

St. Albans as a Village Community.

BY MR. A. C. BICKLEY.

Proceeding by the inductive method, I have to ask why St. Albans should have been chosen as a great centre in England by the Romans? The answer that is generally given that it was at the confluence of certain roads, will, I think, on reflection be deemed to be quite inadequate. I cannot deny that the roads being made, it was quite natural that a great camp and city should have arisen at their juncture. But this is surely only escaping one difficulty by embracing another, and the other is why the roads were at all; why they took the particular direction they did. It is well known that the Romans were in the habit of making roads wherever they conquered, and this is true with the limitation that they only made roads in countries sufficiently populated, or from one centre to another. There is no reason to suppose that any different policy was adopted in England to that obtaining elsewhere. That it is highly probable that the Romans did not lay out most of these roads, but only repaired and adapted them, I venture to submit

has little to do with the question. Our object is to find out primarily why these roads or tracks were made in the first instance. To this the obvious answer is that they were made or laid out for the convenience of carriage between one centre of population and another, and this being the case, it is only in the nature of things that lesser centres of population should have gathered along these roads or tracks, and especially at those places where they crossed. Whether there is any truth in Cæsar's story that Verulam was the chief station of Cassevellaunus at the time of his invasion or not, and there is no reason to disbelieve its truth, is of no moment to my argument. Cæsar describes it as being a place of great military strength, well defended by woods and marshes, as consisting of rude dwellings built of wood, and as being defended by a rampant and a ditch. Such a description would apply to most British towns at this time, but this would not in itself be sufficient to show why the Romans should have chosen the place as one of their few great strongholds. Indeed, it would somewhat militate against it, inasmuch as there is a good deal of evidence that the Romans did not invariably choose British sites for their towns, and indeed in some cases seem to have positively avoided them in order to select some site more suited to their needs or ideas. Though I do not for one moment deny that St. Albans was a British stronghold, yet I cannot help thinking that the camp of Cassevellaunus did not occupy the site of Verulamium, but, taking Cæsar's description as correct, was rather towards the site now occupied by Lord Verulam's house at New Barnes. Be this as it may, neither the British nor the Romans would have chosen St. Albans for a centre if it had not presented certain advantages which lie outside mere means of defence, and most certainly it would not have been selected as the site of the largest permanent camp in Britain. Owing partly to the conditions of the country, and still more to the difficulties of transit, the choice of positions some eighteen or nineteen hundred years ago was far more limited than it is to-day. It is only by appreciating this fact that we can understand the reason for the selection of numbers of Roman camps, many of which were at places which the course of ages has shown to have small advantages from the geographical point of view. I need

mention only a few instances in England, as Richborough, Chichester, and Dorchester, but with regard to the two first they were served by tidal rivers, and if the stream that runs through Dorchester was not navigable then-a-days, the town was within easy reach of the sea coast.

Now, St. Albans presented none of these advantages. It had no navigable stream, and was most certainly at a very inconvenient distance from the sea coast. To reach it a difficult and hostile country must be traversed, and however eligible it might otherwise be, one can but see that there were many other places offering equal advantages with greater facilities of outside supply. Yet it goes without saying that the Romans would never have selected, and most certainly never have continued their camp here, if they had not been satisfied that their garrison would not be liable to starvation. This brings me to the real point of my paper—the consideration of St. Albans as the site of a village community, or rather as the centre of a horde of communities. It is only of recent years that we have learned to appreciate the importance of the part an understanding of the village community system may be able to play in solving many of the problems of our pre-written history. Sir Henry Maine had for years pointed out that the one unchangeable feature of Indian life lies in its communities, that dynasties came and went, while they remained the same, before it occurred to anyone to look for evidences of a similiar primitive culture in our own country. The work of Kowalewsky and other scholars made us acquainted with the fact of a system, similar in its main points, in the Mir district of Russia (a system in the imitation of which some modern socialists profess to see the only salvation of England), in absolute unconsciousness that once something analogous to it obtained in immediate pre-Roman times in this country, and it was not until within the last few years, when the researches of Mr. Seebohm opened the eyes of archæologists to this untried field, that the existence of village communities became an element of our prehistoric knowledge. Although the remains of the village community system were spread around them with a lavishness which our modern civilization has destroyed, the historians of the last century and the earlier part of this, indeed, I may almost say, the latter part of this, have ignored them

altogether, or only referred to them as remains or evidences of British or Saxon methods of cultivation. The old stories which represent our British forefathers as savages, dressed in their own innocence and a little blue paint, have to go to the board. Canon Greenwell and other authors have proved that the Romans had not to meet a chance conglomeration of half-naked savages, gathered from many alien and hostile tribes, merely to resist a common foe, but an army capable of appreciating the seriousness of the struggle and united by a common culture. This culture, so far as present investigation shows, could only have arisen from one source; namely, the village community system. This system presented to a people, emerging from the pastoral cult into the agricultural cult, certain great advantages; it enabled the family or tribe to so isolate itself that risk of warfare with neighbouring tribes was reduced to a minimum; it secured to it its customs, whether totemistic or exogamic or endogamic, and it gave it its requisite means of self-government. Further, it gave to each tribe or family a local habitation, nor did it prevent, but rather assisted in that bonding together which might be necessary to resist a common enemy. The Village Community was a tribe or section of a tribe that for the purposes of sustenance had isolated itself. So far as the evidence afforded by place names and folk custom will allow us to predicate, when it became too big for its land to support, a part split off and found pastures new, and these found, it settled down, preserving the old conditions. Preferably, by the Aryan tribes, a site was chosen by a running stream, but as in the instance of Maidun an adequate well of water may have been deemed sufficient. But four things were invariable. One, the site of the village, where huts might be built and an open-air place of tribal meeting secured (preferably on raised ground); secondly, the garden ground, or kailyard, which was attached to the house, which is so well seen in the garden or court, so often disused in the Mir districts of Russia, and evidences of which still continue in the outer courts of old-fashioned Wessex manors; third, the common field which was devoted to agriculture; fourth, the grazing land, which was open and undivided, and which for choice surrounded the common field; and lastly, the wild or forest land which isolated one village community

from another, and which at once formed neutral and hunting grounds. I need not dwell on the common feast, the hearth fire, or the folk meetings. Of the non-Aryan tribes I will speak presently. It must be evident that by means of such a system England might become a highly productive country, such a country as is the plains at the foot of the Neilgherries or the black soil district of Russia.

In dealing with the village community at St. Albans, we have not, as we should have to do in so many other places, to consider the conquest or supersession of the primitive non-Aryan race by an Aryan one. I quite agree with Messrs. Seebohm and Gomme that the earliest inhabitants of these islands of whom we have any definite knowledge were of non-Aryan stock, and, of course, it is quite possible that they were to some extent mixed up by the time of the Roman invasion with the Aryan conquerors. But, in truth the two races subsisted side by side, and from their different methods of life did not tend to fuse. No doubt they killed one another whenever they could, and most certainly the non-Aryans bitterly hated the intruding race, who despised them, as races of hunters and warriors do those who are content to gain a subsistence by agricultural labour, desiring no improvement. Yet we know from the evidences remaining at Hitchin and the field terraces still to be seen near Luton, and at Clothall, that the non-Aryan stock had settlements in the neighbourhood. Still, I think we need not take them into consideration at St. Albans, for topographical reasons. The country did not suit them. They preferred sudden if not necessarily high hills, on the top of which they could build their strongly-defended villages, just as do the non-Aryan hill tribes of Northern India to-day. They abhorred low-lying lands, and especially marshes and forests, which contained great snakes and savage beasts, with which these people, practically unarmed, felt unable to cope. The valleys intervening between one settlement and another preserved these tribes from their enemies, and so forced them to develop some amount of culture. So far as we can observe from the scanty remains we have, or deduce from parallel examples, they were totemists and endogamous. Professor Boyd Dawkins thinks they formed a considerable population and were

neolithic, he also points out that to them we owe the rudiments of the culture we now enjoy. "Their cereals are still cultivated by our farmers, their domestic animals still minister to us, and the arts of which they possessed only the rudiments, have developed into the industries; spinning, weaving, pottery making, mining, without which we can scarcely realise what our lives would be."

The great distinction between the Aryan and the non-Aryan village community which will at once strike you is that the Aryan commenced his cultivation from the lowest level, the non-Aryan from the hill-top. Surrounding the fortress village was the land where the soil was too thin and poor to be capable of cultivation, and here the cattle grazed. Lower down, where the soil got thicker, agriculture commenced, and to this, together with the increase of population, which required the utmost development of the land at disposal, we owe that system of terrace cultivation that for so many years was one of the problems which puzzled the most acute archæologist. The method of the Aryan community, when circumstances forced it to take to agriculture, was just the reverse. The village was placed by preference near the stream, though not necessarily on the most low-lying land, then came the arable ground, which although belonging to the community was apportioned to each family according to its needs; beyond this was the common field wherein the cattle of all might graze without let or hindrance and over which no one might claim any exclusive right, and further on the waste or forest which was neutral ground, and served the Aryan communist as a hunting ground and a means of defence from hostile tribes. There can be no doubt that morally and intellectually the Aryan tribes were superior to those of the hill men. It is probably to these gentry Cæsar refers as being polyandrous. Polyandry was not uncommon among early non-Aryan tribes, although it is just to say that it is not unknown among Aryans, but it is possible that, as he was hardly likely to be an enquirer at first-hand, Cæsar was misled by his informants, and refers to a system of Clan Marriage which we know prevailed in many parts of early Britain. Many remains of these systems are recorded, and one can but regret that they have never been gathered up, for as Kowalewsky, Letourneu, Reclus,

and others, have shown us, that from nothing can we learn so much of primitive usage or notions of property as from marriage customs. To one custom at St. Albans I shall refer later, but first I wish to call your attention to the subject of folk-motes. In the accounts of the rebellions against Abbey rule, given by one of the Abbey chroniclers, it is noted that the people met in the open air. Now, as these people were plotters, and as there is no reason that the leaders might not have arranged the matter in secrecy, which I may remind you was the usual manner in the Middle Ages just as it is now-a-days, I can but agree with some eminent students of custom, that this open-air gathering is indicative of the ancient community folk meeting. We know that it was essential to the validity of a decision at a folk-mote that it should be arrived at in the open air, and if possible on an elevated spot. The Dane John at Canterbury will occur to us all as being an instance of an elevation expressly made for this purpose, and I may remind you that even now no law has any validity in the Isle of Man unless proclaimed on Tynwald Hill and in the open air. Mr. Fairman Ordish called attention some time ago to a curious remnant of this custom in Hampshire, where it is held essential to the proper rehearsal of the village St. George play that it should take place on a particular piece of ground and not under cover. A still more striking instance is to be found in an existing Purbeck custom, which provides that certain of the inhabitants of one village shall, on a special day, march to another where a feast is provided for them, and as they proceed to a third they shall of right kiss any girl they happen to meet. The journey ends in an open air meeting. Although Purbeck is full of traces of endogamy and exogamy, of polyandry and matriarcalism, this is, I think, the most peculiar and distinctive remnant. Have we anything analogous in St. Albans? A few weeks ago my answer would have been in the negative, or at least doubtful. But to-night, I must in honesty affirm that we have. Among the labourers that inhabit our back lanes I have found, by practical experience, two remnants. The one is that in some cases the wife on marriage, for social purposes, retains her own name and is known as Jane Smith, the wife of Tom Jones, although it is clearly understood that her legal name is that of

the husband. This is a curious reminiscence of tribal marriage. The other instance, which subsists among a distinctly lower class, is for the husband to take, for social purposes, the family name of the wife. This is one of the most distinct remains of matriarchalism I have found in England, with one exception, and I would ask you to consider how strong must be the force of primitive custom when it can withstand the Roman and Saxon invasions, the Norman Conquest and mediæval usage, plus our destructive modern civilisation. It seems to me that just as the Purbeck customs I have detailed point to a village community under semi-advanced, that is, patriarchal conditions, so the assumption of the wife's name by the husband points to one that still remained matriarchal. It is unnecessary to remind you that we still find parallels among the hill tribes of India and the Caucasian settlements and in the wilder parts of China. I may here mention another instance of primitive culture, or want of it, which I have found to prevail among the lower class of cottagers. It is the eating from one dish, each member of the family dipping his or her spoon or fingers into the mass and conveying in to the mouth, without going through the needless formality of having a plate. As illustrative of this I may quote Sinclair's account of the manners and customs of the Scottish peasant farmer: "At their meal they ate and supped together out of one dish. Each person in the family had a short-hafted spoon made of horn, which they called a munn, with which they supped, and carried it in their pocket, or hung it by their side. They had no knives or forks, but used their fingers." Mr. Laurence Gomme, in quoting this, justly points out that it does not represent a going back to, but a non-advance from, barbarism, and considers it a strong piece of evidence of the village community. So far as St. Albans is concerned, let me draw your attention to the fact that the usage I have mentioned is to be found, so far as I can discover, only among those whose ancestors have been of the agricultural labourer class, and not among those whom the exigencies of commerce have imported from other districts, or who have been town employees or artisans, or, in other words, those whose primitive culture has been severely modified by mediæval influences. I would, if time permitted, call your attention to many instances

of this primitive form of civilisation still to be found in England, and the moral, it seems to me, is that the Roman invasion, although it lasted for hundreds of years, never vitally affected the life of the people. I am quite willing to allow that in St. Albans, as at York, or London, or Colchester, we find a peculiar difficulty in tracing early institutions on account of stirring mediæval influences. Places with continuous civilisations must be content to lose evidences of primitive culture. In cultural history as in other sciences, all gain amounts to an equivalent loss.

In asking you to accompany me in spirit to St. Michael's I need hardly describe the peculiarities of that village. It is, as we all here know, approached by a bridge over the Ver, and by a rising street, which is terminated by the churchyard. But I would call your attention to the fact that not only is there a bridge, a purely modern convenience, but also a ford. Now a ford is an important matter. People do not make fords, as they do bridges. They depend on natural characteristics. Although the Ver has been enclosed, I am unable to see a place within reasonable distance where in ancient times there would have been another ford, unless it were at the foot of Holywell-hill. The mere fact that there is a natural ford is surely of importance. To me it seems an obvious connection between the water meadows and the upland, for, on the south side of the Ver, the upland must have been at an inconvenient distance, especially as the copses now existent seem to indicate the boundaries of the agrarian lands of the community. The continuance of this ford is one of the most interesting of the remaining evidences of the village community of St. Albans. As I have pointed out previously, we must not expect in a place so long settled, which was a great Roman, then a Saxon, and during mediæval times, a town of considerable size and great importance, to find such direct evidence of the community as we may at Aston or Chippenham, at Norton or Rothwell, but careful examination may discover some colateral testimony. Am I over-bold in suggesting that we find one item in the camp said to have belonged to Ostorius, which, I think, was originally merely the strong enclosure to which the communists might retreat in case of danger. You will all have noticed that the Hempstead-road from the ford to St.

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Michael's Church is straight enough, till it winds round the schools and garden, and then goes on past the Vicarage in the original direction. Can we not gather something from this? The school-house and garden are indisputably modern, and their position not being a convenient one, they were probably stuck down where they are because it happened to be a piece of vacant land. Whether it had an owner or not is beside the question, but that it was vacant, and had once been common land gains colour from the way the church road widens at this point. You will remember, too, that east of the church there is a considerable rise in the level of the churchyard. To get from the village gate to the field track means climbing up and down quite a little hill. I do not say that this is not natural, probably it is, but certainly it points to St. Michael's Church occupying the site of the village folk-place, and the curve in the road is just what one would look for at such a spot. The communists seem to have held folk-places as sacred, if we may consider that in England they had the same prejudices as in other countries, and specially in those in which village communities still hold their own, and that therefore though there would be tracks to the meeting-place they would not be allowed to pass through it. Over and over again we find that the church occupies the site of the village meeting-place. It was a sacred and well-known spot: where, then, could there be a better site for the church? We must remember, too, that in early days the church was largely used for secular purposes, and in the provision that the vestry, or parish parliament, which was until comparatively recently very largely secular in its functions, should meet in the church, we may surely see a continuance of the village folk-moot. Students of church customs are constantly reminding us that often our old churches were used as marts, and we know that the churchyard was frequently the scene of village fairs or festive gatherings, and that, so to speak, nothing in the way of trade was barred.

I confess I do not lay much stress in the case of places so long settled as St. Albans, on field names. I have found them most misleading, and this must be the case when we remember the number of owners of various nationalities, each introducing different customs, whose property the lands have been. But in places where

village life has been allowed to pursue the even tenour of its way, the case is different. For instance, in the parish of Woking, Surrey, there is a gigantic field bearing the significant name of Broad Meadow; and one at Norton, in Somerset, called Broadmead. There are many fields which retain such suggestive names as Broad Shard, Long Furlong, and so forth. I could, but it is surely unnecessary, go on multiplying instances. There being, on account of its Roman, Saxon, mediæval, and modern importance, and the stress there has always been towards a high condition of cultivation, so little visible evidence remaining of the community system at St. Albans, that I trust you will allow me to describe a place almost parallel as regards geographical and geological conditions, whereat historical reasons have favoured exceptionally the continuance of custom and tradition. The place I wish to refer to is the ancient parish of Woking; I say ancient parish, because since the Conquest it has been split up, but for our purposes to-night it must be taken as a whole. The ancient parish was of enormous size, and contained several village communities. The most noticeable is the one that had for its centre the village of Woking. Woking lies on one side of the river Wey. The river cuts it off abruptly, although, as at St. Michael's, there is a ford. Though this ford is now replaced by a bridge, I must insist upon it, because while the river was a means of defence, yet it was of the highest importance that the village should be placed where for purposes of cultivation it might be crossed with ease by daylight. Of course, there are no remains of either the communal house or of the family dwellings, but probably the road occupies its original position, for, after going in a fairly straight line through the village, it turns abruptly at practically a right angle and surrounds an enormous field, sub-divided among many occupiers, and which probably once represented the common arable land. The evidence of a field across the ford is still stronger. The length of this field is extreme, being considerably over a mile. Its width is not commensurate with its length, and at frequent intervals it is dotted with stones, the lines drawn between which form the boundaries of holdings. Exactly the same was to be seen at Corfe.

One thing has struck me in all the many cases I have

seen, and that is the small size of the stones. This was, no doubt, on account of the frequency with which, under the village community system, boundaries had to be changed, when large stones would be mere encumbrances; but their small size has certainly led to thousands upon thousands being rooted up and applied to other purposes. This field on the side bounded by the ford has a road which winds round it. So does one round the other across the river. Beyond these fields are belts of meadow lands, which certainly represent the common grazing ground of the primitive community, and around this was a wide belt of common waste or forest land. It is now largely enclosed, and where it is not, is merely covered with scrub, but if tradition is to be trusted it was woodland once upon a time. For obvious reasons, Woking, till some fifty years ago, was little disturbed. There are no certain traces of any Roman occupation within its boundaries. It was a royal manor at the time of Domesday, and was repeatedly granted out to favourites, who generally got their heads chopped off, or came to other untimely ends before they could take up residence. Being surrounded by wide heaths, it lay outside the beaten track, and was so much neglected that in mediæval times it had its own parochial court of justice, which I can remember sitting, and which I have described in the "Antiquary" and in a book. This is surely a reminiscence of the village folk-moot, the more as it deals with those questions of morality which usually come before the village councils elsewhere. By morality I mean those things that appeal to the conscience of the village folk, such as altering the neighbour's landmark, or taking an undue advantage of the common lands, and also with those questions which are naturally objectionable to a district which still retains a feeling in favour of endogamy. Thirty years ago the tribal feeling was very strong, and the life of a "foreigner"—that is a man not born or bred on the heath lands—was made miserable to him. He was an outcast, and the commonest courtesies were refused him. The most significant custom remains to be mentioned. It obtained in a subsidiary hamlet, and is certainly a survival of the folk-moot. On one evening in the week, the commoners of the district used to meet and exchange wives for the ensuing period. It was not looked on as

at all improper, and it is perhaps one of the latest instances of the survival of tribal marriage that I know of in England. It was in full force up to forty years ago, but unluckily for the survival of folk custom, an energetic vicar and other authorities set themselves to break up the practice, and to the best of my belief it has now gone the way of things departed. If we are to believe old chroniclers, such customs were not uncommon not so many hundreds of years ago in out-of-the-way places in England and till much later in Scotland and Ireland. Even within the last century something similar was known in parts of Wales, as you may remember Kowalewsky showed in his Ilchester lectures.

But Bisley, near Woking, is so significant an instance of a village community that I must dwell on it for one moment. It is a good way from the modern village, and also from the high road. It is on a slight elevation, but what is most noticeable is that two or three lanes leading from nowhere in particular converge at the churchyard, though for centuries past they have not been used for the villagers to go to church, and, indeed, two are so overgrown that they cannot have been used for any purpose and have ceased to be marked on any map. I need hardly say that there is at this village the usual legend of the Devil having shifted the stones, just as there is at Over and so many other places where the church is out of the way, and this, I also think, tends to show that the church now occupies the ground that early priests once taught was consecrated to the Devil. The moral of these legends is, to use the words of Denys of Burgundy, that the Devil is dead. The other case I have to mention is that of Norton-sub-Hamdon, in the county of Somerset. I have chosen this place for two reasons, firstly, because there are Roman remains in the village, and secondly, because between stone quarrying and wool weaving, there has been some continuous occupation besides that of agriculture. Nor, to give a third reason, was it ever so out of the world as Woking. The river Parrett runs through the parish, but the common fields do not run down to it, nor is the village on it, but upon a small streamlet. I would suggest for a reason that the river is not fordable at all times. One side of the parish embraces a great part of Ham-hill, on which there is an ancient British

earthwork, which is upwards of three miles in circuit, and encloses about 210 acres. Within this are a number of hut circles, which are so small and deep as to suggest that their ancient occupants were of a lower condition of culture than those which made the larger ones we find so plentifully in, for instance, Berwickshire. Mr. Trask, the author of a monograph on Norton, follows Mr. Gomme in thinking that they were occupied by neolithic or non-Aryan people, and he agrees with Canon Greenwell that they possessed considerable civilisation. Here, then, we have the hill folk living side by side with the Aryan community, and between them a narrow track of neutral ground. The Romans had a camp on Ham-hill, large enough and settled enough to have a small amphitheatre, but there is no reason to suppose that they interfered with the life of the district so long as the inhabitants duly paid tribute and probably acted as servants. It is noticeable that the Roman remains are practically confined to one place, and are not scattered over the common fields.

The church is somewhat out of the way, lying behind the village on very slightly elevated ground, and approached by two lanes, one from the village street and one from a lane dividing a field called the Long Furlong from another which bears the suggestive name of Broadmead. Mr. Trask does not doubt, nor do I, that the church marks the site of the village meeting-place. "Here was held," says he, "the tun moot, where justice was administered, and where parochial business of all kinds was transacted." The most important thing in the place is that there are four common fields, in one of which the scattered yards or acres, or "rugges," as they are sometimes called, are only less clearly marked than at Malmesbury. "The large fields," says Mr. Trask, "were certainly held by several occupiers, in acres or strips, and not in large portions." As late as a vestry held in 1812, it was decided that "no person to stock more than 25 sheep to the living in the Common Fields, or on Ham Hill; any person not having sheep, to stock two horses in lieu of 25 sheep; and not to stock bullocks or pigs within the said parish of Norton, but sheep and horses only." I would call your attention to two points in this: one, the fact that the land was all meadow, having ceased to be

arable, the other that the grazing ground on Ham Hill slopes is included in the village land.* The exclusion of cows is odd, but that of pigs can be easily explained on totemistic grounds, if not on the more prosaic one that they destroy turf in feeding. I would also ask you to notice that in Norton we find reference to the Common Bakehouse, which points to the communal hearth fire.

Of course, in this city we are intensely Roman. I hope all duly appreciate our privilege in living close to the site of the largest Roman camp in Britain, possibly one of the largest in the world. I sometimes wonder if we realise quite how important it was in its influence on the natural history and topographical features of the district. At one time there were six legions said to be located here. Even allowing that they were like our own regiments, on a peace footing greatly below their professed strength, yet there must have been an army of from fifteen to twenty thousand men, and that for a considerable time. Think of all the camp followers there would be and of the servants and slaves required. Think too, of the multitude that would be engaged in supplying all their various needs, and then we shall be able to realise that the St. Albans of to-day is but a village to what it was in the first and second centuries. Not only the borough but, for a mile or two round, the country must have been covered with huts and villas, and all our wonder should be that the face should be so little changed. Doubtless most of the Roman dwellings were of wood, and that it was only in the camp and near thereto that they employed brick or stone, except perhaps the great among them, but even allowing for this, surely the destruction of Roman works is a thing to marvel at. The truth we have to grasp is that the Roman occupation was a mere settlement, and that it had small effect on the life of the people. Conquered, they went on living much as before, only being in subjection and paying tribute. The British peasant still farmed his common fields, still pursued his accustomed methods of cultivation, still built his communal house and his private hut, still divided and re-apportioned his communal lands. He might be friendly or unfriendly with the conquering Roman, but he kept his life apart; his sons did not wed

* For further information the reader is referred to Mr. Trask's "Norton-sub-Hamdon" (Taunton: Barnicott and Pearce).

with Roman maidens, nor did the haughty soldiers, as a common thing, take to wife the girls of Britain. Doubtless such customs as communal marriage, or others even more objectionable, would be repressed; doubtless, too, the cruel rites of the Druids would be discouraged, but little beyond this took place. The heathen British still made, as inferences lead us to believe, priests of the lowest of the people, according to pleasant non-Aryan custom—you will remember an instance in the Old Testament. Cæsar describes the functions of the Druids, which, if true, as there is no reason to suppose it not to be, clearly leads us to think that the Druids were non-Aryans, and that they performed the functions which, for instance, the Kolarian tribal priests perform for the village community in that part of India to-day. The truth is that the Roman occupation was a mere outside influence, and affected the British little as communities, though perhaps much individually in many cases. I can do no better than quote the pregnant words of Mr. Laurance Gomme: "The economical system of Rome . . . does not find a place in the primitive economies of Teutonic England. . . . On every side in England we see Rome and its civilisation destroyed or pushed on one side. Not only are cities and villas and roads trampled under foot or under the plough, but commerce and its economical system are pushed out of the way by village communities and their self-contained, self-supporting exclusiveness. Stone and brick lie in heaps at Cærlon, Wroxeter, Silchester, and Verulam, to be replaced by wattle and daub and uncarpentered oak. Manufactures, luxuries of all kinds ceased to exist, and the villager was clothed in the products of his own village, woven by the females of his own family." To us living where we do such words must come home with great force. As one author has pointed out, though the Briton had doubtless worked at making bricks for his Roman masters, yet once relieved of the servitude, he ceased to know how to fashion bricks at all, preferring houses of wood or mud. Nor were the Saxons better. As Roger of Wendover tells us, Ella and his three sons, when they had taken a Roman city and destroyed its inhabitants, wrecked the place and sat down under its walls, when they proceeded to cultivate after their own fashion and to build their accustomed

huts, in utter disregard of the palaces and temples which stood full in their sight. At St. Albans it was the same. There was brick and stone in huge quantities, but none used them. The churches of Ulsinus were of wood or wattle, though possibly erected on stone foundations, and it was not till the days of the Norman builders that even churchmen recognized the valuable quarry that lay ready to hand. It is to the churchmen and their iron rule, far more than to Roman or Saxon occupation, that we must trace the lack of evidence of the village community system in St. Albans. Of all feudal lords, they were the hardest, dividing to every man as they would. They ruled and terrified by ecclesiastical as well as temporal power, and, for their own purposes, divided and united holdings, often to economical advantage, but greatly to the loss of historical continuity. In another way, their rule was destructive. The temporal baron was often absent; the ecclesiastical lord constantly on the spot, in person or deputy; on church lands, therefore, no time was given for the recuperation of custom. Again, so long as he had his dues in money, men, or labour, the temporal lord cared little what the people did or believed. The churchman perpetually interfered; if it was not a matter of this world it was of the next.

At the commencement of my paper I mentioned the question of natural history. I think each great Roman centre, each colony, was only planted where it was beyond dispute that the inhabitants would be, humanly speaking, certain not to be starved, or in other words, they were only set down at places where there were communities of such size and degree of civilisation as to promise adequate subsistence. This must have meant excessive cultivation, such cultivation as we see in some of the Swiss Cantons. On this point I am most unqualified to speak, even more than on the others I have touched on in this paper, but judging from my own partial observation, I must say that I have been struck by the narrow range of flora and insect life around many of our great Roman towns. The same thing has struck me forcibly at Chichester, at York, at Dorchester, at Rochester, and at other places. At Wareham, where there was a small Roman camp, following on a great British one, where a busy Saxon town succeeded the

Roman, and a mediæval port the Saxon town, the same thing is apparent, while within a very short distance is a veritable paradise of ferns and floral life. But this subject is one I prefer to leave to experts. I would suggest that the denudation of wood at these centres is answerable for much, and that the subject is one worthy of investigation, and likely to lead to important results.

I trust you have noticed how carefully I have kept clear of the title of my paper. My object has been to present to you some general picture of our British village community system, to mention its salient points, and to emphasise the enormous part it has played in building up our national life, and body of common law. It has been frequently said that the time between the withdrawal of the Romans and the settlement of the Saxon kingdoms, is the interregnum of British history. In this paper I have dared to be so bold as to suggest that there is no interregnum; that the Roman occupation did not touch, but only gave pause to, the development of life in our island, and a pause that in the endless centuries of Aryan and non-Aryan cults can scarcely be deemed of importance as measured by time. Further, I venture to think that those who desire to bridge over this alleged dark gulf, must disregard the Roman occupation, and endeavour to reproduce those few hundred years by careful examination of custom and tradition, and by comparison with the conditions of other countries, and they be many, wherein the village community is still more or less flourishing.
