PART II.—PAPERS, ETC.

The Ethnology of Somerset from the Neolithic Age to the close of the Roman Dominion.

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being his Presidential Address at the Annual Meeting, Clevedon, July 4th, 1922.

IN 1912 you chose me as President and in taking the chair to-day for the second time I thank the Society for the double honour that they have shown me,—a Somerset man by adoption and, as I see in the last volume of *Proceedings*, the oldest living member, dating from 1862. It is with mixed pleasure that I am here. While it is a great joy to revisit the County in which my first scientific efforts began, and where they have been followed up by so many other explorers, and also to see my newer, I cannot forget my older friends, some of them fellow-workers with me in the County, and all enthusiastic members of our Society. They have gone before, but their work has been taken up by their successors with unabated vigour, with the result that the natural history, the architecture, the prehistory and the history of the County have been brought up to the knowledge of to-day, in our publications, and in our museum at Taunton. Our *Proceedings* present the same high standard of quality now as they have ever shown, and the explorations carried on by the Society, both independently and in co-operation with other bodies, are daily adding to our knowledge of the past.

The County offers an unbounded field for enterprise, and I would suggest that the energies of the Society be specially

directed to the carrying on of the excavations in Glastonbury Abbey and to the exploration of the Lake Villages. We can now restore the plan of the great abbey, and realize the grand scale of the buildings that have gone. We can see in the fragments of equal-armed incised crosses peculiar to British and Irish Christianity[1] and of others adorned with the rope pattern, that have been used for building materials in the Norman nave, remains belonging to the pre-Norman period before the British Church had passed under the dominion of Rome. Further exploration will undoubtedly throw more light on this the greatest of our ecclesiastical foundations that go back to the earliest times of the British Church.

The Lake Village at Glastonbury has been fully explored, but there still remains the equally important site at Meare which is now in hand. From the discoveries already made it will certainly add greatly to our knowledge of Britain before the Roman Conquest and give us a vivid picture of the social life and the commercial relations of our County that have already been indicated by finds in the other lake village.

The Museum at Taunton.

The establishment of the Museum at Taunton is one of the most important works of the Society. When I first visited it with Mr. Ayshford Sanford the specimens relating to the County were more or less mingled with curiosities from foreign lands, as at that time was generally the case in provincial museums. Our first task was to classify on scientific lines, with the aid of Mr. Bidgood the Curator, the specimens that threw light on our County. Then later came the large additions made by the exploration of Wookey Hole, and by the purchase of Mr. Beard's collection from the Banwell Caves, together with the results of other diggings. Thus the Museum grew until the limited space at our disposal was filled up. The last stage in its evolution, is mainly due to the ability of

1. Dr. Forrest Browne, formerly Bishop of Bristol, told me that the Norman architects were in the habit of breaking up and using these crosses for building materials, and I can confirm this from my own observation in various parts of Britain during the last twenty years.

our present Assistant-Secretary and Curator, Mr. St. George Gray. At the present time it is a fully equipped museum in the old Castle of Taunton, and can be made an educational instrument of the greatest possible importance to the general public ; like those of Bristol, Manchester, and other great towns.

The general drift of modern education is towards the study of things as well as of books, and there is no reason why the Taunton Museum should not be used by the primary and secondary schools of the district with the same success as the museums in Manchester. It has outgrown the resources of our Society and has become a County institution which ought to be supported out of the rates, as in other places. There is no special difficulty in co-ordinating the interests of the Society with those of the various bodies who are concerned with the education of the people, and especially the County Council and the municipality of Taunton. The work of the Society lies in the field of research and discovery, and the Society can only collect the materials for the use of teachers in a well organized museum. It cannot undertake the teaching function that finds its proper place in the scheme of public education. In my address in 1912 I brought this matter before the Society, I again appeal to local patriotism to use the museum in the general scheme of education.

I would suggest that all the institutions for the study of things in the County, in Bath, Bristol, Wells, and Taunton, should be, as has already been done in Manchester, brought into closer touch with one another so as to prevent overlapping, and that they should be associated with the teaching bodies in the various centres—from the University of Bristol down to the elementary schools.

It would not be difficult for our Society to devise a practical scheme beginning with Taunton Museum.

The Ethnology of Somerset.

We meet here to-day in Clevedon, a place eminently fitted by its position for an enquiry into the ethnology of Somerset, because it is within sight of the land of the Silures—the only

pre-Celtic aboriginal group of tribes that have left their name in the historic record in Britain. We look northwards over the Channel to Monmouthshire, which at the time of the Roman Conquest was inhabited by a race according to Tacitus closely allied to the Spaniards (Iberi) in their dark complexion and black hair. To the south are the Mendip Hills with their chain of hill-forts, and on the west at Weston-super-Mare the great hill fort of Worlebury commands the shores of the Channel and the adjacent marshes, while to the east, as far as Bristol and the gorge of the Avon, are hill-forts and other prehistoric remains, all of which are closely associated with the swarthy Iberic aborigines. Who were they ? What was their relation to other races in Britain ? And to what extent have they been supplanted by other tribes in Somerset ? These questions I shall attempt to answer in the following manner.

The Iberic Tribes.

The first tribes in Britain, after it was severed from the Continent in the interval between the Pleistocene and Prehistoric periods, were the slenderly built black-haired people known in history as Iberic and termed by Sergi the Mediterranean Race. They were probably non-Aryan and spoke a tongue now represented by the Basques of southern France and northern Spain. They came from the south, where they have left their name in geography in the ancient Iberia extending south of the Caucasus from the Black to the Caspian Sea. In Western Europe they occupied Spain and Portugal, known after them to Greek and Latin writers as the Iberian Peninsula. They penetrated northwards as far as Ireland, which according to Professor Rhys is called " Hibernia " after their name. So far as I know they constitute the earliest element in the ethnology not only of Britain but of the Continent. They crossed the Channel into Britain in the Neolithic Age, with their flocks and herds and Neolithic arts. They were the first shepherds of Salisbury Plain and gradually spread over the whole of the British Isles, where they remained undisturbed by invasion till the beginning of the Bronze Age. The numerous neolithic axes found on the

surface and in burial-mounds in association with their skeletons prove that they occupied Somersetshire in the Neolithic Age.

The Incoming of the Goidels.

A new race appears on the Continent in the Neolithic Age represented by the Goidels, the elder branch of the Celts belonging to the Alpine group of peoples. They spread over Gaul, which was named after them, and passed into Spain forming there the Celt-Iberian people. They did not pass over into Britain until they were armed with the better weapons of the Bronze Age. They brought along with them the arts associated with the knowledge of bronze and the cult of the megalithic temples, such as Avebury and Stonehenge, and the practice of cremation. They rapidly overran the whole of Britain and Ireland imposing their speech on the conquered, and leaving their marks not only in their habitations and tombs but in the names of many of the rivers and places throughout the whole of Britain.

The Goidels in Somerset lived side by side with the Iberic natives, and adopted from them the practice of burial by inhumation, and here, as elsewhere in England, probably formed a small governing class in a large Iberic population. We may infer from the many names of Gaelic origin[1] in British topography that the Gaelic speech prevailed throughout the whole Island. In Yorkshire for example we find a pool on the river Cover, a tributary of the Ure, marked on the 6-inch ordnance map as Lindub (*Lin*=pool, *Dubh*=black), and in Hampshire a similar pool on the Test above Romsey called Dublin, both names having been handed down from one generation to another from the time when Gaelic was the ordinary tongue. In Somerset the Gaelic *dun* (=fort) occurs in Clevedon, Dundry, Dinder and Dundon, and the river Axe (*Exe, Usk, Esk,* the Gaelic for water) and many others, show

1. The suggestion by Cuno Meyer and other German philologists that the Gaelic names were introduced into Britain from Ireland between the third and the ninth centuries after Christ is negatived by the wide range of these names from the Scotch Highlands southwards to the English Channel. This implies a conquest and settlement that could not have taken place without leaving any trace in the historical record. There are no traces.

that the Gaelic tongue was spoken in our County. They are philological islands indicating the Gaelic tongue after it was submerged by the speech of later invaders.

There is no direct evidence as to the extent to which the Goidelic element was represented in the Goidelic (Gaelic) tribes of the Bronze Age in Somerset, but it was probably not less than that which is proved to have been present in the Brythonic tribes of the following Age of Prehistoric Iron.

The Incoming of the Brythons.

The Brythons, forming the younger or Welsh branch of the Celts of the Continent, had already made themselves masters of our Island, called after them "Britannia," before the expedition of Pytheas fitted out in Massilia (Marseilles) about 315 B.C., had made known to the Greeks the manners and customs of the tribes inhabiting South-Eastern Britain. They introduced from the Continent the higher civilisation of the Prehistoric Iron Age, and a commerce with the civilised peoples of the Mediterranean had sprang up by sea and by well defined trade-routes overland through Germany and Gaul. They had also introduced their language (Welsh) which is proved by the study of the existing maps to have been current over the greater part of our Island, in Scotland as well as England. In our County names of Welsh derivation leave no room for doubt that it was the vernacular, and that it had gradually supplanted the Gaelic tongue as the Brythonic tribes pushed westward into Devon and Cornwall, absorbing into their mass the native population. We may quote for example in this district the numerous Combes (*cwm*=valley, ravine) and Pens (*pen*=hill), the Mendips (*maen*=rock), Ebber (*ebr*=pass), Brean Down (*bri*=peak), Wookey (*ogof*=*cave*), Priddy (*prid*=earth), Banwell (*ban*=high), Cadbury (*cad*=battle), Maesbury (*maes*=open field), and lastly the river Avon (*afon*=water).

The Belgae.

When Cæsar invaded Britain the Belgae—the last group of Celtic tribes more or less mixed with Germans—had already

become masters of Southern Britain, into which they penetrated afterwards, as far to the west as the river Parret. Their further progress was stopped by the Roman Conquest. They have left no trace behind in the ethnology of Britain, and probably spoke a Brythonic tongue allied to Welsh.

The Iberic Element in Somerset in the Prehistoric Iron Age.

We must now consider the Iberic race in Somerset after the Brythonic Conquest. I have already pointed out in the concluding chapters of the Glastonbury Lake Village monograph that the inhabitants of that village and of the great hill-fort of Worlebury at Weston-super-Mare, and in finds in other parts of the County that belong to the Prehistoric Iron Age, are of Iberic type. From this we may infer that it was the dominant ethnic element in a Welsh-speaking population in Somerset. It was dominant also in Wilts, Dorset and Sussex, and generally throughout the south of England.

The Iberic Element in Somerset under the Roman Occupation and after.

The four centuries of the Roman dominion in Britain have left no traces behind of changes either in the ethnology or the language. The Iberic race was still dominant and the vernacular was Welsh, although Latin was the tongue of the officials and of the literary classes, the foreign element being too small to affect materially either the one or the other.[1] Both remained as they were in pre-Roman times until they were overwhelmed by the English settlement. Both are still represented in our County by the brunette section of the population, and in the names of Welsh derivation in a topography that is mainly English.

1. The foreign element is represented by 'the Romani' of the Early Welsh records, and by the words derived from Latin in the Welsh tongue.