order to enable a sufferer to be touched for the king's evil. The Ecclesfield accounts contain the following entry relating to this custom:—

"1641. Given to John Parkin wife towards her
travell to London to get cure of his Majestie
for the disease called the Evill, which her s. d.
Sonen Thorn is visited withall 6 8"

The clergymen were required to keep a register of all who were so touched, in order that they might not again go to the king and receive the bounty which accompanied the touch. Hence we read in the register of Hambleden, Bucks:—

"1685. May 17, Mary Wallington had a certificate to goe before the King
for a disease called the King's Evil."

The treating of bishops and clergy is often noticed in the accounts. Sometimes a sugar-loaf was presented, as at St. James', Bristol:—

"1629. Paid for a sugar loaf for the Lord Bishop 15's 10'd"

Sometimes items relate to their refreshment:—

"1593. Pd for a galland of beer given to the
Beishopp of Hereford iiiid"

"1617. Pd for a quart of wine and sugar bestowed
upon two preachers x'd"

The status of students at the Universities was not so high in former days as at present, and poor scholars used to beg their way to Oxford and Cambridge, and receive the assistance of the charitable. Hence we read in the Leverton accounts:—

"1562. Gave to a pore scholar at Oxford. 2s. 0d."

With this record of "a pore scholar" we must leave our study of the contents of the parish chest, which afford such valuable and accurate information about village and town life of ancient times.

[6] 812 registers begin in 1538, 40 of which contain entries prior to that date. 1,822 registers date from 1538 to 1558, and 2,448 from 1558 to 1603.

[7] In the Whitchurch books we find: "1671. Paide for a coate and wastcoate for good wife Clarke 13s., also for linen and shoes; to the Chiurgeons for looking at Ezechiell Huller's legg £3." And such-like entries.

CHAPTER XVIII

STAINED GLASS, TILES, AND MURAL PAINTINGS

Destruction of old windows—Wilfrid's glass-window makers—Glass, stained and painted—Changes in style—Work of foreign artists—Inlaid tiles—Ironwork on doors and screens—Norman hinges—Mediaeval plumbing work—Mural decoration, frescoes, and wall-painting—Cause of their destruction—St. Christopher—Consecration crosses—Norman art—Favourite subjects—Yew trees in churchyards—Lich-gates—The churchyard—Curious epitaphs.

No branch of archaeology is more interesting than the study of our stained-glass windows, which illustrate so clearly the faith, history, and customs of our ancestors. We have again to thank the fanatics of the Reformation and Cromwellian periods for the shameful destruction of so many beautiful windows. How great has been the loss to art and history caused by their reckless demolition! And in addition to this miserable violence our windows have suffered greatly from the ignorant indifference of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which allowed priceless examples of old glass to be removed and replaced by the hideous specimens of the modern glass-painters.

In Saxon times this art found a home in England, the *artifices lapidearum et vitrearum fenestrarum* having been invited to this country by Wilfrid, Bishop of York, in 709. The earliest specimen of ancient glass now in existence is in the choir-aisles of Canterbury Cathedral, where it was probably fixed when the cathedral was rebuilt after the fire in 1174.

Coloured glass is of two kinds: (1) *Stained glass*, made by mixing metallic oxides with the glass when in a state of fusion, the colours thus going through the whole mass; (2) *Painted glass*, in which colouring is laid upon the white or tinted glass, and fixed by the action of fire. As the style of architecture changed, so the art of the glass-painter changed with it. In the Early English period the colours were very rich, and the designs consisted of medallions containing subjects taken from Holy Scripture, or the lives of the saints, upon grounds of ruby and blue. Mosaic patterns form the groundwork of the medallions, and a border of scrolls and foliage incloses the whole design. The outlines of the figures are formed by the lead. In the Decorated period the medallions disappear, and in their place we find single figures of large size under canopies. Instead of the mosaic backgrounds diaper-work in whole colours is used. Lights and shades are introduced in the dresses and canopies, and foliage is painted on the panes. The artists of this period first introduced heraldic devices into the windows. A border of white glass intervenes between the window and the medallion.

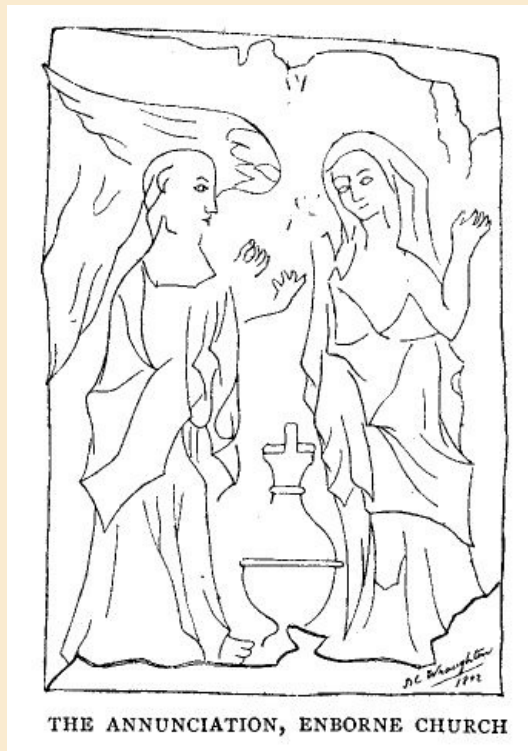
When the Perpendicular style was in vogue the art of the glass-painter degenerated, as did that of the architect. Stained glass was little used, and the artists painted with enamel colours their designs upon the glass. The figures were larger than before, and the canopies of great size and with much architectural detail, landscapes and buildings appearing in the background. During this period inscriptions began to be used. In the sixteenth century the progress of the art was in the same direction. Large figures, and groups of figures, fill the whole window, and the existence of mullions is disregarded in the execution of the design. Glass-painting flourished until the Civil War period, and then died out.

English churches benefited much by the work of foreign artists. The great Florentine Francesco di Lievi da Gambassi visited this country. There is a letter dated 1434, written "to the master glass-painter Gambassi, then in Scotland, and who made works in glass of various kinds, and was held to be the best glass-painter in the world." How much must we regret the destruction of the windows made by this excellent artist in Holyrood chapel and elsewhere by fanatical mobs! The Fairford windows are perhaps the finest and most interesting in England. The story runs that they were made in Germany for a church in Rome, and that the vessel conveying them was captured by an English ship; and as the noble church at Fairford was then being built, the glass was sent there and given to it. Shiplake Church, Oxfordshire, has some of the beautiful glass which once adorned the ruined church of St. Bertin at St. Omer, plundered during the French Revolution.

Some good work was accomplished in the seventeenth century by English artists, who practised enamel painting, notably by Jervais, who in 1717 executed from designs by Sir Joshua Reynolds the beautiful west window of New College Chapel, Oxford.

The floors of our churches were enriched with inlaid tiles. Various patterns and designs were impressed upon them when the clay was moist, a metallic glaze covered the surface, and then the tiles were placed in the furnace. Many designs are found on ancient tiles, such as heraldic devices, monograms, sacred symbols with texts, architectural designs, figures, and patterns. The age of the tiles may be determined by comparing the designs imprinted upon them with the architectural decorations belonging to particular periods. In the sixteenth century many Flemish tiles were brought to England, and superseded those of English manufacture.

In the Middle Ages no branch of art was neglected. Even the smith, who made the ironwork for the doors, locks, and screens, was an artist, and took pains to adapt his art to the style of architecture prevailing in his time. Norman doors are remarkable for their beautifully ornamented hinges. They have curling scrollwork, and a large branch in the form of the letter C issuing from the straight bar near the head. Early English doors have much elaborate scrollwork, with foliage and animals' heads. During the Decorated period the hinges are simpler, on account of the carved panelling on the doors, and they continue to become plainer in the subsequent period. The knockers on the doors often assume very grotesque forms, as at Durham Cathedral. The mediaeval plumber was also an artist, and introduced shields of arms, fleur-de-lis, and other devices, for the enrichment of spires, and pipes for carrying off water from the roof.

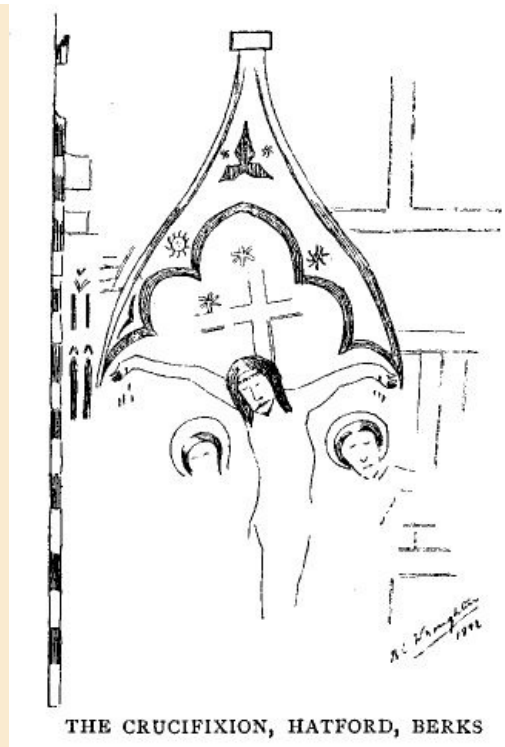


THE ANNUNCIATION, ENBORNE CHURCH

No part of the ancient decoration of our churches has suffered more than the paintings and frescoes which formerly adorned their walls. In the whole of the country there are very few of the ancient edifices which retain any traces of the numerous quaint designs and figures painted on the inner surfaces of their walls during the Middle Ages. Our ancestors used to make free use of colour for the purpose of architectural decoration, and employed several means in order to produce the effect. They sometimes used fresco, by means of which they produced pictures upon the walls covered with plaster while the plaster was wet. Sometimes they employed wall-painting, *i.e.* they covered the walls when the plaster was dry with some pictorial representation. The distinction between fresco and wall-painting is frequently forgotten. Most of the early specimens of this art are monochromes, but subsequently the painters used polychrome, which signifies surface colouring in which various colours are employed. The vaulted ceilings, the timber roof, the screens and canopies, the monuments with their effigies, as well as the surface of the walls, were often coloured with diaper-work. Colour and gilding were marked features in all mediaeval buildings, and even richly carved fonts and sculptural monuments were embellished with this method of decoration. The appearance of our churches in those times must have been very different from what it is now. Then a blaze of colour met the eye on entering the sacred building, the events of sacred history were brought to mind by the representations upon the walls, and many an unlearned rustic acquired some knowledge of biblical history from the contemplation of the rude figures with which his village church was adorned.

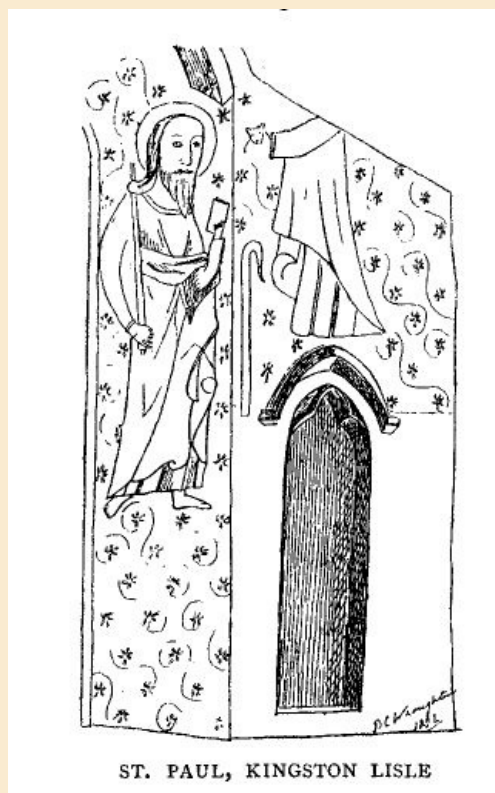
“Even the very walls of this dread place,
And the tall windows, with their breathing lights,
Speak to the adoring heart.”

The practice of painting the walls of our churches dates as far back as Saxon times; but very few fragments of pre-Norman art remain. Of Norman work we have numerous examples, and sometimes it is found that the early specimens of the art have been painted over in later Gothic times, and ruder and larger figures have eclipsed the more careful work of previous ages. An example of this was discovered in the church of St. Lawrence, Reading, where no less than five distinct series of paintings were discovered, painted one over another.



THE CRUCIFIXION, HATFORD, BERKS

Several circumstances have combined to obliterate these specimens of the art of former days. It was not the intention of the Reformers themselves to destroy them. They distinguished carefully between "an embossed and gilt image, and a process of a story painted with the gestures and action of many persons; and commonly the sum of the story written withal hath another use in it than one dumb idol or image standing by itself." It was left to the Puritans, impelled by fanaticism and ignorance, to make "a slanderous desolation of the places of prayer," and it is to them we owe much of the destruction of the old mural paintings. At the end of the eighteenth century there was a prejudice against these works of art; for in 1773 we find the Bishop of London refusing to allow Reynolds, West, and Barry to clothe the naked walls of St. Paul's Cathedral with pictures painted by themselves. Coated over by layers of plaster, or whitewashed until all traces were obliterated, these relics of ancient art have remained for generations, and it is only when an old church is being restored, and the coats of plaster and whitewash removed, that their presence is revealed; and then too often the colours fade away on exposure to the air.



ST. PAUL, KINGSTON LISLE

One of the favourite subjects of mural decoration was a figure of St. Christopher with the Infant Saviour on

his shoulder.[8] He usually has a staff, and strange-looking fish swim about his feet as he crosses the river; on one side there is a hermitage, with the figure of a hermit holding a lantern to guide the saint, and on the other a windmill. This figure usually was painted on the wall opposite the principal entrance, as it was deemed lucky to see St. Christopher on first entering a church. Moreover the sight of the saint was a preservative against violent death during the day, and also a preventive against drowsiness during the service, as the following verses show:—

“Christophori sancti speciem quicumque tuetur Illo namque die nullo languore tenetur.”

Churchwardens' accounts record the painting of these figures—

"1503-4. It. payd to mylys paynter for payntyng
of Seynt X'fer viii's iiii'd"

"1521. It. payd to John Payne for payntyng
of Sent Leonard left by the wyffs
onpaynted xx'd"

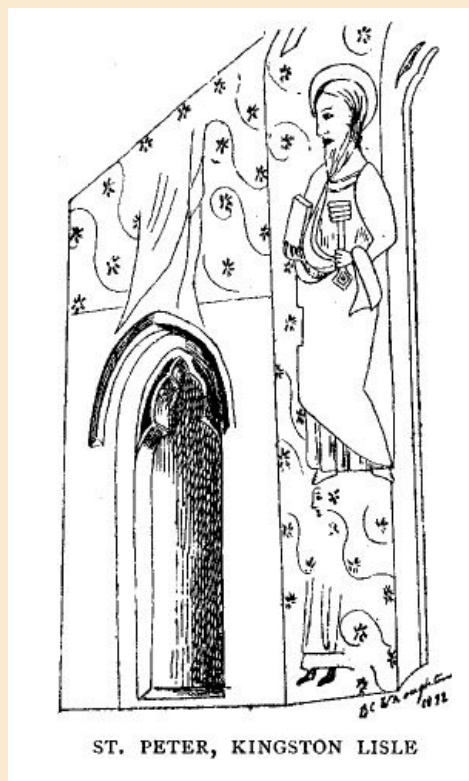
A curious order was issued by Edward III. for arresting painters to work in St. Stephen's Chapel at Westminster, to which artists of every description were liable to surrender as often as the king required their services.



In Saxon times Consecration crosses were painted on the interior walls, twelve in number, on the spots where the bishop marked the cross with holy oil; and sometimes twelve crosses were carved or painted on the exterior walls. During Norman times the art made progress, and there are many specimens of mural decoration of this period, which correspond with the mouldings generally used then; but not many scenes and figures were depicted. Representations of bishops, *Agnus Dei*, scenes from the life of our Lord, the apostles, the Last Judgment, St. George, scenes from the life of St. Nicholas, St. John writing the Apocalypse, were favourite subjects. At Copford the painter evidently tried to make the chancel figuratively to represent the glories of heaven.

During the reign of Henry III. great progress was made, and travelling monks roamed the country leaving behind them in many a village church traces of their skill in artistic decoration. The murder of St. Thomas of Canterbury now became a favourite subject, also the lives of St. Catherine of Alexandria, St. Nicholas, St. Margaret, St. Edmund, the Seven Acts of Mercy, and the wheel of fortune. In the fourteenth century the Doom was the usual decoration of the space over the chancel arch, and scenes from the New Testament, legends of saints, "moralities," etc., were depicted on the walls. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the artists paid little respect to the work of their predecessors, and frequently painted new designs over the earlier mural decorations. They also adorned very beautifully the roofs and screens. The arrival of the Flemings in the eastern counties is shown by the portraying of subjects and saints not usually worshipped in England. The figures of St. George become more numerous and also of St. Christopher, who were regarded with much superstitious reverence by all classes.

The vanity of human greatness is taught by the morality, "Les Trois Rois Morts et les Trois Rois Vifs," representing three kings going gaily hunting meeting three skeletons, the remains of kings once as powerful as they. "The Dance of Death," so popular abroad, also appears in some English churches. The wholesale destruction of so many specimens of mediaeval art cannot be too strongly condemned and deplored. If any of my readers should be fortunate enough to discover any traces of colouring hidden away beneath the coats of whitewash on the walls of their church, I would venture to advise them to very carefully remove the covering, and then to consult Mr. Keyser's book on *Mural Decorations*, where they will find an account of the best methods for preserving these valuable specimens of early art.



ST. PETER, KINGSTON LISLE

In the churchyard stands the old weather-beaten yew tree, looking like a sentinel keeping watch over the graves of our forefathers. Some of these trees are remarkable for their age; the yews at Fountains Abbey, in Yorkshire, were probably in a flourishing condition so long ago as the year 1132, and some are older still. Why they were planted in churchyards it is difficult to ascertain. It has been conjectured that they were planted in so secure a spot in order that the men might provide themselves with bows, as all the bows used by the English, with which they did such execution against their enemies, were made of yew. Others contend that its green boughs were used instead of palms on Palm Sunday, or for funerals. But I think that they were regarded with veneration by our forefathers when they were still heathen, and that some religious symbolism—such as of immortality—attached to them; and that when the Christian teachers came they made use of this religious sentiment of the people, planted the Christian cross by the side of the yew, and under its shade preached lessons of true immortality, of which the heathen ideals were only corrupt legends and vain dreams.

At the entrance of the churchyard there is often a lich-gate, *i.e.* a corpse-gate, where the body may rest while the funeral procession is formed. *Lych* is the Saxon word for a dead body, from which Lich-field, “the field of dead bodies,” is derived. Bray, in Berkshire, famous for its time-serving vicar, is also famous for its lich-gate, which has two rooms over it.

“God’s acre” is full of holy associations, where sleep “the rude forefathers of the hamlet.” There stands the village cross where the preachers stood in Saxon times and converted the people to Christianity, and there the old sundial on a graceful stone pedestal. Sometimes amid the memorials of the dead stood the parish stocks. Here in olden days fairs were held, and often markets every Sunday and holiday, and minstrels and jugglers thronged; and stringent laws were passed to prevent “improper and prohibited sports within the churchyard, as, for example, wrestling, football, handball under penalty of twopence forfeit.” Here church ales were kept with much festivity, dancing, and merry-making; and here sometimes doles were distributed on the tombstones of parochial benefactors, and even bread and cheese scrambled for, according to the curious bequests of eccentric donors.

And then there are the quaint epitaphs on the gravestones, of which many have made collections. Here is one to the memory of the driver of a coach that ran from Aylesbury to London:—

“Parker, farewell! thy journey now is ended,
 Death has the whip-hand, and with dust is blended;
 Thy way-bill is examined, and I trust
 Thy last account may prove exact and just,
 When He who drives the chariot of the day,
 Where life is light, whose Word’s the living way,
 Where travellers, like yourself, of every age,
 And every clime, have taken their last stage,
 The God of mercy and the God of love,
 Show you the road to Paradise above.”

Here is another to the memory of a once famous Yorkshire actor, buried at Beverley:—

“In memory of Samuel Butler, a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage, and then is heard no more. Obt. June 15th, 1812, Aet. 62.”

Here is a strange one from Awliscombe, Devon:—

“Here lie the remains of James Pady, brickmaker, late of this parish, in hopes that his clay will be remoulded in a workmanlike manner, far superior to his former perishable materials.

“Keep death and judgment always in your eye,
Or else the devil off with you will fly,
And in his kiln with brimstone ever fry;
If you neglect the narrow road to seek,
Christ will reject you like a half-burnt brick.”

Those interested in the brave mortals who go down to the sea in ships will like to read the following verses which appear on the tomb of William Harrison, mariner, buried in Hessle Road Cemetery, Hull:—

“Long time I ploughed the ocean wide,
A life of toil I spent;
But now in harbour safe arrived
From care and discontent.
“My anchor’s cast, my sails are furled,
And now I am at rest;
Of all the ports throughout the world,
Sailors, this is the best.”

The following original epitaph in a neighbouring churchyard compares very favourably with the flattering and fulsome inscriptions prevalent at the beginning of the nineteenth century, written in what has been called “lapidary style ”:—

“He was——
But words are wanting to say what;
Say what is just and kind,
And he was that.”

[8] At Sedgeford the Infant is portrayed with three heads, illustrating the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity.

CHAPTER XIX

CHURCH BELLS

Bell customs and village life—Antiquity of bells—Christening of bells—“Ancients”—Inscriptions—Dedications—Inscriptions of praise—Leonine verses—Curious inscriptions—Historical events recorded—Uses of bells—Passing bell—Pancake bell—Curfew—Guiding bells—Names of benefactors—Great bells—Sanctus bell—Sacring bell—Frequent ringing of bell—Change-ringing—Care of bells.

Bells play an important part in village life, and there are few more interesting branches of the study of village antiquities than bell-lore. Ringing customs throw much light upon the manners and doings of our ancestors. Bells rang to commemorate the great events in history, news of which was conveyed to the quiet village; they sounded forth the joys and sorrows of the parishioners in their generations, pealed merrily at their weddings, and mourned for them at their funerals. As the bell “Roland” of Ghent seemed endowed with a human voice, and was silenced for ever by Charles V. lest it should again rouse the citizens to arms, so these bells in our village steeples seem to speak with living tongues and tell the story of our village life.

Bells have great antiquity. Odoceus, Bishop of Llandaff, in 550 A.D., is said to have taken the bells away from his cathedral during a time of excommunication. Bede mentions them in the seventh century. In 680 Benedict, Abbot of Wearmouth, imported some from Italy, and in the tenth century St. Dunstan hung many. Ireland probably had bells in the time of St. Patrick, who died in 493, and a bell that bears his name is preserved at Belfast. The earliest Saxon bells were not cast, but were made of plates of iron riveted together, and were probably used as hand-bells.

Bells were usually christened. Those of Crowland Abbey were named Pega, Bega, Tatwin, Turketyl, Betelin, Bartholomew, and Guthlac. A fire in 1091 destroyed this peal. Those of the priory of Little Dunmow, Essex, according to an old chartulary, were new cast and baptised in 1501.

“Prima in honore Sancti Michaelis Archangeli.”

“Secunda in honore Sancti Johannis Evangelisti.”

“Tertia in honore S. Johannis Baptisti.”

“Quarta in honore Assumptionis beatae Mariae.”

“Quinta in honore Sanctae Trinitatis et omnium sanctorum.”

The tenor bell at Welford, Berks, has the inscription, “Missi de celis habeo nomen Gabrielis 1596.”

Bells dating from before the year 1600 are called “ancients,” and it is a very pleasant discovery to find one of these in our church tower; and still more so if it be a pre-Reformation bell. Unfortunately a large number of “ancients” have been recast, owing chiefly to the craze for change-ringing which flourished in England between 1750 and 1830. The oldest bell in this country is said to be St. Chad’s, Cloughton, which bears the date 1296. Pre-Reformation bells are very seldom dated.

Mediaeval bells have many curious inscriptions on them, which record the name of the donor, the bell-founder, together with heraldic and other devices. The inscriptions are often written in the first person, the bell being supposed to utter the sentiment, as it sends forth its sound. A study of the inscriptions on bells is full of interest. The earliest are simple dedications of the bell to our Lord, or to some saint. The principal

inscriptions of this class are: "Jesus," "Jesus Nazarenus Rex Judeorum," "Sit nomen IHC benedictum," "Sum Rosa Pulsata Mundi Maria Vocata," "Sum Virgo Sancta Maria." The invocation, "Ora pro nobis," very frequently is inscribed on bells, followed by the name of some saint, and almost every saint in the Calendar is duly honoured in some bell inscription.

Bells were always rung on joyful occasions; hence inscriptions expressing thankfulness and praise were appropriate. Consequently we find such words as "Laus et Gloria Deo," "Laus Deo Gratia Benefactoribus," "Alleluja," "Praise God," and other similar inscriptions of praise.

Some old bells have Latin hexameter verses inscribed on them, composed by monks, which are called Leonine verses, from one Leoninus, a monk of Marseilles, who lived in the early part of the twelfth century. A few examples of these will suffice:—

"Est michi collatum ihc illud nomen amaetum."
"Protege Virgo pia quos convoco Sancta Maria."
"Voce mea viva depello cuncta nocina."

This refers to the belief that the ringing of bells drives away all demons and tempests, storms and thunders, and all other hurtful things. One bell proudly asserts:—

"Me melior vere non est campana sub ere."

Inscriptions in English are often quaint and curious. Here is one from Somerset:—

"My treble voice
Makes hearts rejoice."

Another self-complacent bell asserts—

"If you have a judicious ear,
You'll own my voice is sweet and clear."

Loyal inscriptions are often found, such as—

"For Church and King
We always ring."

"I was made in hope to ring
At the crownacion of our King."

"Ye people all that hear me ring
Be faithful to your God and King."

A bell that has been recast sometimes praises the merits of its new founder at the expense of its first maker, as at Badgworth, Gloucester:—

"Badgworth ringers they are mad,
Because Rigbe made me bad;
But Abel Rudhall you may see
Hath made me better than Rigbe."

Sometimes all the bells which compose a peal tell their various uses. Thus at Bakewell we find some verses on each bell:—

1. "When I begin our merry Din
This Band I lead from discord free;
And for the fame of human name,
May every Leader copy Me."
2. "Mankind, like us, too oft are found
Possess'd of nought but empty sound."
3. "When of departed Hours we toll the knell,
Instruction take and spend the future well."
4. "When men in Hymen's Bands unite,
Our merry peals produce delight;
But when Death goes his dreary Rounds,
We send forth sad and solemn sounds."
5. "Thro' grandsires and Tripples with pleasure men range,
Till Death calls the Bob and brings on the Last Change."
6. "When Vict'ry crowns the Public Weal
With Glee we give the merry Peal."
7. "Would men like us join and agree
They'd live in tuneful Harmony."
8. "Possess'd of deep sonorous Tone
This Belfry King sits on his throne;
And when the merry Bells go round,
Adds to and mellows ev'ry Sound;
So in a just and well pois'd State,
Where all Degrees possess due Weight,
One greater Pow'r one greater Tone
Is ceded to improve their own."

A Rutland bell has the following beautiful inscription:—

“Non clamor sed amor cantat in aure Dei.”
 (“Not noise but love sings in the ear of God.”)

Historical events are sometimes recorded, as at Ashover, Derbyshire, where a recasted bell states:—

“This old bell rung the downfall of Buonaparte and broke, April 1814.”

The uses of bells are often shown by their inscriptions. People were aroused by their sound each morning in many places, as at St. Ives, where a bell is inscribed—

“Arise and go about your business.”

The villagers were summoned to extinguish fires by ringing of bells. Thus Sherborne, Dorset, has a bell inscribed—

“Lord, quench this furious flame:
Arise, run, help put out the same.”

Bell-ringing customs are very numerous.^[9] The passing bell has many variants. In some places three times three strokes are sounded for a man, three times two for a woman, and three times one for a child. Out of the first-named of these practices probably arose the phrase, “Nine tailors make a man,” which is usually explained as more properly signifying “nine tellers make a man.” Then we have a pancake bell, which formerly summoned people to confession, and not to eat pancakes; a gleaning bell, an eight hours’ bell rung at 4 a.m., noon, and 8 p.m. The curfew bell survives in many places, which, as everyone knows, was in use long before William the Conqueror issued his edict. Peals are rung on “Oak Apple Day,” and on Guy Fawkes’ Day, “loud enough to call up poor Guy.” Church bells played a useful part in guiding the people homewards on dark winter evenings in the days when lands were uninclosed and forests and wild moors abounded, and charitable folk, like Richard Palmer, of Wokingham, left bequests to pay the sexton for his labour in ringing at suitable times when the sound of the bells might be of service to belated travellers. Names of benefactors often find a permanent memorial on the bells which they gave; as at Binstead, Hants, where a bell has the inscription—

“Doctor Nicholas gave five pound
To help cast this peal tuneable and sound.”

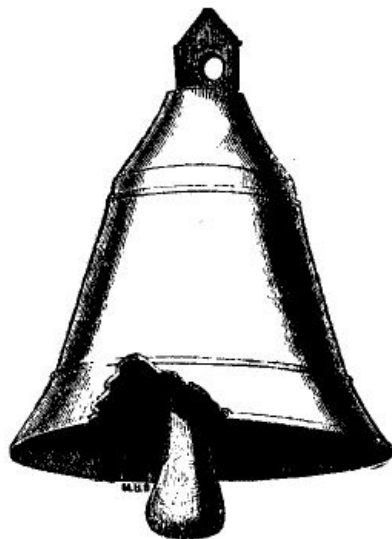
And another bell in the same tower records the name of our famous Berkshire bell-founders, the Knight family. The inscription runs:—

“Samuel Knight made this ring
In Binstead steeple for to ding.”

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ANCIENT BELL FOUND AT WARWICK

of our famous Berkshire bell-founders, the Knight family. The inscription runs:—

“Samuel Knight made this ring
In Binstead steeple for to ding.”

The story of our great bells, of “Great Toms,” “Big Bens,” “Great Peters,” need not be told here.

The story of our great bells, of “Great Toms,” “Big Bens,” “Great Peters,” need not be told here. They wake the echoes of our great cities, and are not heard among the hills and dales of rural England. Outside the church at the apex of the gable over the chancel arch there is sometimes a small bell-cote, wherein the sanctus or saunce bell once hung. This was rung during the service of High Mass when the *Ter Sanctus* was sung, in order that those who were engaged at their work might know when the canon of the Mass was about to begin, in order that they might kneel at the sound and pray to God. At Bosham Harbour the fishermen used to so join in the service of the sanctuary, and it is said that when George Herbert’s sanctus bell sounded for prayers, the ploughmen stopped from their work for a few moments and prayed. The sanctus bell differed from the sacring bell, which was a hand-bell rung inside the church at the elevation of the Host.

Old churchwardens’ accounts record the very frequent ringing of bells. In addition to the Great Festivals, Corpus Christi Day, Church feasts and ales, the occasions of royal visits, of episcopal visitations, victories, and many other great events, were always celebrated by the ringing of the church bells. In fact by the fondness of English folk for sounding their bells this country earned the title in the Middle Ages of “the ringing island.” Peal-ringing was indeed peculiar to England. It was not until the seventeenth century that change-ringing became general, and our old bells suffered much at the hands of the followers of the new fashion.

In recent years the study of our church bells has made great progress, and many volumes have been written upon the bells of various counties. Too long have our bells been left to the bats and birds, and the belfry is often the only portion of a church which is left uncared for. We are learning better now, and the bells which have sounded forth the joys and sorrows of our villagers for so many generations are receiving the attention they deserve.

[9] A collection of these will be found in my book on *Old English Customs Extant at the Present Time*.

CHAPTER XX

THE MEDIAEVAL VILLAGE

Local government—Changes in the condition of villeins and labourers—Famine and pestilence—Effects of the Great Plague—Spirit of independence—Picture of village life—Church house—Church ales—Pilgrimages—Markets—Old English fair—Wars—Hastings—Hereward the Wake—Great Civil War—Restoration—Beacons.

Let us try to imagine the ordinary life and appearance of a mediaeval English village in the "piping times of peace." Of course, no two villages are quite alike; each has many distinguishing features; but a strong family likeness is observable. In the Middle Ages a village was much more independent than it is now. Then there were no Acts of Parliament to control its affairs, and it regulated its own conduct much to its own satisfaction, without any outside interference. Of course, sometimes things were managed badly; but the village knew it had only itself to blame, and therefore could not grumble at the Government, or the fickleness of members of Parliament, or the unreasonable conduct of Local Government Boards. Was not the lord of the manor quite capable of trying all criminals? and did not the rector and the vestry settle everything to the satisfaction of everyone, without any "foreigners" asking questions, or interfering?

The position of the villeins and *cottiers* has changed considerably since the days of William the Norman. The former were now free tenants, who paid rent for their land to the lord of the manor, and were not bound to work for him, while the latter worked for wages like our modern agricultural labourer. There was thus in the twelfth century a gradual approximation to modern conditions on many estates; the home farm was worked by hired labourers who received wages; while the villeins had bought themselves off from the obligation of doing customary work by paying a quit-rent.

We should like to know something of the way in which our ancestors farmed their land, and fortunately several bailiffs have left us their account books very carefully kept, and one Walter de Henley in 1250 wrote a book on the *Art of Husbandry*, which gives us much information. The rent of land was about sixpence per acre. They ploughed three times a year, in autumn, April, and at midsummer, and used oxen for their plough-teams. Women helped their husbands in ploughing and harvest work. An old writer describes the farmer's wife "walking by him with a long goad, in a cutted cote cutted full high." Pigs and poultry were numerous on a mediaeval farm, but sheep were the source of the farmer's wealth. Large flocks of divers breeds roamed the hills and vales of rural England, and their rich fleeces were sent to Antwerp, Bruges, and Ghent for the manufacture of cloth by the Flemish weavers. After the Black Death, a great plague which ravaged the country in 1348, the labourers were fewer in number, and their wages higher; hence the farmers paid increased attention to their sheep, which yielded rich profits, and required few labourers to look after them.

Prior to the advent of this grim visitor, the Great Plague, the prosperity of our villages had greatly increased. The people were better fed and better clothed than any of their neighbours on the Continent. Moreover they were free men, and enjoyed their freedom. There was much happiness in our English villages in those days, and "Merry England" was not a misnomer. There were, however, two causes of suffering which for a time produced untold wretchedness—two unwelcome visitors who came very frequently and were much dreaded—famine and pestilence. There is necessarily a sameness in the records of these pestilences.

The chief famine years were 1315 and 1316, but there is hardly any period of five years from the death of Edward I. to the coming of Henry of Richmond without these ghastly records of the sufferings of the people. Disease not only arrested the growth of the population, but reduced it considerably. It was mostly of a typhoid nature. The undrained soil, the shallow stagnant waters which lay upon the surface of the ground, the narrow and unhealthy homes, the filthy and neglected streets of the towns, the excessive use of salted provisions and absence of vegetables, predisposed the people to typhoid diseases, and left them little chance of recovery when stricken down with pestilence.

The Great Plague arrived in England in 1348 from the shores of Italy, whither it had been wafted from the East. It was probably carried to the port of Bristol by travelling merchants, whence it spread with alarming rapidity over the whole land. Whole villages were depopulated, and about one-third of the people of England perished. It is difficult for us to imagine the sorrow and universal suffering which the plague caused. Its effects were, however, beneficial to the villagers who survived. Naturally labourers became very scarce and were much sought after. Wages rose enormously. The tenants and rustics discovered that they were people of importance. Manor lords found it too expensive to farm their lands, and were eager to hand them over to their tenants, many of whom became much richer and more independent than formerly. The spirit of independence pervaded all classes. There came to our village many wandering friars, followers of Wiclif, who preached discontent to the labouring rustics, told them that the gentry had no right to lord it over them, that they were as good as their masters, who ought not to live in fine houses in luxury supported by their toil and the sweat of their brows. And when oppressive taxes were levied, the rustics revolted, and gained much for which they strove. The golden age of the English labourer set in, when food was cheap, wages high, and labour abundant. A fat pig could be bought for fourpence, and three pounds of beef for a penny; and in spite of occasional visits of the plague, the villager's lot was by no means unhappy.

Here is a picture of village life in those days. The village church stood in the centre of the hamlet, with a carefully made fence around it, in order that no swine or foul beast might desecrate the graves. Surrounded by the churchyard, with its yew tree and lich-gate, the church was very similar to the old building wherein the villagers still worship. All the houses had thatched roofs, and chief among the other dwellings stood the lord's hall. Near the church was a curious building called the church house, which has almost entirely passed away, except in the records of old churchwardens' accounts. It was a large building, in which could be stored wool, lime, timber, sand, etc., and was often let to pedlars, or wandering merchants, to deposit their goods during the fair.

In this building there was a long low room with a large fireplace and hearth, around which a dozen or more could sit in comfort, except when the wind blew the smoke down the wide, open chimney; but our ancestors were accustomed to smoky chimneys, and did not mind them. In the centre of the room was a large oak table.

This was the scene of some very festive gatherings. Aubrey thus describes the church house:—

“In every parish was a church house, to which belonged spits, crocks, and other utensils for dressing provisions. Here the housekeepers met. The young people were there too, and had dancing, bowling, shooting at butts, etc., the ancients [*i.e.* old folks] sitting gravely by, and looking on.”

The churchwardens bought, and received presents of, a large quantity of malt, which they brewed into beer and sold to the company. Hence these feasts were called “church ales,” and were held on the feast of the dedication of the church, the proceeds being devoted to the maintenance of the poor. Sometimes they were held at Whitsuntide also, sometimes four times a year, and sometimes as often as money was wanted or a feast desired. An arbour of boughs was erected in the churchyard on these occasions called Robin Hood’s Bower, where the maidens collected money for the “ales,” and “all went merry as a marriage bell”—rather too merry sometimes, for the ale was strong and the villagers liked it, and the ballad-singer was so merry, and the company so hearty—and was it not all for a good cause, the support of the poor? The character of these festivals deteriorated so much, until at last “church ales” were prohibited altogether, on account of the excess to which they gave rise.

[ENLARGE](#)



AN ANCIENT VILLAGE

There was a large amount of gaiety in the old villages in those days. Men were not in so great a hurry to grow rich as they are now. The Church authorised many holidays in the course of the year; and what with May Day festivities, Plough Mondays, Hocktide and Shrovetide sports, harvest suppers, fairs, and “ales,” the villagers had plenty of amusement, and their lives certainly could not be described as dull. Sometimes the village would be enlivened by the presence of a company of pilgrims on their way to the shrine of St. Thomas at Canterbury, or to Holywell, blessed by St. Winifred, in order to be cured of some disease. Although these pilgrims were deemed to be engaged on a religious duty, they certainly were not generally very serious or sad. Chaucer describes a very joyous pilgrimage in his *Canterbury Tales*, how the company met at the Tabard Inn, in Southwark, including the knight and the abbot, the prioress and the shipman, the squire and the merchant, the ploughman and sompnour (or summoner, “of whose visage children were sore afeard”), and rode forth gaily in the spring sunshine—

“The holy blissful martyr for to seek,
That them hath holpen when that they were sick.”

Pilgrim crosses are numerous all over England, where the pilgrims halted for their devotions by the way, and sometimes we find churches planted on the roadside far from human habitations, with no parishioners near them; and some people wonder why they were so built. These were pilgrim churches, built for the convenience of the travellers as they wended their way to Canterbury. The villages through which they passed must have been much enlivened by the presence of these not very austere companies.

The ordinary lives of the farmers were diversified by the visits to the weekly markets held in the neighbouring town, where they took their fat capons, eggs, butter, and cheese. Here is a curious relic of olden times, an ancient market proclamation, which breathes the spirit of former days, and which was read a few years ago at Broughton-in-Furness, by the steward of the lord of the manor, from the steps of the old market cross. These are the words:—

“O yes, O yes, O yes! [10] The lord of the manor of Broughton and of this fair and market strictly chargeth and commandeth on Her Majesty’s behalf, that all manners of persons repairing to this fair and market do keep Her Majesty’s peace, upon pain of five pounds to be forfeited to Her Majesty, and their bodies to be imprisoned during the lord’s pleasure. Also that no manner of person within this fair and market do bear any bill, battle-axe, or other prohibited weapons, but such as be appointed by the lord’s officers to keep this fair or market, upon pain of forfeiture of all such weapons and further imprisonment. Also, that no manner of person do pick any quarrel, matter, or cause for any old grudge or malice to make any perturbation or trouble, upon pain of five pounds, to be forfeited to the lord, and their bodies to be imprisoned. Also, that none buy or sell in corners, back sides, or hidden places, but in open fair or market, upon pain of forfeiture of

all such goods and merchandise so bought and sold, and their bodies to imprisonment. Also, that no manner of persons shall sell any goods with unlawful mete or measures, yards or weights, but such as be lawful and keep the true assize, upon pain of forfeiture of all such goods and further imprisonment. Lastly, if any manner of persons do here find themselves grieved, or have any injuries or wrong committed or done against them, let them repair to the lord or his officers, and there they shall be heard according to right, equity, and justice. God save the Queen and the lord of the manor!"

And besides the weekly markets there were the great annual fairs, which lasted many days, and were frequented by all classes of the population. These fairs were absolutely necessary for the trade of the country in the days when few people travelled far from their own homesteads, and even the towns with their small number of inhabitants did not afford a sufficient market for the farmer's and trader's stock.

The greatest of all English fairs was held in the little village of Stourbridge, near Cambridge, now almost absorbed by the University town. Hither flocked merchants and traders from all parts of Europe. Flemish merchants brought their fine linen and cloths from the great commercial cities of Belgium. Genoese and Venetian traders came with their stores of Eastern goods. Spaniards and Frenchmen brought their wines, and the merchants of the Hanse towns of Germany sold furs and flax, ornaments and spices, while in return for all these treasures our English farmers brought the rich fleeces of their sheep, their corn, horses, and cattle. The booths were planted in a cornfield, and the circuit of the fair, which was like a well-governed city, was over three miles. The shops were built in streets or rows, some named after the various nations that congregated there, and others after the kind of goods offered for sale. There were Garlick Row, Bookseller's Row, Cook Row; there were a cheese fair, a hop fair, a wool fair, and every trade was represented, together with taverns, eating-houses, and in later years playhouses of various descriptions. In the eighteenth century one hundred thousand pounds' worth of woollen manufactures was sold in a week in one row alone. A thousand pack-horses were used to convey the goods of the Lancashire merchants to this famous fair. Now railways have supplanted the pack-horses; fairs have had their day; the trade of the country can now be carried on without them; and their relics with their shows and shooting-galleries and steam roundabouts have become a nuisance.

The peaceful life of the villagers was sometimes disturbed by the sounds and sights of conflict. The exciting tales of war are connected with the history of many an English village, and many "little Wilhelmines" and labouring "grandsires" have discovered "something large and round," traces of these ancient conflicts and "famous victories."

"For often when they go to plough
The ploughshare turns them out,
'And many thousand men,' quoth he,
'Were slain in that great victory.'"

Many a lance and sword, and gilt spur, beautifully enamelled, which once decked the heel of a noble knight, have been found in our fields, and remind us of those battles which were fought so long ago.

"The knights are dust,
Their good swords rust,
Their souls are with the saints, we trust."

Sometimes the spectres of armed knights and warriors are supposed to haunt these scenes of ancient slaughter, and popular superstition has handed down the memory of the battles which were fought so long ago. It tells us of the mythical records of the fights of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table by the banks of the River Douglas, which ran with blood for three days, so terrible was the slaughter. It tells us how stubbornly the Britons resisted the Roman armies, so that on one occasion not one Briton was left to tell the tale of their defeat.

When we visit the site of some battle with the history book in our hand, it is possible to imagine the lonely hillside peopled again with the dense ranks of English archers, or hear the clanging of the armour as the men-at-arms charged for "St. George and merry England"; and the air will be full again of the battle-cries, of the groans of the wounded and the shouts of the victors.

Visit the scene of the battle of Hastings. Here on the high ground, flanked by a wood, stood the brave English, under the leadership of Harold, with his banner, woven with gold and jewels, shining conspicuously in the morning sunlight. Here they stood in the form of a wedge; there they turned the Normans, and put them to flight. Then the Normans rallied, pretended to fly, decoyed the brave English from their position, and by stratagem succeeded in defeating them at last. Or go to the Madingley Windmill, near Cambridge, and see the fifteen miles of rich drained cornfields which intervene between "Ely's stately fane" and the spot on which you are standing. Here read Kingsley's well-known story of *Hereward; or, The Last of the English*, and instead of the rich cornfields you will see that black abyss of mud and bottomless slime into which sank the flower of Norman chivalry as they tried to cross that treacherous bog to conquer the gallant Hereward and to plunder the monastery of Ely, the last stronghold of the English. On they came, thousands upon thousands, rushing along the floating bridge which they had formed, until at last it gave way beneath the weight, and the black slime swallowed up the miserable wretches.

Or let us take our stand on the Round Tower, near the summit of the Edge Hill, and see the site of the first battle between the troops of Charles I. and the soldiers of the Parliament. The whole of that green lane was lined with troops. In a cottage which stood at our feet the king breakfasted before the battle; from that mound he surveyed the forces of the enemy. Just as the bells in yonder church had ceased to ring for service on Sunday afternoon the cannon began to roar, and the fight commenced. There Prince Rupert charged with headlong fury, carrying all before him. And so we can follow the fortunes of the fight until the brave Cavaliers retired to rest—

"And thousands had sunk on the ground overpowered
The weary to sleep, and the wounded to die."

The memory of many a fight is recorded in the names of the fields, places, and hills on which the battle raged. Lichfield (*i.e.* the field of the dead), Battlefield, Battle, Battleflats, Standard Hill, Slaughterford, and many others, all tell the tale of war and slaughter.

In some parts of the country, especially in Oxfordshire, there are fine avenues of trees, which appear to lead to a large house; but when you have walked to the end of the trees there is nothing to be seen. These avenues tell the tale of war, of the destruction of the manor-house of some old Royalist who fought for his king when the "Roundheads" and Cromwell's "Ironsides" were more than a match for the gallant Cavaliers. His house was destroyed, he and his sons killed, unless they were fortunate enough to escape to France and wait the merry time "when the king should enjoy his own again." How many of our uplands and gentle vales have been stained with blood, and seen the terrible horrors of war, of which we in these favoured days know nothing from our own experience! We read about the sad battles and sieges which have taken place in other countries, but can hardly imagine the time when hostile soldiers were riding through our village lanes, and the noise of the cannon was booming in the distance, as on that famous Sunday morning in October, 1642, when Richard Baxter was disturbed in his preaching at Alcester by that strange sound, and knew that the terrible conflict had begun between the king and Parliament. Our English villages suffered very much. All farming was stopped, manor-houses destroyed, some of the best blood in England spilt, and many a home made desolate. Indeed, in some parts of the country the people had literally no bread to eat, and no clothing to cover their nakedness; and Cromwell ordered collections to be made in London for the relief of the distressed people in Lancashire. Then the old clergyman was driven from his flock, and some commissioner appointed who wrote in the register-books of the parish the names of the children who were born, but did not record their baptism as the clergyman did. And then some black-gowned Puritan, with his hair cut short, came and took possession of the living, and preached very long sermons about Cromwell "girding his sword upon his thigh," and about blinded Papists, and about Mahershalal-hash-baz, who made haste to divide the spoil.

But in the glorious year 1660 everyone began to throw up his cap and welcome right royally the king from over the water; and the long-faced Puritan disappeared, and the writing in the register-books changed into that of a scholarly hand; and many of our churches were enriched by thankofferings of plate and other gifts, because the good people of England rejoiced exceedingly that their loved Church and her services were restored to them; and "the king at last enjoyed his own again." The memory of the adventures of King Charles II., when he was endeavouring to escape from England after the last crushing defeat of the royal troops at Worcester, called by Cromwell "the crowning mercy," still lingers in many of the country villages through which the unfortunate monarch passed. The king and a few faithful followers avoided the towns, passed the ford of the Salwarp at Hemford Mill, and proceeded by Chester Lane to Broadwaters and Kinfare Heath. Presently they reached Brewood Forest, where there stood two old hunting-lodges, built by the Giffards in troublous times as hiding-places for proscribed Papists. They were called White Ladies and Boscobel, and were inhabited by staunch Royalists named Penderel; so the king knew he would be safe there. He was disguised as a forester with leathern jerkin and trunk hose, his long hair cropped, and his hands blackened. All day he lay concealed in a coppice, and in the evening, under the name of Will Jackson, he supped with the Penderels, and then tried to cross the Severn, but all the fords and bridges were guarded. The next day he and Colonel Carlos remained concealed in a large oak near Boscobel, and the memory of Royal Oak day is still preserved. He had other narrow escapes, and was saved by Mistress Jane Lane, the beautiful daughter of Colonel Lane. A pass had been obtained for her and her groom to go to Abbot's Leigh, near Bristol. The plan was arranged that the king should act as groom; so Charles mounted his horse, and Mistress Lane sat behind him on a pillion, and together they rode through Warwickshire to Bristol. The king was nearly captured at Long Marston, for some troopers of Cromwell suspected the party, and came to examine the house where they rested. The cook, however, set Charles to wind up the jack, and because he was awkward struck him with the basting-ladle just as the soldiers entered the kitchen. Their suspicions were thus removed; and in this old house the remains of the jack are still preserved. The poor king was disappointed of his ship; the skipper unfortunately told his wife that he was going to take the king to France, and she was angry, and locked him up in his room, so that he could not fulfil his engagement. At last Lord Wilmot procured a ship for the fugitive king, who set sail joyfully from Shoreham, near Brighton, and reached Paris in safety. There must have been great excitement in the villages of England when the troopers were scouring the country in all directions, and the unfortunate king was known to be wandering about disguised as a servant.

If there are any hills or high ground in your neighbourhood commanding an extensive view of the country, it is probable that in olden days a beacon was placed there, so that the country might be aroused in case of an invasion, and frequently we find that the tower of a church was used as a beacon, and occasionally the iron brazier remains, as at Little Budworth, Cheshire. When the Spaniards determined to invade England in the reign of "Good Queen Bess," and sent the Invincible Armada, consisting of an enormous number of ships and men and guns, bonfires were placed on every hill; and when a gallant merchant vessel brought the news that the Spaniards were coming, the bonfires were lighted, and everyone prepared to resist their attack. Macaulay has told us in very stirring verse of how the news spread, as each fire was lighted,

"From Eddystone to Berwick bounds, from Lynn to Milford Bay";

how Beachy Head caught the signal from St. Michael's Mount, and sent it swiftly over the country from tower to hill-top,

"Till Skiddaw saw the fire that burned on Gaunt's embattled pile,
And the red glare of Skiddaw roused the burghers of Carlisle."

Again, within the memory of the old inhabitants of your village, the hill beacons were brought into use when Napoleon I. threatened to invade England; and on January 31, 1803, by some mistake, the fire on Hume Castle, in Berwickshire, was lighted; other beacons responded, and ere morning dawned thousands were marching ankle-deep through the dense mud of the winter roads to their appointed stations. The mistake was not without its uses, as Napoleon saw that England was ready, and did not venture to attack our shores. A similar accident took place in the reign of Henry VIII. There was a conspiracy against the king by the Roman

Catholics, who did not like their monasteries being destroyed, called "The Pilgrimage of Grace." Beacons were erected on the heights of Pendel, in Lancashire, and on the various hills of Yorkshire and Derbyshire; but the beacon on Pendel was fired before the conspirators were quite ready for action, and their plot came to nothing.

Once again in the history of our country were these beacon fires lighted; but it was not to announce the approach of an enemy, but to reflect the gladness of the nation which for so many years had enjoyed the reign of so good a ruler as Queen Victoria, who has now passed away from us, and whom the whole nation mourns. And as we witnessed the sudden blaze of the beacons we thought, perhaps, of other occasions when they were used, and were thankful that rejoicings and thanksgivings were the cause, and not invasions or conspiracies.

[10] This is a corruption of the old Norman-French word *oyez*, "hear ye."

CHAPTER XXI

VILLAGE SPORTS AND PASTIMES

Decay of old sports—Twelfth Night—Shrovetide—Mothering Sunday— Hocktide—May Day—Miracle plays— St. John's Day—Rush-bearing—Beating the bounds—Archery—Quintain—Football—Christmas games—Stocks — Cucking-stool.

It is the custom of some writers to represent the lot of an English villager in past ages as having been particularly hard and disagreeable; to enlarge upon the scanty wages which he received; and to compare his position unfavourably with that of the agricultural labourer of the present day. I have already pointed out that the small wages which he received are no test of his poverty, because he received so much more in lieu of wages; and certainly he had far more opportunities of enjoyment and recreation than the present generation has. Now we have scarcely any village games or sports, except when some energetic rector or curate starts a cricket club. Old social customs, which added such diversity to the lives of the rustics two centuries ago, have died out. The village green, the source of so much innocent happiness, is no more; and a recent writer has observed that the ordinary existence of agricultural labourers is so dull that in East Anglia they have almost forgotten how to laugh!

We will now try to realise how our village forefathers used to enjoy themselves, how they used to spend their holidays, and to picture to ourselves the scenes of happy social intercourse which once took place in our own hamlet. Every season of the year had its holiday customs and quaint manner of observance, some of them confined to particular counties, but many of them universally observed.

On the eve of Twelfth Night, January 5th, we see the good farmer and his labourers in Devonshire joining hands round his apple trees, and singing—

"Here's to thee, old apple tree!
Hence thou mayst bud, and whence thou mayst blow!
And whence thou mayst bear apples enow!
Hats full! caps full!
Bushel, bushel, sacks full,
And my pockets full too! Huzza!"

A hearty supper followed, and with laughter, songs, and good wishes to the farmer and his wife, the company passed a very joyous evening. In Herefordshire, Yorkshire, and other parts of England similar customs prevailed.

[ENLARGE](#)



ANN HATHAWAY'S COTTAGE

Then followed Twelfth Night, which was celebrated by great rejoicings and merry-makings, a game called the choosing of kings and queens being played, and Twelfth Night cakes consumed in plenty. The next Monday was called Plough Monday, when the labourers used to draw a plough round the parish and receive presents of money, favouring the spectators with sword-dancing and mumming, preparatory to beginning to plough after the Christmas holidays. The men were decked out with gay ribbons, and were accompanied by morris-dancers. The Christmas holidays lasted these twelve days, and during them it was customary for the gentlemen to feast the farmers, and for the farmers to feast their labourers. Then came the Shrovetide festivities, on Shrove Tuesday, when pancakes, football, and cock-fighting, and a still more barbarous custom of throwing sticks at hens, were generally in vogue. On Mid-Lent Sunday, commonly called "Mothering Sunday," it was the pleasing custom for servants and apprentices to carry cakes or furmity as presents to their mother, and to receive from her a cake with her blessing. This was called "going a-mothering." The old poet Herrick alludes to the custom in Gloucestershire in these words:—

"I'll to thee a simnell bring,
'Gainst thou go'st a-mothering;
So that when she blesseth thee,
Half that blessing thou'lt give me."

Then came the diversions of Hocktide, on the second Monday and Tuesday after Easter, when the men and women intercepted the public on alternate days with ropes, and boldly exacted money for pious purposes. There was a Hocktide play, which was acted before Queen Elizabeth, and caused her much amusement. She gave the players two bucks and five marks of money, which delighted them exceedingly.

Very shortly afterwards the great rural festival of our forefathers took place, the glad May Day, when, in the early dawn, the lads and lassies left their towns and villages, and going into the woods to the sound of music, gathered the may or blossomed branches of the tree, and bound them with wreaths of flowers. At sunrise they returned, and decorated the lattices and doors with the sweet-smelling spoil of their joyous journey, and spent the rest of the day in sports and pastimes, and dancing round the Maypole. The setting-up of the May-pole was a very joyous ceremony. A long string of oxen, gaily decked with flowers, drew to the village green the time-honoured pole, decked with streamers, flowers, and flags, where it was raised amidst laughter and shouts; and the Queen of the May was enthroned in an arbour and all danced round; and the morris-dancers, Robin Hood, Friar Tuck, and Maid Marian performed wonderful antics as they led the revels. Targets were set up at the other end of the green, and archery formed an important part of the day's pleasures. The preachers at the time of the Reformation thought the people made an idol of the Maypole, and condemned the innocent amusements, which were revived again when Charles II. came to the throne. After May Day our villagers had not long to wait until the Whitsuntide holiday came round—

"A day of jubilee,
An ancient holiday;
When, lo! the rural revels are begun,
And gaily echoing to the laughing sky,
On the smooth-shaven green,
Resounds the voice of mirth."

I have already given a description of these Whitsuntide rejoicings in a preceding chapter.

Then there were the miracle plays, or "mysteries," as they were called, in June, on Corpus Christi Day, which were performed before the Reformation, principally in the neighbourhood of large monasteries; Coventry, Chester, London, York being specially renowned for these performances. The subjects were taken from Holy Scripture, or from the lives of saints, and were intended to teach the people religious knowledge, but the scenes were disfigured by many absurdities and grotesque perversions. Their history is a curious one, too long to enter upon in this chapter; but often in the open fields, at the bottom of natural amphitheatres, were these plays performed, very similar in construction to the famous passion play performed by the peasants, at Ober Ammergau, in Bavaria, the last surviving specimen of the ancient religious drama.

Then there were the bonfires to be lighted on St. John's Day upon the hillsides, and the dance of the young people around them, the more venturesome youths leaping through the flames, all carrying home the

firebrands and forming a glad procession. Afterwards followed the busy harvest-time, when everyone was too hard at work, and too tired at the end of the day's labours, to think of holiday-making; but at length came the harvest home, when the last sheaf was gathered in, and the harvest supper was a very joyous occasion. With light hearts, smiling faces, and cheerful shouts, the harvest labourers and their wives and children, carrying green boughs, a sheaf of wheat, and rude flags, formed a glad procession to the farmer's house, where they found the fuelled chimney blazing wide, and "the strong table groaning beneath the smoking sirloin." The feast over, they retired to some near hillock, and made the welkin ring with their shouts, "Holla, holla, holla, largess!"—largess being the presents of money and good things which the farmer had bestowed. Such was the harvest home in the good old days, a joy and delight to both old and young. Shorn of much of its merriment and quaint customs, it still lingers on; but modern habits and notions have deprived it of much of its old spirit and light-heartedness.

The floors of the old churches were formerly unpaved and unbearded, simply made of clay, and were covered over with rushes. Once a year there was a great ceremony, called "rush-bearing." Rushes were cut in the neighbouring marsh, and made up into long bundles, decked with ribands and flowers. Then a procession was formed, everyone bearing a bundle of rushes, or placing them in the rush-cart beautifully adorned; and with music, drums, and ringing of bells, they marched to the church and strewed the floor with their honoured burdens. Long after the rushes ceased to be used in church the ceremony was continued, and I have myself witnessed a rush-bearing procession such as I have described. A village feast, followed by dancing round the May-pole, generally formed the conclusion to the day's festivities.

"Beating the bounds" of the parish was another annual ceremony, which often took place on Ascension Day and is still in use at Oxford. Boundaries of property were not so clearly defined in those days as they are now; and hedgerows, walls, and railings were scarce. The bounds of the parish were often marked by trees, called "gospel trees," because the clergyman used to read the gospel for the day under their shade. The people carried a processional cross and willow wands, and boys were generally flogged at the boundaries, or ducked in the river, if that constituted a boundary, in order to impress upon their memories where the bounds were. The village feast afterwards made some amends to them for their harsh treatment.

The village sports were a great source of enjoyment, and were frequently indulged in. The time-honoured archery developed the skill of our English bowmen, and won for them many a battle before the days of gunpowder and cannons. Then there was the very ancient game of the quintain, which consisted of an upright post with a cross-post turning upon a pin. At one end of the latter was a broad board, at the other a heavy sand-bag. The play, which required skill and dexterity, was to ride against the broad end with a lance, and pass by before the sandbag, swinging round, could strike the player to the ground. This was a common sport at wedding festivities. There were also the games of singlestick, cudgelling, and wrestling, which had many votaries, and the famous game of quarter-staff, so general in Berkshire, and so graphically described in *The Scouring of the White Horse*, by Mr. Hughes. An old parishioner of mine was the reputed champion of this game, which has now almost died out. Football is an ancient sport, and the manner formerly in vogue most nearly resembles the game authorised by the Rugby rules. The football was thrown down in the churchyard, and the object was to carry it perhaps two or three miles, every inch of ground being keenly contested. "Touch-downs" were then unknown, but it is evident from old records that "scrimmages" and "hacking" were much in vogue. Sack-racing, grinning through horse-collars, running after pigs with greased tails, were some of the lighter forms of amusement which pleased the villagers.

Then in the winter evenings there were "carols" to be practised for Christmas, and each village boasted of its own musicians, who played violins, flutes, clarionets, and other instruments in church, before the days of harmoniums and organs. Their music might not be of a very first-rate order, but they delighted in it, took an interest in it; and how pleased they were to take part in the service, and to play over their favourite hymn tunes, with a great many twirls and variations, to their children during the winter evenings! Christmas brought its accustomed merry-makings. In the north every farmer gave two feasts, one called "t' ould foaks' neet," and the other "t' young foaks' neet." Here is Sir Walter Scott's description of an ancient Christmas:—

"And well our Christian sires of old
Loved when the year its course had roll'd
And brought blithe Christmas back again,
With all its hospitable train.
Domestic and religious rite
Gave honour to the holy night:
On Christmas Eve the bells were rung;
On Christmas Eve the Mass was sung;
That only night in all the year
Saw the staled priest the chalice rear.
The damsel donn'd her kirtle sheen;
The hall was dressed with holly green;
Forth to the wood did merry men go,
To gather in the mistletoe.
Then open wide the baron's hall,
To vassal, tenant, serf, and all;
Power laid his rod of rule aside,
And Ceremony doft'd his pride.
The heir with roses in his shoes,
That night might village partner choose;
The lord, underogating, share
The vulgar game of 'post and pair.'
All hailed with uncontrolled delight
The general voice, the happy night,

That to the cottage, as the crown,
Brought tidings of salvation down.

“The fire, with well-dried logs supplied,
Went roaring up the chimney wide;
The huge hall-table’s oaken face
Scrubb’d till it shone, the day of grace,
Bore then upon its massive board
No mark to part the squire and lord.
Then was brought in the lusty brawn,
By old blue-coated serving man;
Then the grim boar’s head frowned on high
Crested with bays and rosemary.
Well can the green-garb’d ranger tell
How, when, and where the monster fell;
What dogs before his death he tore,
And all the baiting of the boar;
While round the merry wassail bowl,
Garnished with ribbons, blithe did trowl.
Then the huge sirloin reek’d: hard by
Plum-porridge stood, and Christmas pie;
Nor fail’d old Scotland to produce
At such high time her savoury goose.
Then came the merry maskers in,
And carols roared with blithesome din;
If unmelodious was the song,
It was a hearty note, and strong.
Who lists may in this mumming see
Traces of ancient mystery;
White shirts supply the masquerade,
And smutted cheeks the visor made;
But, oh! what masquers, richly dight,
Can boast of bosoms half so light!
England was merry England when
Old Christmas brought his sports again.
’Twas Christmas broach’d the mightiest ale;
’Twas Christmas told the merriest tale.
A Christmas gambol oft would cheer
A poor man’s heart through half the year.”

Such was the manner of keeping Christmas in olden times; and if “the mightiest ale” was sometimes too mighty, and although the intemperance of our forefathers was a vice much to be deplored, at any rate their hearty manner of keeping this annual feast was effectual in promoting “goodwill amongst men,” and in cheering the hearts of the poor.

In this chapter I have attempted to show the varied amusements and recreations in which our village ancestors took part. On the old village green, which in too many of our villages has been inclosed and become a thing of the past, many of these sports and pastimes once took place. There stood the village stocks, in which the refractory paid the penalty of their misdeeds; and sometimes, too, a pillory was added, which held fast the head, arms, and legs of the culprit, while the villagers, rude vindicators of the law, threw stones, rotten eggs, and other missiles at the unhappy victim. At the edge of the pond you might have seen a long plank which turned on a swivel, with a chair at the end overhanging the water. This was called a “cucking-stool,” and was used to duck scolds or brawlers. The culprit was placed in the chair, and the other end of the plank was raised several times, so that the ardour of the culprit was effectually cooled by frequent immersions. These were rough methods of administering justice, but often very effectual in checking vice.

The social customs which formerly existed in each village, the sports and pastimes associated with the village green, the May Day festivals, and the Christmas carollings were of great value, inasmuch as they tended to infuse some poetical feeling into the minds of the people, softened the rudeness of rustic manners, and gave the villagers simple pleasures which lightened their labours. They prevented them from growing hard, grasping, and discontented with their lot. They promoted good feeling between the farmers and their labourers. The customs of the town were a poor exchange for the ancient country manners and amusements; and it was a sad day for our country when the villagers lost their simplicity and the power of appreciating the primitive pleasures of rural England.

[ENLARGE](#)



OLD STOCKS AND WHIPPING-POST

CHAPTER XXII

THE VILLAGE INN

Monastic inns—Village inns—Highwaymen—Inn signs—Famous inns— Man-traps.

In almost every village in England there is an inn. Before the Reformation there were very few of these hostelries, as travellers were always accommodated at the monasteries, each of which, as we have seen, had a hospitium, or guest-house, where their wants were attended to by special officers appointed for the purpose, and where they could remain for several days. But the destruction of the monasteries produced many changes in the condition of the country; it introduced the necessity of a poor law, for the poor were always relieved by the monasteries; it required the erection of schools and places for education, as all the education of the country had been carried on in these monastic buildings; and when the old guesthouses ceased to exist, travellers, merchants, and pedlars required some place in which to lodge when they moved about the country, and inns became plentiful as time went on. Hence in almost every village in England there is an inn, which is generally a landmark; and if you wish to direct a stranger to some place where he desires to go, you doubtless tell him to turn to the right by "The Bull," or to keep straight on until he comes to "The Magpie." Indeed, a friend of mine, who is a strong teetotaler, asserts that the only good use inns have is to help people to find their road. But old inns have a great history. In former days they used to be meeting-places of plotters and conspirators. All the distinguished people in the country used to pass through the villages and towns on the great roads through the country, and when the horses were being changed they used to partake of the good fare which the landlord provided. Those were busy times for the old inns, when there was stabling for fifty or sixty horses, and the coaches used to rattle through the village to the inn door long before the iron horses began to drag their freight of passengers along the iron roads, and the scream of the engines took the place of the cheerful notes of the posthorn.

Sometimes a gentleman would ride to an inn door on a beautiful, fleet-looking steed, and receive a hearty welcome from the landlord; but the pistols in his belt looked ominous, and presently some soldiers would steal noiselessly into the inn where the gentleman was refreshing himself, and there would be heard the sounds of vigorous fighting; and often, in some wonderful way, Claude Duval or the noted Dick would fight his way out, whistle to his steed, jump into the saddle, and ride away before his less nimble pursuers had recovered from their astonishment. Very many exciting scenes have taken place in our old inns, but in these days railways have changed all things; and in many streets where the coaches used to rattle along, and the place was alive with merry sounds, the moss now grows, and all is silence and desolation. We should certainly think it inconvenient to take three days to travel from London to Bath, and it would not be pleasant to have a visit from Dick Turpin on the way, and to have all one's valuables appropriated by that notorious highwayman; but in these days of worry and busy bustling it would be refreshing to catch a glimpse of those quiet times when people were not so much in a hurry, and to hear the sound of the posthorn once more instead of the whistle of the steam-engine.

The quaint-looking pictures and curious names which attract our notice as we pass an inn door have some queer stories to tell. We notice a very curious collection of animals sometimes, and a strange assortment of things; and the reason why our ancestors put some of these curious things together is somewhat difficult for us to find out. In olden days, other houses of tradesmen besides inns had signs. Grocers, tailors, candlestick-makers, all had signs; but most of these have disappeared, except one belonging to a certain sweep of my acquaintance, whose house is adorned with the figure of a man coming out of a globe, with the motto, "Help me through the world." Over their doors barbers still have their poles, which represented once the fact that the barber was prepared to bandage up wounded arms and legs, and to perform the office of blood-letting; the stripes on the pole were intended to represent the bandages, and the barber was the surgeon of the town. We do not seem to have so much blood to spare as our forefathers, as the barber always bled his customers once or twice a year, especially in the springtime, the operation being considered very beneficial.

One reason for the curious mixture of animals and other things which we see on signboards is that an

apprentice, when he had finished his time and begun to set up for himself, adopted some sign, and then joined with it the sign of his old master. This will account for such curiosities as "The Lamb and Dolphin," "The Goose and Gridiron," "The Fox and Seven Stars," combinations of things for which it would otherwise be difficult to account. Another reason is that signs were taken from the armorial bearings, or crests, of some popular character, or of some great family in the neighbourhood. For example, I may mention "The Bear with the Ragged Staff," which was the crest of Richard Nevil, Earl of Warwick, commonly called "The Kingmaker," who was slain in the battle of Barnet, 1471 A.D. "The Blue Boar" was one of the badges of the House of York. "The Bull" is a very common sign, because it was a very common crest, and we have them in all colours—black, red, white; lions also rage in blue, white, and red attire. Sometimes we meet with "The Cross Keys," the keeper of which was probably an old servant or tenant of an abbey or monastery, and chose his sign from that of the monastery with which he was connected. Frequently, in olden times, a cross was erected at the meeting of two or three roads, or where the pilgrims to Canterbury used to pass; afterwards an inn was built near it, and was, in many cases, called the Cross Inn.

One very common cause of curious signs is the way in which the original word has been corrupted by ignorant people frequently repeating words which they did not understand, and thus changing their whole meaning. You may have seen an inn described as "The Swan with Two Necks"—a very rare bird indeed. But it was never intended to disfigure the bird by giving it two necks; the original sign was "The Swan with Two Nicks" and nicks were the marks which were cut on a swan's bill to distinguish it from other swans, so that it might be known to whom the bird belonged. But *nicks* became *necks* in course of conversation, until at last a fabulous creature with two beautifully curved necks appeared on the signboard. This same cause will account for the two strange signs, "Bull and Gate" and "Bull and Mouth." The original signs were "Boulogne Gate" and "Boulogne Mouth," *i.e.* the gate and harbour of the town of Boulogne, in France, which was captured by the English under King Henry VIII. in the year 1544. The English were very pleased to hear of the defeat of the French, and of the taking of that important town, and several inns were named in honour of the event; but the French "Boulogne" was too much for our good English mouths to speak, so it became "Bull and."

Another name which puzzled our forefathers was "*La Belle Sauvage*" ("the Beautiful Savage"), which was named after a noted savage beauty who was the rage at Paris. Others assert that the name of the landlady was Isabella Savage, shortened into Bella Savage. However, in course of time the name was altered into "Bell and Savage," and a picture representing this odd combination stood over the door. In the same way the original sign, "Whip and Nag," between which there is often a very close connection, became "Whip and Egg"; and the reason why these two articles should be placed together is not so evident. So also there does not seem any reason for an inn to be called "Bag o' Nails"; but when we are told that the original word was "Bacchanals," *i.e.* followers of Bacchus, the old god of wine, we can understand how the corruption, "Bag o' Nails," arose. Before the days of licensing, when everyone could sell liquor who chose without obtaining any licence from the magistrates, it was the custom to put a bush over the doorway, in order to inform the passers-by that liquor could be purchased there. This is the origin of the saying, "Good wine needs no bush."

[ENLARGE](#)



VILLAGE INN WITH OLD TITHE BARN OF READING ABBEY

"The Catherine Wheel" tells us the sad story of St. Catherine, who was born at Alexandria, and for converting fifty heathen philosophers to Christianity was sentenced by the Emperor Maxentius to death on a wheel, devised by most ingenious cruelty, armed with knives, saws, and nails. It is recorded that she was rescued from this fate, but was afterwards beheaded (305 A.D.). It is curious that this instrument of torture and the story of St. Catherine's heroism should be recorded on a signboard. But it may have been brought before the public by a certain miracle play, founded on the life of St. Catherine, which used to be performed on festival days. However, the Catherine wheel appears frequently on the coats-of-arms of several families, and it may be that the sign was taken from these.

"The George," also, is a very popular sign; and the "St. George of merry England" is the patron saint of this country, and the battle-cry of her knights and yeomen of ancient days. Who does not remember that stirring scene on St. George's Mount during the Crusades, described in Sir Walter Scott's *Talisman*, when King Richard tore down the Austrian banner, which the Austrian monarch had dared to erect beside the Royal

Standard of England? St George is generally represented as slaying a dragon. He was a soldier who served gallantly under the Emperor Diocletian, and commanded a legion of soldiers; he was a Christian, and by the dragon whom he slew is meant the devil, red with the blood of the Christians. So popular a personage as St. George, whose name inspired our ancestors with courage, and was often borne by them into the heart of the foe, would soon be recorded in paintings and become a general sign. "The Goat" is a common sign, and is taken from the crest of the Duke of Bedford; but "The Goat and Compasses" has puzzled many people as to its origin. It appears to be a corruption of a pious expression, "God encompasseth us"; and this shows how strangely words may be twisted and converted by ignorant and careless usage.

There are some very noted inns where great events have taken place, amongst which I may mention the Bull Inn at Coventry. Here Henry VII. was entertained the night before the battle of Bosworth Field, when he won for himself the English crown. Here Mary Queen of Scots was detained by order of Elizabeth. Here the conspirators of the Gunpowder Plot met to devise their scheme for blowing up the Houses of Parliament. And when the citizens refused to open their gates to Charles I. and his soldiers, no doubt there were great disputings amongst the frequenters of "The Bull" as to what would be the result of their disloyal refusal.

Some of the inns in remote country places did not enjoy a very enviable reputation, and were little better than man-traps, where the unfortunate traveller was robbed and murdered. At Blewbury, in Berkshire, there was an inn, the landlord of which was suspected of murdering his guests with great secrecy and mystery, and no one could tell what he did with the bodies of the victims he was supposed to have murdered. A few years ago an old tree in the neighbourhood of the inn was blown down, and on digging up the roots a skeleton was found among them. People wondered how it could have been placed there, but at last a very old inhabitant told the story of the mysterious disappearance of the bodies of the late landlord's guests, and the mystery was at length accounted for. Whenever he slew a man he planted a tree, placing the body of the murdered victim beneath it. The constables never thought of looking there; and probably under every tree which he planted (and there were several), when their roots are dug up, the bones of his numerous victims will be discovered.

Another story is connected with the old "Hind's Head" at Bracknell, which was another of these mantraps, where many travellers slept to rise no more. One winter's night a stout-hearted farmer stayed there, and joined several jovial companions round the kitchen fire. They ate and drank merrily, and at last the serving-maid showed the traveller to his chamber. She told him that he was surrounded by robbers and murderers, showed him a trap-door at the side of the bed, on which if he stepped he would tumble headlong into a deep well. She directed him to tie the bed into a bundle, put it on the trap-door, and escape by the window. He did so; down went the bundle, instead of the farmer, into the well, and he managed to effect his escape. Rousing the neighbourhood he captured the villains, who were all executed, and the bones of many of their victims were found in the well. Happily such inns were rare.

To describe the conditions of the old inns for which England was famous, of the good fare which awaited the travellers by the coach, of the spacious corridors, of the comfortable beds hung with silk and smelling of lavender; to tell of all the great folk who entered their doors—kings, queens, poets, generals, highwaymen, statesmen, grooms, conspirators, coachmen—all this would require much space to relate. When railways came in, their ancient glory departed; the old stables are destroyed; grass grows in the courtyard; and the object of their existence has almost ceased to be.

CHAPTER XXIII

VILLAGE SUPERSTITIONS AND FOLKLORE

Belief in witches—Survival of water ordeal—Witches turned into hares—Cruelties practised on witches—Bishop Jewel on the "evil eye"—Fairies—Berkshire popular superstitions—Field-names—Homes of famous men—Washington Irving's description of an English village—Rural exodus—Conclusion.

There is yet another class of subjects connected with old village life, of absorbing interest and importance. I refer to the old superstitions and folklore which still linger on in the recollections of the "oldest inhabitant," and which ought to be at once treasured up, lest they should be altogether lost. The generation of those who believed firmly in the power of the "evil eye" of the witch, and who feared to disturb the revels of the fairies on their rings and mounds, is only just passing away. An old gipsy has told me some strange stories of the superstitions of former days. He has told me of the witch at Farnham who made the cows wild and prevented them from giving milk; of another witch who lived at Henley-on-Thames, and who when thrown into the river "floated like a cork." Here we have a survival of the old Saxon method of trying culprits by the water ordeal, often used in examining witches. This particular witch could turn herself into a hare, so my venerable gipsy friend, aged one hundred and six years, informed me, and the dogs hunted her. He told me of the Tadley witch, who "wished" several people, and greatly injured them. It seems to have been a common practice of the old witches to turn themselves into hares, in order to vex the squires, justices, and country parsons, who were fond of hunting, as the old dames could elude the speed of the swiftest dogs. An old writer states "that never hunters nor their dogs may be bewitched, they cleave an oaken branch, and both they and their dogs pass over it." Mary Dore, a witch of Beaulieu, Hampshire, used to turn herself into a hare in order to escape detection when caught in the act of wood-stealing, to which she was somewhat addicted.

Old women were rather harshly used in the days when people believed in the power of witches. If any farmer's cattle died, it was immediately concluded that the animals were bewitched; and some wretched old woman was singled out, and summarily tried and burnt. If anyone fell ill, some "witch" had evidently a waxen

image of the sufferer, and stuck needles into it; and such was the power of the witch that, wherever the person was, he felt the stab of the cruel needle. Hence the witch had to be found and burnt. If the corn crops failed, was not witchcraft the cause? for had not old Mother Maggs been heard to threaten Farmer Giles, and had not her black cat been seen running over his fields? Even good Bishop Jewel did not disbelieve in the power of the evil eye. In preaching before Queen Elizabeth he said: "It may please Your Grace to understand that witches and sorcerers are marvellously increased within Your Grace's realm. Your Grace's subjects pine away even unto the death, their colour fadeth, their flesh rotteth, their speech is benumbed, their senses are bereft. I pray God they never practise further than on the subject." To so great an extent did faith in the witches' fatal power prevail. Our forefathers used to believe in the existence of other, and more pleasant little companions than the old toothless witches—the bright little fairies who, on account of the neglect which they have received from the present generation of Englishmen, have, so it is reported, left our shores in disgust, never to return. The previous inhabitants of our villages did not so treat them; and did not the fairies always bring them luck? They nailed the horseshoe to the stable door to keep out the witches, lest the old beldams should ride their steeds by night to the witches' revels; but no one wished to exclude the fairies. Did not the dairymaids find the butter ready churned, and the cows milked by these kind assistants? Was there not an old lady in Yorkshire who knew all about the fairies, had often heard them making butter, and had seen the butter smeared all over the gate by a little green man with a queer cap who had been seen slipping under a culvert? Canon Atkinson told us of this lady who knew all these strange things, and of the Hart Hall "Hob" who worked so hard with his flail, and of many other curious folk who frequented the Yorkshire moors in olden days. The last witch had just died before he went to Danby, but he found the whole atmosphere of the folklore firmament so surcharged with the being and work of the witch, that he seemed able to trace her presence and her activity in almost every nook and corner of the neighbourhood.

The wells all over England were haunted by fairies, and is it not confidently asserted that "the good people" (as the fairies are called) live in wilds and forests, and shun great cities because of the wickedness which exists therein? Have they never appeared to the lonely traveller, clothed in green, with long hair floating over their shoulders, and with faces more blooming than the blush of a summer morning? Then there were the fairy rings formed by the dancing of their merry feet.

"Some say the screech-owl, at each midnight hour,
Awakes the fairies in yon ancient tower.
Their nightly dancing ring I always dread,
Nor let my sheep within that circle tread;
When round and round all night, in moonlight fair,
They dance to some strange music in the air."

Then there were brownies; and knockers, who worked in mines, and showed rich veins of silver; and elves—all of whom were included in old village superstitions, and many were the tales told of the good deeds they did, and the luck they brought. Nor must we forget the story of the invisible smith who inhabited Wayland Smith's Cave, in Berkshire. Whenever a farmer tied up his horse in the cave, and left the money on a particular stone, on his return he found his horse shod by the kind efforts of the invisible smith. There is also the old Berkshire story of the old witch who lived in a cave by the roadside, and who, by the power of her "evil eye," could stop the strongest team of horses, so that, however much the carters lashed and swore at them, the animals would not budge an inch until she permitted them to go. Here are a few of the common superstitions current in Berkshire. If a corpse be kept over a Sunday another death will occur before the week is out; should a big bumble-bee enter the window, a guest may be expected; and when the woodpecker, commonly called the yaffle, laughs, they say the rain is coming. When the thick mist lies in the valley, the people say it is the White Lady, a belief closely akin to the Dame Blanche, who is said in Normandy to haunt streams. If one row of freshly sown seeds or potatoes does not come up, it foretells a death in the family. If a girl mends her clothes on her back, she risks having a drunken husband. A screech-owl is unlucky, and so also is it if a bird fly against the window.

A woman came to the rectory a few years ago for a drop of sacramental wine, which she wanted for an infant who had "the graspings." This complaint I discovered to be a craving for something, accompanied by restlessness; and it was supposed that a drop of sacramental wine would cure an infant so troubled. If the mother before the child was born craved for drink, this craving was communicated to the child, and could only be remedied by a drop of wine used in Holy Communion. This superstition, which I have met with elsewhere, probably is a relic of pre-Reformation days, and of sacramental Reservation.

A tramp was passing through a Hampshire village a short time ago, and calling at a house, begged for a glass of water. The woman who lived there said that she was sorry she could not give him water to drink, as there was a child in the house unbaptised, and therefore it would be unlucky. The origin of this superstition it is difficult to trace.

These are some of the legends and superstitions which linger amongst us. Every neighbourhood has its stories, its legends, and romantic histories. It is a sad pity that these should pass away without any record being made. Many curious customs and ceremonies relating to christenings, marriages, and burials linger in remote hamlets; and charms, curious remedies, and other relics of the quaint superstitions of our forefathers, are full of interest to the lover of our English villages.

As we walk in the fields, or study the old map of the parish, the names of the fields invite our attention. These are full of interest, and often tell us about matters which would be entirely forgotten. Some names tell us of the great forests which used to exist all over the country, when kings and noblemen, outlaws and poachers, used to hunt the deer and the wild boars in many a successful run. These forests were large tracts of country in its natural state, partly wood, partly heather and grass, which were owned by the king, and were especially brought under the harsh forest laws of the Norman sovereigns.

Some of our field-names remind us of the existence of these old forests where corn now grows, and also of swamps and islands where everything now is dry and far removed from water. Sometimes they tell us of the old common lands which used to be farmed by the villeins and borderers, and of the strange way in which

they used to manage their farming. Each man used to keep one or more oxen for the village plough until they made up the team into eight; then they ploughed the land in strips of an acre or half-acre each, divided by a bit of unploughed turf called a balk. Each strip was a furlong, *i.e.* a "furrow long," *i.e.* the length of the drive of a plough before it is turned. This was forty rods, or poles, and four of these furrows made up the acre. These pieces of land were called "shots," and there were "headlands," or common field-ways, to each shot; and "gored acres," which were corners of the fields which could not be cut up into strips, and odds and ends of unused land, which were called "No Man's Land," or "Jack's Land." It is curious, too, that all the strips belonging to one man did not lie together, but were scattered all over the common land, which must have been a very inconvenient arrangement for farming purposes. There were also in each village community a blacksmith, whose duty it was to keep in repair the ironwork of the village ploughs, a carpenter for the woodwork, and a pound-keeper, or punder, who looked after the stray cattle. Many of the "balks" still remain on the hillsides where these old common lands existed, and the names of the fields bear witness to the prevalence of this old field system.

They tell us, too, of the way in which attempts were made to force the growth of particular crops, and in many parishes you will find a "flax piece," which reminds us of a foolish Act of Henry VIII. ordering the cultivation of that plant. Metals, too, which have long ago been worked out, and trades which no longer exist, have left their traces behind in the names of our lanes and fields. Also they speak of the early days when the wolf or the bear might be seen in our woods or fields, or of the beaver which loved the quietude of our streams, of the eagle which carried off the lambs undisturbed by sound of the keeper's gun. Sometimes he was disturbed in his thefts by the flight of a good strong English arrow, which came from a sturdy English bow drawn by a good strong English arm. The English archers were famous everywhere, and many a battle has been won by their valour and their skill. A law was passed in the reign of Edward IV. that every Englishman should have a bow of his own height, and that butts for the practice of archery should be set up in every village; and every man was obliged to shoot up and down on every feast-day, or be fined one halfpenny. Consequently, in some villages we find a field called "The Butts," where this old practice took place.[11]

Many villages are associated with the lives of distinguished men—authors, soldiers, and statesmen. Perhaps your village may have bred other poets besides "the mute inglorious Milton" of Gray's *Elegy*. Not far from where I am writing was Pope's early home, the village of Binfield, which he calls—

"My paternal home,
A little house, with trees arow,
And, like its master, very low."

On the other side lies the village of Three Mile Cross, where Miss Mitford lived and wrote "Our Village"; and Arborfield, called in her book *Arborleigh*, about which she tells some pleasant stories, is the adjoining parish. Sometimes, as I ride down a grassy lane, a favourite haunt of the distinguished authoress, I seem to see her seated on a fallen tree weaving her pretty romances, while her favourite dog, which she often describes, plays and barks around her. A few miles in another direction lies Eversley, the loved abode of Charles Kingsley, about whom many stories linger in the countryside. To visit the uncomfortable brick-paved study where he wrote, the garden where he used to pace and think out his great thoughts, is delightfully refreshing and invigorating to a jaded writer.

[ENLARGE](#)



OLD COTTAGES

These are only instances of places which have become interesting on account of the famous men who once lived in them; and England has many heroes of the sword and pen whose lives each Englishman should study; and when you visit their dwelling-places you will recall their achievements, and perhaps endeavour to imitate their examples. Here is an instance of how little the villagers know of the distinguished men who once lived amongst them. The great Duke of Wellington did not live a very long time ago, and yet some friends of mine who were staying at Strathfieldsaye, near the Iron Duke's house, and made inquiries amongst the villagers about their recollections of the hero of Waterloo, could obtain no information. At last one venerable rustic

vouchsafed the extraordinary intelligence, "I believe as 'ow 'e were very good at war"! What a thing it is to be famous!

Much more remains to be said upon the various subjects which this history of our village suggests. But the day is closing, and our walk through its sequestered lanes and our thoughts about the various scenes which yonder venerable oaks have witnessed, must cease. But enough has been said to show what a wealth of interest lies beneath the calm exterior of ordinary village life. An American truly observes that everything in the rural life of England is associated with ideas of order, of quiet, sober, well-established principles, of hoary usage, and reverent custom—the growth of ages of regular and peaceful existence. The impression which the appearance of an English village left on his mind is beautifully described in the following passage:—

"The old church of remote architecture with its low, massive portal, its gothic tower, its windows rich with tracery and painted glass, its scrupulous preservation, its stately monuments of warriors and worthies of olden times, ancestors of the present lords of the soil; its tombstones, recording successive generations of sturdy yeomanry, whose progeny still plough the same fields, and kneel at the same altar; the parsonage, a quaint, irregular pile, partly antiquated, but repaired and altered in the tastes of various eyes and occupants; the stile and footpath leading from the churchyard, across pleasant fields, and along shady hedgerows, according to an immemorial right-of-way; the neighbouring village, with its venerable cottages, its public green sheltered by trees, under which the forefathers of the present race have sported; the antique family mansion, standing apart in some little rural domain, but looking down with a protecting air on the surrounding scene. All these common features of English landscape evince a calm and settled security, and hereditary transmission of homebred virtues and local attachments, that speak deeply and touchingly for the moral character of the nation."

One of the most distressing features of modern village life is the continual decrease of its population. All our young men flock to the towns, attracted by the greater excitement which town life offers, as compared with the more homely pleasures of the country. The rural exodus is an alarming and very real danger to the welfare of social England. Agricultural machinery has greatly diminished the number of labourers required on a farm. Agricultural depression and the decreased value of land have caused many old country families to close their old manor-houses, as they cannot afford to live on their estates.

Let us hope that those whose happy lot it is to live in the quiet hamlets of our native land, afar from the noise and din of busy towns, will learn to love more deeply their village homes, and interest themselves in their surroundings. To those who read the history of their native place, each house and field, each stone and tree, will tell its story, and recount the wonders it has witnessed. And as the stories of wars and fights, of superstition and of crime, fall on our ears, we shall be thankful that our lot is cast in more peaceful days, when no persecutions, religious or political, disturb the tranquillity of our village life. And when we read of the piety and simplicity of our forefathers, their veneration of their church, their love of home, their innocent joys and social customs, we should strive to imitate their virtues which have materially helped to make England a great and powerful nation. It is hoped that these chapters upon the old life of our country, and the manners and customs of our forefathers, may induce many of my readers to read and study history more deeply, may serve to create an interest in the relics that remain to us of the past, and to preserve the fleeting traditions that Time doth consecrate.

[11] In many cases the name "Butts" refers to the fact of the land, under the common-field system, *abutting* on meadows or roads, *e.g.* "Butt-close," in the parish of St. Mary Bourne.

APPENDIX

BOOKS AND DOCUMENTS RELATING TO PAROCHIAL HISTORY

To anyone who sets himself the task of writing a history of his village, the following notes may be useful. With regard to the etymology of the name, concerning which absurd errors are made in most guide books and old county histories, it would be well to consult Canon Taylor's *Words and Places*, being careful to study the earliest form of the word in *Domesday* and old documents. Bede's *History*, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, and other old English chronicles, published by Bohn, may contain some allusions to the parish and neighbourhood, and also Kemble's *Saxons in England*. The *Domesday Book* is, of course, a mine of wealth. The Public Record Office contains many documents which will be of great service—the *Testa de Neville* (Edward II.), *Marshall Rolls*, *Nonarum Inquisitiones*, *Pipe Rolls*, *Patent Rolls*, *Close Rolls*, *Hundred Rolls*, *Inquisitiones post-mortem*, and the *Feet of Fines*. The *Manor Court Rolls*, if they still exist, in the custody of the lord of the manor, should also be consulted. The journals of local antiquarian societies and county histories will of course be examined. The history of the families connected with the parish must be traced. The British Museum and the College of Arms contain fine collections of *Heralds' Visitations*, and Burke's *Landed Gentry* and Dugdale's *Baronage* are the chief sources of information. Old *wills* will yield much information, many of which are in course of publication by the Index Society, and county archaeological journals; and Somerset House and many diocesan registries contain the original documents. The Historical Manuscripts Commission has published many volumes of borough records which are of great service, and the lives of any great men connected with the parish may be studied in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. As we have already pointed out, the parish chest contains valuable sources of information upon the history of the village, and its contents should be carefully examined.

The registers of the diocese contain many documents relating to the ecclesiastical history of the parish, and from them we can obtain a list of the rectors or vicars. If the church was connected with any monastery, Dugdale's *Monasticon* will furnish some information. The Public Record Office contains the documents *Taxatio Ecclesiastica P. Nicholai IV.* and *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, which give an account of the value of the first-fruits and tenths, and also some volumes on the sale of chantries, and the inventories of church goods. The name of the saint to whom the church is dedicated must not always be accepted, in spite of years of usage, and should be confirmed by reference to some early will of a chief person of the village buried in the church, which usually gives the name of the patron saint. The story of the church writ in stone should be traced by the various styles of architecture, with the help of Rickman's *Gothic Architecture* or Parker's *Glossary of Gothic Architecture*. If there has ever been a monastery in the parish, Dugdale's *Monasticon* should be consulted; and if there are any remains of a castle, Clark's *Mediaeval Military Architecture in England* will be useful. Prehistoric remains, such as barrows, earthworks, pit dwellings, and caves should be described; also any Roman roads and villas; the flora and fauna of the neighbourhood, geology, folklore, and dialect.

The following books are recommended:—

Evans' *Ancient Stone Implements of Great Britain*.
 Evans' *Ancient Bronze Implements*.
 Boyd Dawkins' *Cave Hunting*.
 Boyd Dawkins' *Early Man in Britain*.
 Greenwell's *British Barrows*.
 Fergusson's *Rude Stone Monuments*.
 Cox's *How to Write the History of a Parish*.
 Wright's *Essays on Archaeological Subjects*.
 Parker's *Mediaeval Domestic Architecture*.
 Sims' *Manual for the Topographer and Genealogist*.
 Burn's *History of Parish Registers*.
 Seebohm's *English Village Community*.
 Toulmin Smith's *English Gilds*.
 Haine's *Manual of Monumental Brasses*.
 Bloxam's *Principles of Gothic Architecture*.
 Tanner's *Notitia Monastica*.
 Cutts' *Middle Ages*.
 Lee's *Glossary of Liturgical and Ecclesiastical Terms*.

INDEX

Akeman Street, 60
 Aldhelm, church-builder, 103
 Alfriston clergy-house, 180
Alignements, 46
 Allington rectory, 180
 Almshouses, 181
 Altars, 191
 Amphitheatre, Roman, 67
 Anchoresses, 183
 Anchor-hold, 183
 Anglo-Saxon villages, 74-89
 Archery, 277, 298
 Architecture, English, 102-24
 Arresting a dead body, 227
 Arrow-heads, 20
Art of Husbandry, 255
 Astrology, belief in, 222
 Aumbry, 192
 Avebury cromlech, 46

B

Ball-flower moulding, 118
 Barkham in *Domesday*, 128
 Barnack Church, 106
 Barrows or tumuli, 23-3
 " long and round, 25
 " near churchyards, 23
 " Saxon, 90-3
 " their contents, 24, 29
 Basilica, Roman, 66
 Beacons, 268
 Beating the bounds, 276
 Bede, 75
 Bell-ringing customs, 250

Bells, 245-53
" christening of, 246
" inscription on, 247-50
Benedict Biscop, 103
Benedictine monks, 161
Bewcastle cross, 98
Bishops, treating of, 229
Black Death, 255
Blood-letting, 167-9
Blowing Stone, 52
Bordarii, 131
Border castles, 140
Brachycephalic race, 21
Brasses, monumental, 212-18
Bridal cup, 207
Brief Book, 226
Brighthampton, pit dwellings at, 33
British Church, 93
" oppida, 34
" roads, 60, 61
" saints and martyrs, 94
Bronze Age, 21, 40
Budworth hermitage, 182
Burial urns, 29, 30
" urns in woollen, 220
C
Caesar's camps, 50
Camps, 50-52
Carthusian monks, 162
Castles, 135-53
Cave men, 16
Celts, 21, 34, 37, 56
Cemeteries, Saxon, 92
Censers, 205
Chancels, 190
Charles II., adventures of, 267
Chaucer's satire on monks, 160
Chepstow Castle, 140
Chest, parish, 218-29
Chivalry, 143, 148
Chrismatory, 206
Christmas in olden time, 278
Chun Castle, 51
Church ales, 258
Church bells, 245-53
" house, 258
" plate, 200-8
" yard, 243
Churches, parish, 184-99
Churchwardens' account books, 223-6
Cistercian monks, 114, 161
Civil War, effects of, 153, 220, 265
Cloister of monastery, 163
Cluny, monks of, 161
Consecration crosses, 239
Conversion of Saxons, 94, 95
Crannogs, 38
Cremation, 28, 29, 92
Cromlechs, 46-9
Crosses, Saxon, 95-101
Cross-legged effigies, 211
Cucking-stool, 280
D
Decay of old sports, 271
Decorated architecture, 117
Desecration of monasteries, 159
Devil's Highway, 61
Dog-tooth ornament, 116
Dog-whipper, 228
Dolichocephalic race, 19
Dolmen, 49, 50
Domesday Book, 125-34
Donnington Castle, 152
Druids, 48, 50

E

Early English architecture, 115-17
Earthworks, 50-6
Easter sepulchre, 193
Edge Hill, battle of, 264
Edwardian castles, 140
Emblems on brasses, 217
Enstone, menhir at, 45
Eslithic man, 14
Epitaphs, curious, 243
Ermyrn Street, 60
"Evil eye," 291-3

F

Fairford windows, 232
Fairies, 56, 293
Fairs, 261
Feudalism, 141
Field-names, 296-8
Flint implements, discovery of, 11
Flint implements, 15, 20
Fonts, 186
Food in barrows, 24, 25
Football, 277
Force-pump, Roman, 68
Frescoes, 234
Friars, preaching, 161
Future life, belief in, shown by barrows, 24

G

Gambassi, glass-painter, 232
Geburs, 82
Gentleman, accomplishments of a, 149
Geological changes, 11-13
Glaciers in Britain, 12
Glass, stained, 230-3
Glastonbury, pit dwellings at, 37, 41, 42
Green, village, 8, 280
Grims-dike, 54, 55
Grosmont Castle, 141
Guizot on castles, 141

H

Hagioscopes, 194
Hall marks, 208
Harvest homes, 275
Hastings, battle of, 264
Heart burial, 222
Hedsor, pile dwellings at, 37, 38
Hereivard the Wake, 264
Hermits, 181
Hexham church, 104
" crosses, 99
Highwaymen, 283
Hocktide sports, 225, 273
Homes of famous men, 298
Hospitium of monastery, 169
House, evolution of country, 172-7
Hundreds, origin of, 87
Hurstbourne, Hants, pit dwellings at, 34

I

Ice Age, 12, 13
Ikniel Street, 60
Ilkley cross, 99
Inigo Jones, 176
Inns, 7, 282-90
Inventories, 201
Iron Age, 21
" work in churches, 233
Itinerary of Antoninus, 59

J

Jervais, glass-painter, 232
Johnson, Dr., on monasteries, 159

K

Keep of Norman castle, 137

Kelvedon rectory, 179
Kenilworth Castle, 151
King's evil, 228
Knaresborough hermitage, 182
Knighthood, admission to, 145

L

Laindon reclusorium, 183
Lammas lands, 79
Lecterns, 191
Legends, 44, 55, 263
"Lepers' windows," 195
Lich-gate, 242
Local Government, 254
Low side windows, 195

M

Manor-house, 172-7
Manors, 79, 133
Man-traps, 289
Markets, 260
May Day, 225, 273
Mediaeval village, 254-70
Menhir, 45
"Merry England," 256
Milestones, Roman, 61
Miracle plays, 274
Misereres, 191
Monasteries, Saxon, 102
" 154-71
" charity of, 159
Monastic day, 166, 167
" inns, 282
Monks, benefits conferred by, 155
" corruption of, 160
Monstrances, 206
Monumental effigies, 209-12
Mothering Sunday, 273
Mouldings, Decorated, 118, 120
" Early English, 116
" Norman, 112
" Perpendicular, 123
Mural paintings, 234-41

N

Neolithic man, 15, 18, 20, 37
Norman architecture, 109-15
" castles, 135-53
" place-names, 132
" villages, 125-34
Normans, coming of, 125

O

Ockwells manor-house, 173
Ogee arch, 118
Organised condition of society among prehistoric races, 31
Ornaments, Saxon, 91
Osculatorium, 192
Oxford, poor scholar of, 229

P

Pageants, 149-52
Paleolithic man, 14
Palimpsests, 213
Parish chest, 218-29
" registers, 218-23
Paschall money, 225
Pastimes, 271-81
Pavements, Roman, 71, 72
Pax, 192, 206
Perpendicular architecture, 120
Pews, 187
Piers Ploughman, 165, 174, 181
Pile dwellings, 37-43
Pilgrimages, 259
Piscina, 192
Pit dwellings, 33-7

Place-names, 76, 101
Plague, 255-7
Plate, church, 200-8
" " in bishop's coffin, 202
Ploughman's lament, 84
Plough Monday, 272
Porch, 185
"Pot-boilers," 36
Pre-Reformation plate, 202-5
Pulpits, 188
Pytheas of Marseilles, 10
Pyx, 191, 206

Q

Quintain, 277

R

Raglan Castle, 141
Reading Abbey, 171
Reading-pews, 197
Reclitorium, 183
" at Rettenden, 183
Rectories, 177-81
Registers, parish, 218-23
Religion of Saxons, 93
"Restoration," 199
Rollright Stones, 46, 47
Roman relics, 57-73
" rig, 54
" roads, 58-62
" villas, 70-3
Rood-loft, 188
Royal arms in churches, 190
Rural exodus, 300
Rush-bearing, 276
Ruthwell cross, 97
Ryknield Street, 60

S

Sacring bell, 252
St. Christopher, 238
Salisbury Cathedral, 115
Saltways, 61
Sanctus bell, 252
Saxon architecture, 106-9
" house, 172
" monasteries, 102
" place-names, 76, 77
" relics, 90-101
Saxons, coming of, 74, 75
Screens, 189
Secret chambers, 177
Settle, Victoria Cave at, 17
Shires, origin of, 88
Shrovetide sports, 273
Signs of inns, 284-8
Silchester, 54, 62-70
Slavery under Saxons, 84
Sluggard waker, 228
Smoke farthings, 226
Socmen, 83, 131
Spenser's description of hermitage, 182
Sports and pastimes, 271-81
Stocks, 280
Stonehenge, 46
Stone monuments, 44-50
Stourbridge Fair, 261
Sudeley Castle, pageant at, 149-51
Sun-worship, relics of, 27
Superstitions, 44, 295
Switzerland, pile dwellings in, 38-41

T

"Terraces," 19
Tesserae, 65, 71
Thanes, 80
Thane's house, 81

Thuribles, 205
Tiles, 233
Tournaments, 146-9
Tudor arch, 121
" houses, 175
Tumuli, *see* Barrows
Turf monuments, 53, 54
Twelfth Night, 272
Tympana, Norman, 110
U
Uffington, 52-4
Ufton Court, Berks, 176, 178
V
Vernicle, 201
Vestry, contents of, 196
Vicarages, 177-81
Villas, Roman, 70-3
Villeins, 130, 255
W
Wars, 262-70
Watling Street, 60
Wayland Smith's Cave, 27, 294
Whalley cross, 96
" reclusorium, 184
White Castle, 141
White Horse Hill, 53
Whittenham Clumps, 52
Wilfrid, St., 96, 104, 108, 230
Witches, 291
" turned into hares, 292
Woollen, burials in, 220
Worlebury, pit dwellings at, 34
Y
Yeomen, 83, 131
Yew tree in churchyard, 241

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