

The Rev. PREBENDARY SCARTH, M.A., read a paper on the

Vestiges of Roman Villas which have been discovered in the neighbourhood of Bath.

He commenced by stating that the Roman remains found in Bath entitled it to the rank of one of the most elegant cities in Roman Britain ; but the villas which had been discovered in the immediate neighbourhood gave a still greater idea of its opulence and security. These, although mentioned incidentally by various writers, had never been collected into one record ; two or three had been described, but the notices of the rest are meagre. His object, then, was to give some account of the many that had existed within a radius of seven or eight miles of the city. The villas for the most part lie along the lines of Roman road which led to the city, and are generally not far distant from these main roads. He then enumerated them, but the lateness of the evening prevented his going into any particular description of each, or describing the many objects of interest found among their ruins. The following were enumerated :—Wellow, Newton St. Loe, Combe Down, Box, Warleigh, Farleigh Castle, Iford, Colerne, North Wraxall. At these places considerable remains had been found, and some beautiful tessellated floors perfect, or indications of such floors. Remains of villas had been found,

and some beautiful tessellated floors perfect, or indications of such floors. Remains of villas had been found at Cheney Court, near Box, Hasilbury, Langridge, Congrove, Grammers Rocks, Farmers Field, Hanham. At these latter places the remains were not so perfect, but sufficient to shew that they were Roman villas. Also at Camerton many Roman buildings had been laid bare, but these had been described in the last number of the Journal of the Somerset Archæological Society, just issued. After the villas had been enumerated, and a few of their contents noticed very briefly, Mr. Scarth went on to say that there are certain particulars in these villas which are worthy of notice. The regularity of their form—they were either built round a court, and formed three sides of a square, or else were oblong, often with a projecting portion at right angles to the main body of the building. They were all provided with a hypocaust and baths, and had tessellated pavements of elegant workmanship. They were accompanied with out-buildings, and enclosed in an area of some extent by a boundary wall. Interments are found within this boundary, and are of two kinds, cremation and inhumation. They were supplied with earthenware utensils of every description, and with glass, both for the windows and for domestic use. Coins are found in the greatest abundance, and to the latest period of the Roman occupation. The situations are well chosen, and the villas are for the most part represented at the present day by elegant modern country houses, in the same locality and near the same site. They were always well supplied with water, and the wells are of excellent construction. It would be a very interesting work to collate the patterns of the various pavements that have been laid open; out of the many that have been destroyed we have still some

designs of great interest. Thus in the villas around Bath we have Orpheus or Apollo playing on the lyre, we have the record of a charioteer, we have animals and birds of different kinds, as well as sea-monsters, lately found in Bath ; we have the figure of an elephant on the pavement at Watley, near Frome ; and the curious figures in the Pitney pavement with certain emblems in their hands, which have never been satisfactorily interpreted. All this gives us a great idea of the art and refinement of that period. The villas around Bath, however, do not seem to have equalled in dimensions those laid open in other parts of England, as at Woodchester or Bignor, nor the elegant remains which exist at Lydney, in Gloucestershire, the plan of which shews something of the luxury and art described by Pliny in his Laurentine villa. It is to be regretted that the remains found at Lydney have never been published, though accurate drawings have been made of them, and all the articles discovered there are carefully preserved by the owner of the property. These were exhibited at the Meeting of the Archæological Institute at Gloucester, in 1860. Mr. Wright, in a very interesting chapter of his "Celt, Roman, and Saxon," has given a sketch of the number of villas that must have met the eye of the traveller as he journeyed along the line of some of the Roman roads ; but his enumeration only partially describes what must have existed in Roman times, and his enumeration of those in Somerset is very limited and imperfect. The superstructure of these villas is a subject which has perplexed antiquaries, and on which they are not decided—namely, if the upper portions were constructed of stone or wood. "I am inclined to think," said Mr. Scarth, "that wood must have furnished the materials of the upper portions, and that the stone walls were only carried to a

certain height above the ground-floors. The remains seem to indicate that they were hastily plundered, and then set fire to, and that the roof and timbers fell in upon the floors, which are found often indented, and covered with burnt matter, and roofing tiles. After remaining in this condition, it may be for centuries, the portions of the walls still standing were afterwards used as quarries, when stone was needed for other buildings, or to make enclosures. The Saxon population left them in ruins, the Norman and medieval inhabitants used them as materials, and thus little is left to our time, except the foundation, and that which has happily been buried under their *débris*. But even what remains may still be useful to this generation, and may be made the means of conveying not only historical information, but practical knowledge. The consumption of fuel has of late engaged the attention of the British Association, and their President has remarked upon the waste of it in domestic uses. He says, 'In warming houses we consume in our *open fires* about five times as much coal as will produce the same heating effect when burned in a close and properly constructed stove. Without sacrificing the luxury of a visible fire, it would be easy, by attending to the principles of radiation and convection, to render available the greater part of the heat which is now so improvidently discharged into the chimney ;'—and surely examining the plan of these Roman villas may suggest to us some hints for carrying out this very desirable economy. If a whole house could be heated by the same quantity of fuel which is usually consumed in two or three grates, a great advantage would arise both in health and comfort. Would it not be possible now for our architects to contrive brick flues upon the old Roman principle, which should convey the heat through the walls of the several rooms,

and thus keep the whole house at a certain temperature, and be regulated by valves as was done in Roman houses? A fire in every bedroom is an expensive luxury in a modern house, especially when fuel is dear, but no one likes to enter a chill or damp bedroom after leaving a comfortable study or drawing-room fire. Surely modern science might here take a lesson from ancient art, and devise an inexpensive plan of warming a whole house, by dispersing the heat, now wasted in the chimney, through the entire building, by means of safely constructed flues. Any notice of Roman agriculture would extend this paper beyond a reasonable limit, but in treating of villas it must be borne in mind that they were generally residences with a farm attached, and all the appliances of agriculture, which was a favourite occupation of the wealthier Romans. Those who would study this very interesting subject cannot do better than consult Professor Daubeny's Lectures on Roman Husbandry, published in 1857, (Oxford: J. H. and J. Parker). He will find there brought together all that can be culled from the classic writers on the subject—a subject, too, which has, indeed, had their particular attention; and he will read the Georgics of Virgil with a very different appreciation of Roman knowledge and Roman agricultural attainments, to what he has hitherto had. At the present day, when agriculture has become a science, no well-educated gentleman should be without such knowledge, and it will greatly enhance the pleasure of his farming pursuits; and should he desire fuller and clearer ideas of what the rich Roman villas actually were, and would he fully appreciate the remains which are found even yet in this country, as at Lydney, Bignor, Woodchester, Cirencester, or Wellow, I would refer him to Mr. Castle's 'Villas of the Ancients,' a folio work of the last

century, of great merit, and an excellent aid to the study of Pliny's interesting description of his Laurentine villa.

“One word, in conclusion, as to the state of our island during a considerable part of the Roman occupation. We cannot suppose that the Romans began to build villas until their power was consolidated, and their dominion fixed and secure. It must, therefore, have been after the time of Agricola; and this idea the words of Tacitus tend to confirm. The earliest, therefore, probably date about the end of the first century of the Christian era; the latest, we have seen, indicate occupation to the date of the Romans quitting Britain. The frequency with which they occur in the southern counties, gives us an idea of the settled and secure condition of the country, and the ease and comfort in which the Roman population dwelt. But these villas, with their enriched floors and elegant refinements, are not found north of the River Tees. I am not aware of any having been found north of Yorkshire, though a few have been met with in that county. The southern and western parts of the island appear to have been in a state of security, whilst the northern portion was exposed to perpetual inroads, and required a strong force to protect it. In the principal towns and the stations along the main lines of road, garrisons were placed, and these secured the peace of the country; while the higher classes appear to have lived secure in their country villas, cultivating their lands, and occupied in the pursuits of the chase, and, as Sir R. C. Hoare thinks, on terms of friendly intercourse with the native inhabitants. It is pleasing to think that, notwithstanding the dark shade history has thrown over the Roman occupation of our island, there are yet signs of peace, comfort, civilization, and refinement, which indicate

that society in that age had its bright as well as its dark aspect, and that the Roman dominion brought with it much that compensated for the loss of former rude independence. In fact, if we may judge from a comparison of the Roman remains with the remains of medieval times, we must allow that they contrast very favourably. In medieval times we have the fortified castle of the baron, a petty yet almost independent power, holding dominion over the neighbourhood, where very little safety existed except within the limits of his stronghold; while under the Roman sway we have everywhere remains of elegant county dwellings, unfortified and apparently perfectly secure, very different from the moated grange or peel-tower, while the roads were well kept in all directions, and were open to traffic, and secured from depredators by having regular garrisons at proper intervals. If we may judge from the *vestiges only* which remain of these two periods, we must, I think, award the palm for comfort and security to the period of the Roman occupation."

The Rev. F. WARRE gave notice of the "Earthworks on Musbury Hill."

Mr. W. AYSHFORD SANFORD read a paper on the "Coal Formations of Somersetshire."

Mr. W. BOYD DAWKINS delivered an address on "some of the earliest traces of the Human Race, especially in connection with the Animals, whose remains are found in the Mendip Caves, and elsewhere."

The Rev. W. ARTHUR JONES gave an account of "Mr. Beard's Collection of Mendip Cave Bones," and submitted a scheme for the purchase of them for the Society, by a special subscription. This scheme was favourably received, and has since been carried out.