The Annals of WEST COKER

BY THE LATE

Sir Matthew Nathan

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

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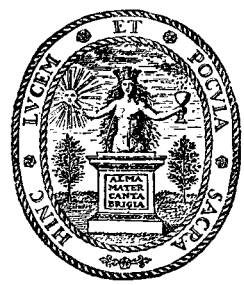

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

NOTHING much ever happened at West Coker. No great man was born or lived or died there. No battle was fought near it nor did any constitutional crisis have its rise in its neighbourhood. It was never the centre of great industry nor the source of widespreading trade. No relic of saint nor monument of art nor scene of natural beauty ever attracted visitors to it.

Its records are scant. Of old inscriptions there are none. The manor and the hundred have left behind them no court rolls. No musters remain from early calling-up of soldiers. The church registers that have been preserved are comparatively late in date and the churchwardens' accounts only begin 220 years ago. Of civil documents pertaining to the parish, no old ones remain. There is no collection of letters written from the village.

The worker who has come to this unpromising field has brought to his task no aptitude or training for historical or economic research. He has no knowledge of dialect nor instinctive appreciation of folklore and has had no special opportunity for collecting facts from records or tradition.

And yet—and yet, the *Annals* of West Coker have seemed to him worth the compilation. The development of that part of England where the Coker villages lie, though it has followed similar lines to that of other parts, has had differences due to the antecedents, heredity and environments of the people and to the climate, soil and surface of the land. The story told of such development can be written with endless variety by chroniclers in different parts of the country. The story of the villages and eventually that of the one village is a miniature history of England and a similar history is open to any person in any village to read from remains and records of the past for his own satisfaction, and to write for that of his neighbours.

The system followed need not be the same as has been adopted in this case: namely, to tell, as far as possible in chronological sequence, the prehistory and early history, down to the compilation of Domesday Book, of a tract of country which had its main features common; then, for the 305 years when two villages in it were under one lord, the story which they shared has been related; and then for another 438 years the detailed happenings of a single parish.

The *Annals* originated in long-ago translations and explanations by Professor Eileen Power of two muniments in the rich collection of Mrs G. Walker Heneage of Coker Court. They grew up in the following ten years on nourishment provided from the Public Record Office by Miss Nellie McN. O'Farrell and extracted by me from published and other sources too numerous to mention here but referred to in footnotes. Illustrations have been omitted. Some technical help has been given by Somerset friends, Mr H. St George Gray, Miss Sophie Bates Harbin, Mr A. Vivian-Neal and the Rev. George Nicholson, rector of West Coker. I have not hesitated to impose hard work

on my successive secretaries, Miss Eileen Dover and Miss Edna Warry, who has given help in the preparation of the maps.

My own share of the work has been little more than its arrangement. On the other hand, my gain from it has been great—pleasure and interest, when these could no longer be drawn from work in such stations of life as it has been my good fortune to occupy.

M.N.

EDITOR'S PREFACE

SIR MATTHEW NATHAN died soon after he had completed the writing of *The Annals of West Coker* and before he could prepare it for publication: whereupon the responsibility for the book passed to Eileen Power, a close friend of Sir Matthew's, and his literary executor. But the war broke out soon after she had taken charge of the manuscript, and her own death followed not many months later. In fulfilment of her last wishes I took over her obligation to Sir Matthew.

This obligation could not be fulfilled as speedily as I, or as Sir Matthew's heirs and friends, might have wished. Nothing could be done while wartime restrictions were on, and I was on national service. When, in 1945, I was at last able to turn my attention to the book I soon realized that the task was going to be both complicated and protracted. To begin with, a number of excisions had to be made. Sir Matthew's text was too long to go into one volume; and both Sir Matthew's executors and myself agreed that a single volume of manageable size was desirable on economic and other grounds. Sir Matthew's original text contained a certain amount of 'general history' which was not directly related to West Coker or the county of Somerset, and which was not always up-to-date. Similarly, the last section of the book, dealing with local and national events after 1800, was different in character and not as valuable as the earlier parts. By agreement with Mr E. J. Nathan, Sir Matthew's heir and executor, I decided to omit this section as well as most of the passages of general history.

The main difficulty, however, was not in deciding what to leave out but in editing the remainder of the text. Although Sir Matthew brought to the writing of the book his great gift of accurate statement and a scrupulous regard for detail, the text, as he left it, was not yet in a condition which he himself would have regarded as fit for the press. Many of the facts needed verifying, nearly all the footnotes needed checking and re-casting to conform with scholarly practice. To have investigated all Sir Matthew's facts and sources would have meant redoing the whole of his work, and was unnecessary as well as impracticable. Nevertheless, a very large number of statements and documentary references had to be re-examined—more especially the statements which were based on other people's notes, or did not at first sight appear to be fully supported by documentary evidence. This took a great deal of my time; yet even then, one or two of Sir Matthew's references, such as those to the manuscripts at Coker Court on pp. 184 and 229 could not be traced.

Apart from the excisions and the corrected details of fact and reference, Sir Matthew's text has not been tampered with. Here and there his narrative could have been brought up-to-date by the use of authorities and sources made available since his death. But this could not have been done without re-writing whole passages of the book and imposing upon it my own style

and ideas. I therefore decided to leave these passages in the form in which Sir Matthew had written them.

Throughout this work of editing I had the assistance of Mr E. J. Nathan, who also read the page proofs. I owe also a deep debt of gratitude to Miss Elizabeth Crittall, a pupil of Eileen Power's and an editor of the Victoria County Histories, for her help in reading and checking the text.

M. M. POSTAN

PETERHOUSE, CAMBRIDGE
January 1956

FOREWORD

LT.-COL. SIR MATTHEW NATHAN,

P.C., G.C.M.G., D.L., J.P., R.E., F.S.A.

3 JANUARY 1862—18 APRIL 1939

MATTHEW NATHAN purchased the Manor House, West Coker, near Yeovil, in 1907. His earliest known ancestor of whom we have any record was his great-great-grandfather, who is supposed to have come to this country from Dessau in Germany in about 1725.

This man's second son, Myer Nathan (1734–1811), was in business as a cutter of quill pens; the quills were purchased, in lots of 20,000 and over, from the Hudson's Bay Company, and there remain in the possession of the family the originals of receipted bills dated 1759 and 1760. According to contemporary editions of the Post Office Directory, Nathan and Sons, quill merchants, carried on business at 45 Mansell Street, Whitechapel, E.C., and the last entry of the firm is that in the directory for 1831.

Matthew Nathan's father was Jonah Nathan (1810–86), the third child of Nathaniel Nathan (1760–1850). At about the time he arrived at manhood various changes and improvements were taking place in the manufacture of writing implements, the most important of these being the substitution of steel pens for quill pens. So the Mansell Street House of Nathan and Sons ceased to exist and the latest-joined of the sons went into that of Thomas de la Rue and continued in it for the greater part of his life, becoming eventually the senior partner. At one time the firm had a contract for the supply of quill pens to the Bank of England, and when, more than one hundred years later, Sir Matthew Nathan was 'pricked' for the office of High Sheriff of Somerset and reluctantly, owing to his innate modesty, had to obtain armorial bearings he secured some little amusement from the transaction by selecting for the device on his shield 'Azure three Pens in fesse Argent', thus recalling the occupation of his forbears and endowing it with that sense of historical continuity which will be found so apparent in the *Annals* and which was ever his particular pleasure. Characteristic too was the choice of a motto—*Nec rogitando nec negando*—a principle to which he rigidly adhered throughout his career but which nevertheless brought him a variety of appointments with all of which he was well able to cope.

His father was twice married; his second marriage, to Miriam Jacobs, daughter of Lewis Jacobs, a solicitor, took place in 1860 and Matthew Nathan, their second son, was born on 3 January 1862; he had five brothers and two sisters, none of whom are alive today. His mother, twenty-five years her husband's junior, was clever, practical, far-seeing and resolute in facing facts. Both she and her husband belonged to good Jewish city families, long established in England, both characterized by an entirely British outlook. But

at that period Jewish boys were not welcomed at the best English public schools and Mrs Nathan, determined that her family should have the best possible education, to that end engaged a resident mathematical tutor and a succession of resident foreign governesses—chiefly German—and visiting masters for all special subjects and languages, including French and Italian, from a near-by 'crammers'' establishment. She herself supervised their intensive education in two schoolrooms in their commodious house with an advisable—though occasionally harsh—strictness. This intimate and exclusive schoolroom life precluded 'the boys' from games; there could be none of the 'public school spirit', no 'team work', none of the rough and tumble of school life. They learned to ride, swim and shoot, but in their tiny circle they acquired no love of sport. Not until they went to Woolwich, Cooper's Hill or Cambridge—with uncanny insight their mother selected the careers best suited to their individual capacity—did they make friends outside the 'visiting' circle of their family. This lack of a 'public school' life they all deplored later, for it made understanding of others less easy and did even suggest an aloofness they did not feel. But it was undoubtedly due to this intimate home life that they grew up so closely united and that the bonds of fraternal and sisterly affection were never broken.

Matthew distinguished himself as a cadet at the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich, winning the Pollock medal and six prizes, being senior under officer and receiving the sword of honour on passing out; he was said to have been the only cadet mentioned by name by the late Duke of Cambridge. He received his commission in the Royal Engineers on 1 May 1880. On completing the usual course at Chatham, during which he visited Antwerp to study its fortifications and to meet their designer, he was appointed to a Royal Engineer district in the Midlands. After a few months there he was called up to the fortifications branch of the War Office, to which he returned in the intervals of foreign service during the next seven years. This service was first of all at Sierra Leone, where as Commanding Royal Engineer, West Africa Settlements, and Acting Captain, he designed the fortifications which were to convert the harbour into a coaling station. He was in Egypt and the Sudan for a year (1884–5) at the time of the first struggle with the Mahdi, when an army was taken up the Nile by Lord Wolseley too late for the rescue of General Gordon. For six months of this time Matthew Nathan was employed in the 8th Company, Royal Engineers, on the construction of a railway across the big bend of the Nile which forms the second cataract. Then two successive dry seasons were spent by him in Sierra Leone in the construction of the defence works he had designed. He had with him another engineer officer, the first appointed from Kingston College, Canada, and a small staff of non-commissioned officers, and employed some 1700 work people.

Between 1887 and the end of 1890, he was in India and Burma designing and, in some cases, superintending the erection of coast defences at Karachi, Bombay, Rangoon, Calcutta, and of land forts on the north-west frontier. He visited other parts of India and Burma, including Madras, Mandalay, Simla, etc., in the same connexion, took part in 1889 in an expedition in the

Lushai Hills on the north-east frontier, and returned to England in 1891, via the Persian Gulf and across Persia, from Bushire to Enzeli, the Caspian, and the Caucasus and round by the Crimea, Constantinople and Athens.

For the best part of the following ten years he was at the War Office, Whitehall, first of all in the fortifications branch, dealing with questions of coast defence and designing batteries for the Isle of Wight and other parts which it was considered in those days would be liable to raiding attack by cruisers in the event of the then anticipated war with France and Russia. The last part of this period he was secretary to the Colonial Defence Committee, a body that brought together the advice of the Admiralty, War Office and other departments on matters of defence for the benefit of the dominions and colonies. In this he was a successor to George Sydenham Clark (later Lord Sydenham), who was afterwards Governor of New South Wales and of Bombay. Various colonial governors and military commanders were in those days among the visitors to the committee's office. It was in this capacity also that Matthew Nathan attended, as the representative of the War Office and of the committee, the conference of premiers on the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee in 1897, held under the presidency of Mr Joseph Chamberlain, and addressed them on the subject of defence. He also represented the same departments on the first committee that considered the question of cable communications in time of war. This committee was sitting when the Fashoda incident in the Sudan nearly brought about the long-expected war with France.

In the autumn of 1899, at the instance of the Colonial Office, Matthew Nathan went back to Sierra Leone to act for six or seven months for the governor, Sir Frederic Cardew, who went on leave after the suppression of a rebellion resulting from the imposition of a hut-tax in that colony, and in the following year he was appointed Governor of the Gold Coast at the time when a war with the Ashantis had resulted from an attempt to take possession of the Golden Stool—the emblem of sovereignty in that country. He was on the Gold Coast for over four years with one short spell at home. It was a time of reorganization, the native government having to be replaced in Ashanti, and British administration to be inaugurated in the northern territories, north of Ashanti. In the early part of this governorship, there was a mutiny of Sierra Leone troops stationed in Coomassie, who marched to the coast and then towards the French frontier, giving rise to considerable anxiety, and to some unrest among the recently conquered Ashantis. In a comparatively few years, however, the completion of a railway from the coast to the Ashanti capital, the operations of the Ashanti Goldfields Mining Corporation and, most of all, the introduction of cocoa-growing weaned the Ashantis from the fighting lust which had so long made them difficult neighbours to our settlement on the Gold Coast. Other matters engaging the attention of the governor at this time were the settlement of the boundaries on the west with the French and on the east with the Germans; the commencement of a general survey of the colony rendered necessary by the gold rush of those years, on which survey Australians and Canadians were largely employed; a reorganization of the general system of administration by provincial commissioners; and the adoption of the anti-

malarial measures recommended by Sir Ronald Ross who visited both Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast in Matthew Nathan's time. In the first complete year of that time one in eight of the Europeans in that colony had died of malarial fever and its consequences.

From the Gold Coast Sir Matthew Nathan, as he had by then become, was transferred to succeed Sir Henry Blake as Governor of Hong Kong in 1904. The principal incidents affecting that place in the two and a half years that followed were the Russo-Japanese war and some difficulties arising from the attempts of foreign coal-ships to violate neutrality; the commencement of the construction of the line connecting Hong Kong with Canton; and the loan by the Colonial Government to the viceroy of the Two Hu to enable him to repurchase the concession for the continuation of that line to Hankow in the north, which had passed into foreign hands. Large public works were being undertaken at the time, including roads on the mainland, water-supply works, and rebuildings to deal with the Chinese over-crowding which had made the bubonic plague so fatal in the colony.

In April of 1907, Sir Matthew Nathan was appointed to be Governor of Natal in South Africa. He spent the three summer months of that year on leave in England. There had been with him in Hong Kong, Mr Richard (A. Brabazon) Ponsonby, son of Jack Ponsonby (formerly of the Foreign Office) and grandson of Sir Spencer Ponsonby-Fane of Brympton. Mrs Jack Ponsonby, who was aware that he had been long hunting for a house in which to live when he retired from the public service, advised him to look at the manor house at West Coker. He went over there and at once decided to acquire it if it were possible. The negotiations with this in view were carried out by his brother Lt.-Col. Sir Frederic L. Nathan and were satisfactorily completed by the end of the year.

Sir Matthew arrived in Natal where there had recently been difficulties due to a difference of opinion between the home and local Ministers with regard to the suppression of a Zulu rebellion. A revival of trouble occurred shortly after the new governor's arrival, but it was suppressed without loss of life and through the tactfulness of Mr Winston Churchill, then Under Secretary for the Colonies, without further friction with the Natal Government. The other interest of the Natal situation in the last years of the decade was the meetings of the convention that was to effect the union of the South African Colonies. It first met in December 1908 at Durban where it was opened by the Natal Governor and later at Bloemfontein and Cape Town. Sir Matthew Nathan, who was still a major in the Royal Engineers and a lieutenant-colonel in the army, became honorary colonel of the Durban Light Infantry.

From Natal Sir Matthew Nathan was recalled to England at the commencement of 1910 after ten years in four colonial governments, to serve for ten years in four home departments. The first was the Post Office, where he was secretary first under Mr Sidney (afterwards Lord) Buxton, and then under Mr Herbert (now Viscount) Samuel. The office was then preparing its arguments in connexion with taking over the business of the National Telephone Company. A system of cheap night- and week-end cable messages

suggested by the secretary to the British Post Office was adopted by foreign countries and by the cable companies after conferences in London and a meeting with the secretary's French and German colleagues in Paris. Sir Matthew was again a member of a committee on cable communications in war, which on this occasion envisaged a different enemy from that of 1898, and was also a member of the board which administered the business of the Pacific Cable on behalf of the Governments owning it—Great Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

From the Post Office Sir Matthew was appointed, in 1911, to be chairman of the Board of Inland Revenue, where he served under the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr Lloyd George. The board was then attempting to give effect to the difficult provisions of land taxation introduced by 'The Finance Act, 1909–10, of 1910', and successive Finance Acts were involving questions of steepening super-tax. Sir Matthew was chairman in August 1914 and put before the Chancellor the first proposals for war taxation.

In July 1914 there had been trouble on the banks of the Liffey over an attempt to prevent a party of Irish volunteers carrying away arms that had been surreptitiously landed by methods similar to those of the volunteers in Ulster some months previously. Following this, it was thought necessary to make a change in Irish administration and Sir Matthew Nathan was appointed Under Secretary, whose duty it was to carry on the government under instructions from the Chief Secretary, during the time when the latter was necessarily absent from Ireland. Sir Matthew did not, however, take up his new post till October 1914, by which time the Irish volunteers had divided into two bodies, the majority following Mr John Redmond, the Irish parliamentary leader, and the other Mr John McNeill, the alleged purpose of the latter being the defence of the Irish nation and antagonism to Great Britain. A large number of those that followed Mr Redmond were eventually induced by him to enlist, while some with their arms joined the other section which became known as the Sinn Fein volunteers. These entered on a course of drilling and other preparations against Great Britain which, however, were only to be acted upon in support of a German landing in the country. The movement grew with the very partial success of the British arms in the first twenty months of the war, with the support of a fighting labour organization and with strong hostility to proposals to introduce conscription into Ireland. A futile attempt to land German munitions on the coast of Kerry led to an outbreak on Easter Monday (23 April) 1916. The volunteers occupied buildings in different parts of the city from which the troops reinforced from the Curragh and eventually from England could only displace them by a regular encircling attack involving heavy loss of men and great destruction of buildings. In a week the rebellion was crushed and the government of Ireland had passed into the hands of General Sir John Maxwell. It had caused considerable indignation in England and a Royal Commission, under the chairmanship of Lord Hardinge of Penhurst, was set up on 10 May 1916 to 'enquire into the causes of the recent outbreak of rebellion in Ireland and into the conduct and degree of responsibility of the civil and military executive in Ireland in

connection therewith'. On 26 June they reported that the main cause of the rebellion appeared to have been that lawlessness was allowed to grow up unchecked and that Ireland for several years past had been administered on the principle that it was safer and more expedient to leave law in abeyance if collision with any faction of the Irish people could thereby be avoided. In the course of fixing responsibility for the rebellion they stated:

> Sir Matthew Nathan assumed office as Under Secretary to the Irish Government in September 1914, only. In our view he carried out with the utmost loyalty the policy of the Government, and of his immediate superior the Chief Secretary, but we consider that he did not sufficiently impress upon the Chief Secretary during the latter's prolonged absences from Dublin the necessity for more active measures to remedy the situation in Ireland which on December 18th last in a letter to the Chief Secretary he described as 'most serious and menacing'.

In a letter written to Sir Matthew on 4 May, Mr George Bernard Shaw had already come to the same general conclusion:

> It is no more possible to govern a country on the assumption that such a convulsion is possible than it is to walk about London on the assumption that every man you meet may shoot you—though he *may*. Once the raising of an armed force of any denomination was tolerated the Government had to take the extra risk that all government runs from armed populations.

Before the commission had assembled, the Chief and Under Secretary had been called upon by the Prime Minister to resign their appointments. After the close of its sittings Sir Matthew reported for duty to the military authorities. He was employed from 12 June till 11 November as staff officer to the Chief Engineer, London Defences. Earthworks on positions north and south of the Thames, $39\frac{3}{4}$ and 35 miles long respectively, in preparation for an invasion in which no one greatly believed, were being thrown up by volunteers unfit for active service, who under the title of 'National Guard', made themselves available for this work and for the defence of the lines if necessary. Up to the end of June 1916 it had been proposed to make these earthworks of full profile and some $19\frac{3}{4}$ miles had been thus constructed on the two fronts. It was then decided that only breast-works with traverses three feet high, excavated from a shallow borrow-pit in front, should be thrown up in the first instance, to be completed if the emergency arose by large working parties, for the organization and transport of which a scheme had been drawn up and was kept up-to-date. Sir Matthew Nathan's duty was the preparation and co-ordination of the programmes of the different units engaged on the work and the taking of steps to expedite its progress. He was also appointed by the Home Secretary to a committee for finding useful employment for conscientious objectors.

On 12 November 1916 he entered into new employment. It had been decided to reorganize the administration of war pensions and he was nominated to be secretary to the new department. The bill creating this did not become law as the Ministry of Pensions Act until 22 December 1916. This Act trans-

ferred to the Ministry of Pensions 'the powers and duties of the Admiralty, the Chelsea Commissioners and the War Office in respect of the administration of pensions and grants to officers and men, and to their widows, children and dependants, and to persons in the nursing service of the naval and military forces', except 'service' as distinct from 'disability' pensions. With the completion of the transfer of the staff from the various offices that had previously dealt with pensions, that of the Ministry numbered 2296, distributed between the Secretariat (Great George Street), Pensions Issue Office (Baker Street), the Royal Hospital (Chelsea) and the Tate Gallery (Millbank). Apart from this staff at the headquarters offices, local war pensions committees of voluntary workers, already in existence, covered all parts of the United Kingdom, one being established in every administrative county with sub-committees within the county area. The Ministry provided not only pensions and allowances under royal warrants and orders in council but also, under an Act of 1917, medical treatment and artificial limbs and appliances for disabled men, and vocational training and employment for those able to take advantage of this provision. A special grants committee under the Ministry had powers of supplementation of separation allowances and pensions. At 31 March 1918 there were ten branches of the Ministry responsible to the secretary. As casualties piled up from the battles of 1917 and from the German offensive in the spring of the following year, the cases for the Ministry of Pensions rapidly increased, the numbers for 1918 exceeding those for the previous year. Great difficulty was found in adding to the staff which, however, had been raised to 5638 by the end of March 1918 and 7032 by the end of August of that year. The increase consisted of young girls without training, and their frequent mistakes resulting in delays in men getting pensions or treatment caused considerable indignation. Possibly supervision suffered from the undue attention given to detail and to records on the part of the secretary and to the excessive hours spent by him at his desk. At any rate at the end of August 1918, feeling the burden of his office and the difficulty of working with an uncongenial Minister, he asked for temporary relief. Just at that time London traffic having been dislocated by a strike of omnibus employees over the wages of women conductors, a committee had been appointed 'to investigate and report upon the relation which should be maintained between the wages of women and men, having regard to the interests of both as well as to the value of their work'. Sir Matthew Nathan was appointed a member of this committee and its secretary and was engaged on that work when the war came to an end. He was then living at Albany off Piccadilly in London, a quiet spot except, in 1917 and 1918, for its proximity to air raid targets.

This committee reported lengthily on 30 April 1919, but, as was to be expected from its constitution—a judge and two barristers, a woman doctor and Mrs Sidney Webb—inconclusively. Sir Matthew then went on leave for a walking tour to the west of England, following in part main roads, at that time owing to non-repair during the war but little used, and in part byways. He journeyed by the Surrey hills to the New Forest, along the Solent and through Dorset to West Coker, where he was put up by his tenants, and thence

to the Polden Hills, by the Wiltshire and Berkshire Downs and by the Thames valley to London. It was in the last ten days of May and the first fifteen of June, when the hedgerows were gay first of all with hawthorn and then with wild roses, and the country as beautiful and peaceful as English country can be in perfectly fine summer days. The length of the walk was 325 miles and it remained a life-long memory, a pendant to the ride through Persia of twenty-eight years before. He returned to the Ministry of Pensions, not, however, as secretary but as chairman of the War Pensions Committee which had wide powers of making grants outside the provisions of royal warrants to officers and men injured in the war and to the widows, children and dependants of those killed. He continued in this congenial employment to the end of 1920 when he sailed for Australia to take over the government of Queensland. The duties of that office normally involved little responsibility or work of importance, but it fell to Sir Matthew to advise the Secretary of State in December 1921 about a Bill introduced by the Labour Government then in power to abolish the Legislative Council, and later about the financial difficulties that had arisen on account of that government's being charged in London with a breach of faith in the taxation of lands. Otherwise attendance at many ceremonial occasions, laying foundation stones, agricultural shows, art, dramatic and musical exhibitions, school prize-givings, etc., filled the governor's time when in or near the capital, Brisbane. He claimed to have opened in the course of five years 102 agricultural shows. A considerable part of the year was, however, spent in touring the downs and coast-lands on which agriculture—temperate and tropical—flourished, and the vast area of rough grazing country from the Pacific coast to the 138th degree of longitude East and from the gulf of Carpentaria to the New South Wales border. This going about, and his residence in Queensland generally, was made happy to Sir Matthew by the great friendliness of the people and the simplicity of life among them. He left towards the end of 1925 and journeyed to Hong Kong, where he renewed his acquaintance with his old colony, but under the sad condition of a boycott of the port of Canton and the complete cessation of its trade. The circumstances in which he visited Shanghai and the Yangtze were equally unfavourable. British steamers were being fired on as they went up the river, and the British concessions were presently to be the object of Chinese attack. His journey was cut short at Ichang where the gorges begin, some thousand miles from the river mouth, where he was laid up for a month over Christmas at the consulate with pneumonia. Having recovered from that he took ship across the Pacific, hurriedly visiting Japanese ports during the steamer's stay in them and passing on 10 February 1926 the Golden Gate of San Francisco into the United States. He was three months there, traversing the southern states, staying at Charleston, Washington and New York and enjoying American hospitality which is always so surprising.

For the greater part of the next ten years he led a busy life, with many activities in London and in Somerset and on one occasion a tour of six months abroad. Under the central government he succeeded Lord Stevenson as chairman of the advisory committee constituted in 1922 to assist the Colonial

Secretary in managing the scheme for the restriction of rubber exports from Ceylon and Malaya. He held this position from 1926 to 1928, when the scheme collapsed owing to the Dutch East Indies not having joined it. In 1927 he was chairman of the civil research subcommittee on geophysical surveying, which reported in July of that year and resulted in a lengthened trial being made of geophysical methods in Australia. At the end of 1927 and the beginning of 1928 he visited Ceylon as a member of a committee to consider proposals for the revision of its constitution, of which Lord Donoughmore was chairman, and Sir Geoffrey Butler, Conservative M.P. for the University of Cambridge, and Dr T. Drummond Shields, a Scottish Labour M.P., were the other members; Sir Geoffrey proved to be the directing spirit. The committee reported on 9 June 1928 and its main recommendations have been carried out. The object of these was 'to transfer to the elected representatives of the people complete control over the internal affairs of the Island, subject only to provisions which will ensure that they are helped by the advice of experienced officials and to the exercise by the Governor of certain safeguarding powers'. In 1928 Sir Matthew was chairman of another civil research subcommittee, now called a committee of the Economic Advisory Council, this time to report on the need for a central research station in the Empire to deal with problems of irrigation. The recommendations of their report, dated May 1930, were not acted on. Other work of overseas interest on which he was engaged in London was that of a committee of zoologists and other scientists over which he presided and whose deliberations resulted in a large party of investigators being sent out to live for a year on one of the islands of the Great Barrier Reef of Australia for the purpose of studying problems of marine life there.

Sir Matthew was a vice-president of the Royal Geographical Society from 1929 to 1932 and for many years a contributor of reviews to its journal. At a later date when he devoted his leisure to archaeological and historical matters he became a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries and also of the Royal Historical Society. He presided over a committee which ensured that the work previously done by the British Records Society in collecting and distributing documents of historical value was taken over by a British Records Association of wider membership, and he helped his friend the Master of the Rolls in securing the preservation of local records by becoming chairman of a section of the association devoted to this task. On his periodical visits to London he attended meetings of the committee of the City of Westminster Health Society which ran an infant welfare centre for Westminster, and of the Friends of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem which helped that institution with books and scholarship funds. In Somerset he had been made a justice of the peace before the war, and in 1927 he was elected chairman of a county committee to regulate the procedure for putting young offenders on probation. He was appointed a Deputy Lieutenant at the end of 1933. He became High Sheriff in 1934 and was in attendance on the judge at the spring and summer assizes of that year at Wells and at the winter assizes of 1935 at Taunton, the Rev. G. A. Nicholson, the rector of West Coker, being sheriff's chaplain on these occasions. He was elected in the spring of 1928 to be an alderman of the

County Council, became chairman of the County Records Committee and as such gave much time in the course of the next seven years to the collecting and cataloguing of documents in the Records Office at Taunton. He was also a member of the County Education Committee and its elementary education subcommittee and interested himself in the work of the rural Worker's Housing Committee and in that of the Town Planning Committee. In county bodies, not local government authorities, he was chairman of the executive committee of the County Nursing Association and he belonged to the Rural Community Council and was chairman of its countryside committee. He was a Fellow of the Somerset Archaeological Society, President in 1932 and subsequently Vice-president. He was a member of the Somerset Records Society and chairman of the editorial committee of Somerset and Dorset Notes and Queries. In Yeovil he represented the County Council on the small-holdings and allotments committee for no. 2 district, on the Yeovil assessment committee and on the governing body of the secondary schools. He was assistant county director of the British Red Cross Society and was a member of the general committee of the Yeovil and District Hospital. He represented the Somerset Archaeological Society on the Ilchester Almshouse Trust. In West Coker he was a trustee of the almshouses and when a branch of the British Legion was formed in the village in May 1934 he was elected its president.

In the spring of 1934 he had the misfortune to be knocked down when coming from a meeting in the City on the subject of juvenile offenders and was laid up for a time. This was followed by a serious illness which led to his resignation from most of his work in London and in the county at the beginning of 1935 and from the County Council at the end of that year. Such energy as he had left he devoted to these *Annals* of West Coker.

Those in search of a clue to the remarkable character of Matthew Nathan will find few indications in these *Annals*. Only his intellectual qualities, his tireless industry and his utter thoroughness emerge. He scarcely permits a single personal note to penetrate the thick layer of historical facts and, although it is possible from an occasional hint to surmise a few opinions and to realize his pleasant sense of humour, it would be impossible for a stranger to construct from these pages a picture of the author which those who still remember him could recognize. This foreword, in attempting to portray him, can only be compared to a medallion in low relief, sharp in outline, perhaps, but with no deep light and shade—not a portrait in the round. Strange that no shadow of his forceful personality is cast on these meticulous pages, no echo of his resonant voice, no direct indication of his many strongly held views, no hint of 'his outstanding administrative and financial gifts, nor of his accessibility and hospitality' (*R.E. Journal*, Sept. 1939), nor of his kindliness, his gift for friendship and, above all, of his unwavering devotion to duty.

In appearance he was upright, square shouldered, of middle height, powerfully built with a long well-constructed head and forcible jaw. Under his shaggy brows lay blue-grey eyes, twinkling with intelligence and humour. His qualities made him a valuable public servant; in each of the colonial governorships that he occupied he left his mark and is remembered not only for his

brilliance and charm but also for the deep interest he took in the history and geography of the colony and in the needs and everyday lives of the people. He collected a vast library of reference books—besides ephemeral literature cognate to all local subjects—wherever he worked, and subsequently built on to his home in Somerset a large room in which to house them.

During the course of his career he was in close contact with the heads of the departments of State and enjoyed the friendship of many distinguished and celebrated men and women in almost every walk of life. He was a most prolific correspondent and every letter, 'in' and 'out', was entered in his diary. Owing to the variety of places in which he worked, the positions which he filled and his insatiable appetite for friendship his correspondence was immense. He was consistently faithful and never lost sight of anyone with whom he had at any time had kindly relations. Amongst his correspondents were many distinguished persons and their letters together with a vast collection of secret and carefully preserved State papers may one day prove of great historic value when the danger of causing political or private offence by their publication is past. At one period he was annually exchanging Christmas greetings with some 500 to 600 people.

Both men and women were powerfully attracted by his personality; he dominated the scene in every society by a magnetic charm which, when he entered a room, caused him to become the focus of a group. His prodigious and highly trained memory enabled him to gratify the vanity of the person he was addressing by his instant and correct recognition and association. Until the last ten years of his life he was almost inhuman in his indifference to fatigue, and his terrific energy and sense of duty imposed a great strain on his entourage: secretaries, aides-de-camp and even at times members of his family were often exhausted by his demands, although on the whole their services were ungrudgingly given. Throughout his life he had a difficulty in appreciating the lighter side of existence; he had no interest in any kind of games or sport, although as a governor he played polo—as it was said, *pour encourager les autres*—until a bad accident at the game obliged him to promise his mother to give it up; he had a real abhorrence of gambling and once he found it hard to forgive a private secretary who had the luck to win a big prize in a sweepstake when serving on his staff! He had a strong sense of justice and when he pondered on a problem of policy it was to consider not only 'Is it expedient?' but also 'Is it right?' Paramount throughout his life was his loyalty to the State; this may perhaps be the reason he never married—nobody should intervene between him and it—although in one obituary notice of him it was ascribed to lack of time!

He had a great love of children and young women and was 'Uncle Matthew' to a very large number of girls who confided their joys, troubles and opinions to him, trusting him with their secrets and taking his counsel, as one of them, since become famous, has noted in her autobiography; older women too were greatly attracted to him.To his nephews he appeared aloof and they stood somewhat in awe of him; he had too long been held up to them as an example and ideal whom they should strive to emulate, alas without his gifts. His iron

self-discipline made him occasionally appear harsh to their foibles and faults and he would not tolerate self-indulgence in anybody. He loved beauty in all its forms and might gladly have spent large sums on his beautiful house and garden, had it not been for the calls on a not unlimited income made by various charities and memorials both abroad and at home to which he was a regular contributor: he never dropped anything he had once started. He almost resented the necessity of having a motor-car but enjoyed immensely the services of his chauffeur-gardener, Richard Guppy, a man deeply versed in local traditions who often gave his salty views on people and property and who was perhaps occasionally shocked by 'Sir Ma-atthew's' liberal and un-Tory opinions. For in spite of his interest in and love of the ancient ways he was not a conservative in politics and his views tended more than a little towards socialism; they did not prevent him, however, from preserving an intensely conservative attitude to all the habits of daily life; chairs, books, tables, everything had its rightful place which must be adhered to.

During his last years he suffered from increasing and painful attacks of angina pectoris and was most reluctantly compelled to retire from all outside activities and confine himself to working on the *Annals*; he was attended up to his death with great devotion by his housekeeper, Nellie Clark, who with Richard Guppy, still continues to serve his nephew at the Manor House.

Some of his friends caused to be carved in stone in the porch of the Manor House the following inscription:

This ancient Manor House
was for many years the home of
Matthew Nathan
Here he welcomed his friends
to whom his presence was an inspiration
here he wrote 'The Annals of West Coker'
and here he died on 18 April 1939.

E. J. NATHAN

September 1954

CHAPTER I

SOUTH SOMERSET IN EARLY AGES

THE story of the land of Somerset as we know it now must begin somewhere in the first quarter of the second millennium of the pre-Christian era. By about 1700 B.C. the surface of south-west England had assumed much the same features as it has today allowing for subsequent slow alterations of altitude by elevation or depression and the constant denudation of hills and silting up of valleys. The exposed strata were generally the same as the modern geological map reveals.[1] The limestone beds of the Carboniferous system form the Mendips and other detached hills towards the Severn on a curve some fifteen miles west and south of Bath. To the east and north they are overlaid by the coal-measures of the Bristol and Somerset coal-fields. In the upper valleys of the Axe and the Brue and in the lower valley of the Parrett the Rhaetic beds of the Triassic system come to the surface, but the lower levels of these valleys are now for the most part covered by alluvium. The alluvium of the Yeo and the Ile rests on the Lower Lias beds of dark blue clay and limestone, the eastern and southern boundaries of the exposed surface in the county passing near Shepton Mallet, Castle Cary, Sparkford, Mudford, Tintinhull, Martock, Kingsbury Episcopi to Ilminster and on to the west. The Middle Lias or Marlstone—hard brown ironstone, limestone, sands and sandy shale—come to the surface in a narrow band, with boundaries roughly parallel to those last described and including the north part of Yeovil and the parishes of Preston, Brympton, Lufton and Montacute to the west. On the exposed overlying Midford or Yeovil Sands are situated the south part of Yeovil, nearly the whole of the parishes of West Coker and Odcombe, and part of East Chinnock. These yellow micaceous sands contain bands and nodular masses of sandy and shelly limestones heralding the Inferior Oolite. The hard bands are noticeable on the high-road where it enters and leaves West Coker. Here and there, and notably at Ham Hill, beds of Inferior Oolite, in which shelly bands predominate, overlie the Midford Sands. In the area to the south these sands are covered by a fuller's earth series—grey marly clay, with fuller's earth and argillaceous limestone—but these have been for the most part overlaid by the flaggy oolite limestone, sand and sandstone which constitute the Forest Marble; on this are situated the rest of West Coker, namely Coker Hill and the Ridge, and parts of East Chinnock, Hardington, Pendomer and Sutton Bingham, other parts of these parishes and that of Closworth being on the still later superimposed Cornbrash, a rubbly limestone. On the exposed fuller's earth are the remainders of the parishes of East Chinnock, Hardington and Pendomer; a narrow band of this stratum outcrops between the Midford Sands and

[1] See Map I (facing p. 64).

Forest Marble on the north side of Coker Hill from East Chinnock to East Coker.

From near Ham Hill, which is the highest elevation in the neighbourhood (over 400 ft.), to near Yeovil, the crest of a ridge of hills, averaging about 300 ft. above sea-level, runs in a curve concave to the north, nearly parallel to and three or four hundred yards south of the line of junction of the Midford Sands with the underlying Marlstone, and on this line are springs which unite to form a small stream running eastward to the Yeo river. From a point near Odcombe, 375 ft. above sea-level, another stream flows south into the valley where lies West Coker and thence in an easterly direction between East Coker and North Coker, through Barwick to the Yeo; this Coker Water is mainly fed by springs to the south of it that have their rise at the junction of the porous Forest Marble with the more impervious fuller's earth beds; similarly originating springs create the Chinnock Brook flowing west to the Parrett between the ridges of Coker Hill (449 ft. at its highest point) and Hardington (369 ft.) and the Broad river, also flowing west to the Parrett between Hardington and Birt's and Abbot's Hills (400 ft.)—all these elevations being in the Forest Marble, and the valleys in the underlying fuller's earth. Those headwaters of the Yeo which flow from the south by Abbott's Hill above Sutton Bingham and Halstock Hill (356 ft.) near Closworth are in part similarly formed.

Anyone at that time examining the country from the vantage ground of the Coker ridge would have seen, looking north, patches of cultivation on the near hillsides and meadows following the streams. These, a few miles away, concealed by the undulating foreground, flowed in marshy ground through the dense woodland which filled the view from nearly west to north-east. To the north-west, near hills as high as the ridge cut off the distant scene, but fifteen or sixteen miles due north there stood up the cone of the Isle of Avalon above the line of the forest; far behind it on a clear day might be traced the outline of the bare Mendip Hills. From the other side of the ridge the beholder, looking a little south of east, saw three or four miles away the beginning of thick woodland which hung on the northern face of steep Dorset hills. To the south the view was limited to a distance of five or six miles by high ridges which hid the sea coasts some fifteen miles away. Doubtless much of the land not covered by forest had rough growth on it. There would have been oak and hazel in the woods and elder-willow thickets on the alluvial swamps. The beech tree, now a feature in the landscape was not there then, and the absence of roads other than trackways, and the lack of hedges and of habitations made the scene very different from what it is today.

In neolithic times the climate was humid and rainy and the various waves of migration seeking easily cultivable soil avoided the marsh lands and peaty beds to occupy the naturally drained chalk and oolitic surfaces of the ridge system radiating from Salisbury Plain. Here still stand the megaliths of the great temples of that time. But there was no temple in south Somerset such as led men by green trackways periodically to worship at Avebury, or at Stonehenge. One such way, however, passes through the district going north-

east from the sea at the mouth of the Devonshire Axe. The earthwork at Cadbury Castle in the valley of the Stour and the Parrett is an obvious junction between the megalithic areas of the Mendips, south-western Wiltshire, and the Dorset downs, and may have been connected with these by hill-crest ways. There are signs of early occupation at Ham Hill and Yeovil and it is easy to believe that from the former to the latter there was a way approximately following the present Odcombe-Yeovil road which passes by Feebarrow farm. There may have been another way which lay by a spur at Odcombe along the crests of the Coker hills, where now Ridge lane marks the parting between the Coker Water and the Chinnock Brook, closely following the boundary between Coker and Hardington parishes and presenting all the features of a trackway made in earliest times by the feet of man avoiding for his journeying the dense forest and making as short as possible his passage of the swampy land through which meandered the streams. Such a trackway may well have formed part of a connexion between an early settlement on Ham Hill and the ramparts that at the end of the neolithic period enclosed numerous pit-dwellings on the summit of Maiden Castle in Dorset.

At the beginning of the Bronze Age (about 1700 B.C.), the roundheaded people who inhabited the country left relatively little material evidence behind them. Their burial barrows contained few bronze objects, mostly pins, buttons, or other minor articles. The use of bronze for these articles being more frequent in the south of England than in the north, the conclusion can be drawn that this use began on the southern coast and then spread to the centre and north of England. It is not generally in burial grounds that the more important implements appear, but in hoards, or scattered over the surface, sunk in boggy ground or lying on a river bed. This would indicate that the barrows in general belonged to a period before bronze was in common use, metal at that time being scarce and only manufactured into articles of a comparatively small size. Articles of the earlier, middle and late bronze times have been found in many parts of Somerset, including (in the south) Chard, Ilminster, South Petherton, Ham Hill, Yeovil and Sparkford.

It is not possible to say whether the fragment of a polished axe dug up at West Coker or the stone axes of a hard texture also polished to an edge found at Ham Hill are of the earlier bronze period (1700–1400 B.C.), or of the Megalithic Age that preceded and merged into it, for the manufacture and use of polished stone implements continued long after the introduction of bronze. Apart from a flat axe found at Sparkford Hill, there does not appear to be any record of the discovery, in South Somerset, of bronze implements of the early period. To the Middle Bronze Age (1400–900 B.C.) would belong the bronze palstave found at Ham Hill. This is a hoe or digging stick which, when hafted at right angles to the shaft of the handle, becomes a sort of mattock. A stumpy spear-head of bronze with loops is another Ham Hill find. To this period also belong two bracelets of twisted silver from Sparkford and the torque—a twisted collar of bronze or gold—dug up at Hendford Hill on the West Coker side of Yeovil.

At a time which cannot be determined with any certainty, but which may

have been between the middle and the late bronze periods and between the beginning of the first millennium and the eighth century B.C., England was invaded by a foreign people speaking the Aryan language which we now know as Keltic. This first wave of Scandinavian Nordics is now generally called Goidel or as pronounced and spelt in English 'Gael'. The new arrivals built barrows for their dead, but their comparative infrequency suggests that burial in them was not invariable. Their culture was mainly that of the Late Bronze Age (900–500 B.C. in England), but it is probable that this first wave of Keltic-speaking people brought with them, or at least their arrival synchronized with, the use of a new metal—iron. The first period of the Early Iron Age, called after the cemetery at Hallstatt in upper Austria where it was originally identified and studied, lasted in England from about 900 to 600 or 500 B.C. and so corresponded roughly with what is known as the Late Bronze Age. Through this period the use of bronze ornaments and implements predominated and to it belongs the Hallstatt brooch, a boat-shaped bronze ornament of Italian type of the seventh century B.C. found in association with some Roman ornaments two or three feet below the surface of an almost flat, grass field just within the eastern boundary of West Coker parish near where this boundary is crossed by the road from Yeovil. It is suggested, probably correctly, that a Roman villa had been built on a site occupied in Hallstatt times.[1] Not many articles found in south Somerset can definitely be classed as belonging to this period which is better represented further north. Shards of pottery found at Ham Hill include one fragment that might be called Hallstatt,[2] but most of the ornaments, etc., discovered there belong to the later period of the Early Iron Age, which is called after the excavated lake-side site of La Tène in Switzerland.

This period, in which the use of iron is more common than that of bronze, dates roughly from between 600 and 500 B.C. and lasts to rather beyond the Christian era. The beginning of the period coincides fairly well with the date given by some writers for a second wave of Keltic invasion from over the sea. It is believed that by this time the Goidels had to some extent coalesced with the non-Aryan or Alpine inhabitants of the country, sometimes called Iberians, and that they made common cause against the new invaders. The evidence of language is that they were driven by these to the north and west, for that branch of the Keltic language in which the sound 'gu' is common is to be found in Ireland, the Isle of Man and Scotland, while that branch where 'p' takes its place is now spoken in Wales, Brittany and, till recently, in Cornwall. A traveller from Marseilles referred early in the fourth century to this island as the Pretanic Isle, a name adopted by later geographers, which may have indicated the people's habit of staining or tattooing. But there is no doubt that the civilization of Keltic Britain attained a higher standard of culture than used to be attributed to it before the weapons, implements and ornaments of the La Tène period were as well known as they now are, before the Wessex hill-towns had been intensely studied and especially before the excavation of

[1] D. P. Dobson, *The Archaeology of Somerset* (1931), p. 102.
[2] *Som. Arch. Soc. Proc.* LXX, p. 112.

the Somerset lake-villages had thrown light on the life and occupations of their inhabitants.

A foremost hill-town of south-east England, which of late (1935–6) has been the subject of special research, is at Maiden Castle in Dorset. Hill-forts of less importance than Maiden Castle, but which seem to have developed generally on the same lines, are Ham Hill and Cadbury Castle in south Somerset, the former some three or four miles to the north-west and the latter some dozen miles to the north-east of the Cokers. Within the ramparts of Ham Hill has been found on the north-west side one example of the work of the La Tène period which is cited by a recognized authority as 'an early instance in England of barbaric, as opposed to classical, art, of which the former seeks to satisfy by means of dynamic abstract patterns and by the statement of organic forms in terms of inorganic or surrealist symbols, whereas the latter gives pleasure by means of a sympathetic and obvious naturalism'.[1] This particular instance of barbaric art is the finely patinated bronze head of an ox which probably formed part of a complete animal[2] that was not intended actually to represent an ox but was rather intended as a symbol to describe the characteristics of the ox-type. The Ham Hill finds include also some work with embossed late Keltic decoration and various ornaments and implements of that time—bronze brooches or fibulae, pins and rivet-heads of different forms. A horse's snaffle bit has been dug up associated with other objects of Keltic character. Iron weapons discovered consist of spear- and lance-heads and a dagger in a bronze sheath, the front of which was tinned. A reaping hook or sickle of iron stands for agriculture and there is much Early Iron Age pottery. A hoard of flat iron bars, believed to have been intended for use as currency, was on one occasion found on the hill and on another a coin of Keltic times. Other such coins come from South Petherton, the Parrett bed at Langport, the Glastonbury lake-village and other parts of Somerset. These are mainly of silver or tin and are rough imitations, probably made in Gaul, of the stater of Philip I of Macedon who died in 335 B.C. This had on the obverse a head of Apollo crowned with a laurel wreath and on the reverse a two-horse chariot; but the die had deteriorated and the design as received by the Britons had become confused and disjointed.

Human habitation at that time was not entirely confined to defensible areas. Some half-dozen miles from Ham Hill, on the other side of the Cokers and near Yeovil, there have been discovered, at Westlands, remains—pottery, iron arrow-heads, etc.—of a settlement dating probably from about 100 B.C., though it is possible from the position in which they were found that they may have belonged to two different periods of the Iron Age.[3]

A defence very different in kind from the ramparts of the hill-forts was afforded by their position in the derelict swamps of the Somerset plain of the lake-villages of Glastonbury and Meare some seventeen miles as the crow flies north of the Cokers. The finds from these villages indicate their existence

[1] T. D. Kendrick, *Anglo-Saxon Art to A.D. 900* (1938), p. 127.
[2] *Som. Arch. Soc. Proc.* XLVIII, p. 33.
[3] *Ibid.* LXXIV, pp. 135, 136.

in the second century B.C. and that their inhabitants were husbandmen, but that they also produced textiles and pottery and knew how to smelt metals and to fashion beautiful articles from them. Brooches, bracelets, finger rings, pins, tweezers, punches and awls of bronze were frequent. A bronze mirror was found at Glastonbury and also bronze harness trappings. Iron seems to have been easily obtained, and in addition to a few weapons—daggers, spear-heads, and a piece of sword—many knives, bill-hooks, sickles, files, awls, bolts, gouges, adzes, rivets, keys or latch-lifters and harness of iron have been found. Flat iron bars were here also used as currency. Wooden objects were lathe-turned and wheel-hubs, spokes and a number of handles of tools of this material have been collected. Antlers of deer were in this age still employed for making handles, hammers, etc. Pottery was mostly hand-made—fine ware for the choicer pots and coarse paste for kitchen use. Many have beautiful curvilinear decoration of definitely La Tène character. Glass occurs in beads —blue, sea-green, yellow, mauve and clear. The use of finely made arrows of flint show that the Stone Age even at this date had not entirely passed away. The wild animals were stag, roe deer, otter, beaver, boar and cat and the domestic animals included the ox, sheep, goat, pig, horse, dog and the common fowl. The crops consisted of wheat, barley, beans and peas, and the wild plants found are those familiar nowadays.

It is in the Somerset lake-villages that Keltic culture reached its highest point in south-west England in the first century B.C. The level of this culture probably did not differ much from that of northern Gaul with which for some centuries there had been constant and increasing intercourse. Britain was no doubt known as a rich country. The tin mines of Cornwall had long been worked and silver and lead obtained from the Mendips, while alluvial gold had been taken from the river beds. It is on account of these reputed riches, as well as for political reasons, that Julius Caesar decided to raid the south coast of Britain.

Neither Caesar's first raid on the south-east coast in the year 55 B.C., nor the invasion in the following year of a larger force which penetrated into the Hertfordshire territories of the Catuvellauni resulted in any permanent settlement or affected the west country. Greater were the immediate effects of a second migration of Belgae a few years after Caesar's expedition. The movement had been led by one Commius whom Caesar had made king of the Atrebates in Gaul, and who already had some influence in Britain. He landed on the Hampshire coast and his followers occupied the central part of southern England. It is doubtful how far to the west of Silchester the tribes acknowledging him as chief extended. His son Verica ruled in Berkshire, Hampshire, Surrey and Sussex. Another kingdom, that of the Dobuni, then covered the country to the west, including what is now Somerset, and early in the first century it was raided by Belgae from the realm of Commius, who destroyed Glastonbury village and checked the Dobunian civilization in those parts where pre-Roman Keltic art had reached its zenith. South of the Dobuni were the Durotriges, a lately Belgicized tribe centred at Maiden Castle.

The Roman expeditionary force of A.D. 43 landed in east Kent and defeated the British in a decisive battle on the Medway. This was followed by a period when the tribes in the south and east of England were kept in subjection and columns were occasionally sent out for the conquest of the midlands and the west. For the conquest of the west, Legion II under the command of the future emperor, Vespasian, was despatched. He met with some resistance, possibly from the Atrebates at Silchester and undoubtedly, according to recent discovery, from the Durotriges based on their fortress of Maiden Castle, and he is believed to have advanced into the territory of the Dumnonii to the west of the Exe.

Towards the close of the year 47 a new governor, P. Ostorius Scapula, proceeded to create a frontier or *limes* from the mouth of the Exe, through Somerset and Gloucestershire, across the Midlands to Lincoln (Lindum). The frontier, known as the Fosse, consisted of a permanent roadway to be defended by auxiliaries patrolling from forts on either side of it. In Somerset, within five miles on either side of the road, are the remains of some twenty settlements which may represent these forts. Prominent among them is the old British encampment of Ham Hill which rises precipitously above the valley of the Parrett some four and a half miles from the road and has a wide outlook over the plain to the west. The road thus commanded bifurcates at a place on the Ivel or Yeo river to which the name of Ilchester is now attached. While the main road ran from here 160 miles in a generally straight course to the north-north-east, branches went west-south-west to the recently occupied *oppidum* of the Dumnonii called by the Romans Isca Dumnoniorum (Exeter) and south-east to the neighbourhood of Maiden Castle where the Romans were constructing Durnovaria (Dorchester).

The Roman camp at Ham Hill was apparently restricted to that part of the old British encampment which covered the northern spur of the hill, where there is some evidence of occupation by temporary buildings. The Roman military relics found on the hill include fragments of scale armour, spear-heads, a dagger, horse bits, and a fragment of a chariot wheel together with various personal ornaments, weapons and implements.[1] The most interesting of these are the thin, slightly rounded, overlapping plates of scale armour; these must have been attached to a leather or linen tunic or lining which they made into a tight-fitting and exceedingly flexible cuirass—*lorica squamata*—so called because of the fish-like structure of the bronze scales which were made lustrous by being alternately burnished and tinned. Three different sizes of scale were found, probably coming from different cuirasses.[2] The purely military occupation of the hill probably ended about the middle of the first century A.D.[3] By A.D. 49 the pacification of the south-west was so complete that the lead mines of Mendip were being worked by the new ruling power. Even the country west of the Exe, though practically unoccupied by the Roman forces, was presently thought so little dangerous that Legion II

[1] *Som. Arch. Soc. Proc.* LVIII, pt. II, p. 48.
[2] *Ibid.* XLVIII, pt. II, pp. 31–3; *ibid.* LVI, pt. II, pp. 56, 57.
[3] *Ibid.* LXX, p. 106.

was withdrawn from watching it, and its headquarters established at Glaevum (Gloucester).

By the year 62 the dangerous British rebellion was crushed, peace was restored and the conquest of Britain, except of Wales beyond the Severn and of the north beyond the Trent and Ouse, was complete.[1]

It is possible that the revolt in the east of England in the year A.D. 61 may have delayed the completion of the Fosse Way but there is reason to believe that, at any rate by the death of Nero, successor to Claudius, in 68, it was finished with its two southern branches. Apart from these there were other roads leading out of it in Somerset. One left the main road some seven miles north-north-west from the starting-point at Ilchester and then followed a more westerly direction along a narrow ridge which ended above and not far from the mouth of the Parrett. Another branch to the west which left the Fosse Way some seventeen miles north of Ilchester gave access to the lead mines of Mendip. Some eighteen miles farther on, the main road reached Aquae Sulis (Bath) which by A.D. 68 had become a watering place.

Ilchester itself as far as can now be judged was a posting station, which may have developed into a village but hardly into a town. It would have been a fort but that the conditions of the south-west did not require protection for posting stations. Evidence of habitation in Roman times, mentioned hereafter, has been found there. There has also been found by the evidence of four round skulls that there was a Gaulish settlement at Ilchester which would have been made some time after the Romans came.[2] In association with these, fragments of Roman and Romano-British pottery were discovered.

The Roman roads south of Ilchester coming into south Somerset proper require a more detailed description than those to the north. The Isca Dumnoniorum branch on leaving Ilchester is directed on a point on the shoulder of Windwhistle Hill about 50° west of south. About four miles from Ilchester in this direction, where the Fosse Way crosses a small tributary of the Parrett, there has been found, embedded in the south bank of the stream about six feet below the surface and from three to four feet from the actual waterway, a moulded column of Ham Hill stone, apparently the columnar base of a statue such as is fairly common in the late Roman period. The inscription has been rendered: 'To the Emperor Flavius Valerius Severus, pious and fortunate, most noble Caesar.' This wording fixes the date of the inscription between 1 May 305 and 25 July 306. Of the same date, also mentioning this emperor, is one other inscription in England—that on a road-stone found on the line of a Roman road from London to Rochester. No connexion can be traced between this ruler, distinguished chiefly if not solely for his vices, and Britain. His column stood nearly a mile, as the crow flies, north of the nearest part of the summit of Ham Hill.[3] It was also on the north side of the district known as Stanchester, where remains of a Roman building have been found. The only other points to be noted with regard to this branch of the Fosse Way,

[1] The story of the Roman Conquest is epitomized from *Roman Britain*, by R. G. Collingwood (1936).

[2] *Som. Arch. Soc. Proc.* LXXV, pp. 103–5.

[3] *Ibid.* LXXVI, pp. 19–21.

which passes some four miles from West Coker, are that it is not at present traceable on the ground in Somerset beyond Dinnington, about ten miles from Ilchester, though it seems to have passed not far from Chard, and that an observer in 1724 saw the road south of Ilchester 'pav'd with the original work: t'is composed of the flat quarry stones of the country, of a good breadth, lay'd edgwise, and so close that it looks like the side of a wall fallen down'.[1]

The branch from Ilchester to Dorchester is for the most part on a course about 25° east of south. It was easily traceable in 1835 when it was stated that 'the dorsum of the road through the meadows is broad and elevated and formed of flints brought from the neighbouring downs'.[2] At Larkhill quarry, not quite four miles from Ilchester, near where a section of the road has been obtained, a group of coarse pottery of late Roman date was found. The road passed between Yeovil and East Coker about one and a quarter miles from the latter place.

Near and between the roads that ran from the posting station, there sprang up in the course of time the villas of Roman and/or Romano-British landowners; out of sixty or seventy villas, farms or other places of permanent settlement known to have existed in Somerset, some thirty are within a ten-mile radius of Ilchester. About half of these lie north of its latitude and to the west of the Fosse Way. Access was given to most of them by that branch of the main road which runs north-west from Ilchester to the eastern end of the Polden hills near Street and reaches high fertile ground above the Cary and Parrett valleys. They include villas where now are Kingsdon, Lyte's Cary, Charlton Mackrell, Somerton (two or three), Hurcot, Kingweston, Littleton (two) and Butleigh Wootton near Street, and one on Sedgemoor. Further west were villas at Pitney (two), High Ham, Langport and Huish Episcopi, Drayton and Curry Rivel and Bawdrip. Three of these villas, two at Littleton and one at Pitney, we know to have been of the courtyard type which will be described presently along with one at a place more closely connected with this history. One of the Pitney villas appears to have been long occupied and of some importance, judging from its size and the rather elaborate mosaics which formed the floors of three rooms. At one of the Littleton villas four of the rooms had such floors and there were mosaics also at the other Pitney villa, at Hurcot and at High Ham. At the other sites have been discovered tiles, bricks, hypocaust pillars, Samian and other potsherds and various small objects. It is probable that these were not all villas of the more developed type and that some were mere farmhouses. On the low ground near one of the Somerton villas was found a piece of bone, perhaps a handle, scored with the letters APRILIS, perhaps the name of the owner, and certainly evidence of the common use of the Latin language. Of the coins found on or near the villa or farm sites, the earliest, belonging to the end of the first century, came from Langport, a place of which the importance in connexion with the crossing over the Parrett may have been early recognized. For the most part, however, the coins associated with this group of

[1] *Victoria County History, Somerset*, I, pp. 348, 349.
[2] W. Phelps, *The History and Antiquities of Somersetshire* (1836), I, p. 131.

villas date from the middle of the third century to the latter part of the fourth century. It may be deduced from this and from the dates of coins found farther north along the Fosse Way, that Bath, where the earliest discovered inscription is dated A.D. 70, and sites near it were frequented before it became usual to build villas in south Somerset.[1]

Coming back to Ilchester we find that the existence of a villa there has been recorded but is now looked upon as doubtful, though remains of structures—bricks, tiles and tessellated pavement—have been found in the north and south parts of the village site and many coins have been picked up there, including at least two first-century and one second-century one. Four miles after leaving Ilchester the south-west branch of the Fosse Way passes under Ham Hill. On the hill have been found the remains of a villa which must have existed long after the military occupation of the position had ceased. The area covered by the buildings was about 160 by 40 feet and it included at least twelve rooms. The walls of an average thickness of two feet were substantially built of faced stone from the hill. Some of the rooms were floored with cement and among smaller objects found was a key and coins of the second, third and fourth centuries.[2] Apart from these objects and those already described as being possibly connected with the military occupation of the hill, other remains of buildings, many brooches (including one of the AUCI*22*A variety and so inscribed), some rings and bracelets, and various miscellaneous bronze and iron ornaments and implements have been found at different parts of the hill. A hoard of nearly 500 Roman copper coins, buried in the year A.D. 270 in a Romano-British vase on the eastern extremity of the hill, discovered in some year between 1802 and 1814, and not completely listed till the year 1936, is of special interest showing that for a short time Britain was furnished with coins minted in Gaul as well as with those issued by the central Empire. The Gallic coins were minted between the years A.D. 260 and 268, during which under a succession of rebels the country made itself independent of the Emperor Gallienus. The two issues differed considerably in style and workmanship though they may have been of the same intrinsic value 'and the authorities in Britain would have little scruple in accepting and circulating whatever coinage entered the country, whether from Gaul or elsewhere'.[3]

A mile beyond Ham Hill and about a mile off the road to the left at Norton-sub-Hamdon, under the south-west corner of the hill, remains—potsherds, tesserae, a bronze fibula and a coin of about the year A.D. 222—indicate a dwelling-house of some sort. Many coins, mostly from the middle of the third century to the middle of the fourth, found not very long ago at South Petherton, make earlier reports of villa foundations in this neighbourhood credible. Two miles further on and seven from Ilchester, a villa site, three-quarters of a mile south of St Michael Seavington and 300 yards west of the Fosse Way, occupies slightly elevated ground sloping gently to the south with

[1] *Victoria County History, Somerset*, I, pp. 320–9.
[2] *Som. Arch. Soc. Proc.* LII, pt. II, pp. 180–2.
[3] Myres and Sutherland, *The Numismatic Chronicle* (fifth series), XVI, pp. 30–42.

a good view of the open country all round. Two rooms had geometrically patterned mosaic floors and a third was floored with red tiles. The stucco walls were painted and the roof tiled. Debris of no special interest was found on the site and a copper coin of the middle of the fourth century not far away from it. Further along the same branch of the Fosse Way, but beyond the ten-mile radius of Ilchester, the finding of tesserae, roof slates, potsherds and coins, some dating between A.D. 250 and 380, justify the assumption that within what is now the parish of Chard there was a villa of the third or fourth century and possibly another house. A mile or two out on the west side of the probable course of the Fosse Way, in a sheltered and well-watered spot, at Wadeford in the parish of Combe St Nicholas, undoubtedly stood a Roman villa of considerable pretensions with seven mosaic floors and a hypocaust. In addition to the usual remains of building and many potsherds, some small bronze ornaments were found on this site and near it; there were also brass coins of the first century and a gold one of the third quarter of the fourth. Some miles further west at Whitestaunton, many remains testify to the existence of a well-equipped villa with bathrooms, hypocausts, mosaic flooring, window and other glass, and lead piping. The road to Isca Dumnoniorum passed no villas south of the latitude of this one nor is there evidence of this pleasant form of settlement existing beyond this town or in the country of the tribe from which it took its name. We have reached the limit of romanized Britain in this direction.[1]

The branch of the Fosse Way going to Durnovaria, like the branch going to Isca Dumnoniorum, passes for some three miles over swampy country in which no permanent building was possible. The south-eastern branch then ascends a hill and descends again to near where two small streams, flowing westward, unite to fall into the Yeo. On a little ridge between these streams, some four and half miles from Ilchester and 300 yards east of the road, a villa was erected towards the close of the second century A.D. on a spot that had already been occupied in the Early Iron Age, that is over 600 years before. This villa is a large one of the courtyard type, that is, it had a courtyard nearly completely surrounded by buildings. This measured 207 by 169 feet and was paved with irregular blocks of Yeovil stone, covered with a layer of gravel. It had entrances about the middle of the south and west sides and drained under the western entrance into a ditch outside and also from its south-east corner. Three structurally independent buildings formed its north, east and south sides. Some pillar bases of Ham Hill stone indicate, but not with certainty, that the west side was closed by a covered corridor. The buildings on the north and east sides were dwelling-houses. The north block had some ten rooms of which one was a corridor along part of its south side and another was a stone-flagged passage from front to back of the building and apparently heated by an outside furnace. Most of the rooms were paved with large white tesserae, but in three of them these were coloured and laid in geometrical patterns. The east block has only been partially excavated. It consisted of a series of small rooms grouped around a central hall in front of which ran

[1] *Victoria County History, Somerset*, I, pp. 331–4.

a veranda opening on to the courtyard. One room was warmed by a channelled hypocaust with furnace in a chamber behind. At the south end of this block was a bathroom. Four of the rooms, and possibly more, had tessellated pavements. The buildings on the south side of the courtyard were of less substantial construction. They were probably domestic quarters and stores and, together with a number of small rooms, included the entrance passage from outside to the courtyard already mentioned and, west of this passage, a barnlike structure with a beaten clay floor and probably a thatched roof. The floor of one of the rooms in this range had a design of hollow squares alternately blue and white. Another was of large white tesserae and two others of hard yellow cement. Over the whole site of the villa, fragments of window glass were found. Floor tiles were plentiful, especially in the neighbourhood of the furnaces; and fragments of plaster, coloured red, white and green, were discovered in most of the rooms. None of the floors is of artistic merit and, with a few Samian and New Forest exceptions, the pottery found was of a coarse black ware, probably of local manufacture. On the base of one beaker of hard pink clay is the *graffito* MARTINUS. The other small objects found—bronze bracelets, finger rings and brooches—are only such as have been discovered elsewhere in the villages of the native peasantry. The general impression derived from the excavated remains is that the builder of this house was one of the larger landowners of the neighbourhood, who lived in comfort but not in luxury, and that at any rate the later owners were farmers rather than leisured gentlemen. The occupation of the villa, on the evidence of pottery and coins, lasted from about A.D. 180 to 370.

Along the outer wall of the west side of this villa was a road some ten feet wide and one foot deep in the centre, made of flat slabs of Yeovil stone about eight inches thick covered by small stones and gravel. It had a slight camber and an open ditch on its western side. A similar, but somewhat less substantial road, ran along the south. Over some thirteen acres in the neighbourhood of the villa, as far west as the Durnovaria road, walls and other remains have been found; they probably represent a few dwellings of a poorer class surrounding the great house. In the further course of this road some Romano-British black pottery has been found in association with a pit dwelling and a hearth at the top of Hendford Hill and finds of similar pottery have been reported from various points within the modern town of Yeovil. But no other villa is met with alongside the main road before it leaves the present county boundary.[1]

In the triangle between the two roads with apex at Ilchester, were a couple of villas of which one, at any rate, was of a superior class to that just described. It lay in a field now known as Chessels or Chesil (in the parish of East Coker) half a mile from a point on the Durnovaria road distant five and half miles from Ilchester. It occupied a slight elevation just below the 200 feet contour, and from it the ground sloped gently for about 500 yards to the Coker Water flowing east. There is also a good spring of water close by. Discoveries near this site made at different times would seem to refer to parts of one villa and

[1] *Som. Arch. Soc. Proc.* LXXIV, pp. 122–43.

of a fairly extensive one. Foundations, hypocausts, mosaics, painted wallplaster, potsherds and coins dated between A.D. 140 and 370 were found, the chief interest being in the mosaics. Of the two first discovered, one was a purely geometrical design. The other was described in 1753 as follows:

The mosaic work lately discovered about a mile and a half south of Yeovil, in Dorsetshire, and in the way to East Coker, appears to be a floor of a Roman sudatory or sweating house. The cavity below, by its divided walls, burnt stones, &c., very plainly shows itself to be the fire-place; but one flue remains to convey the warm air to the room above. This floor is composed of burnt bricks, blue, red, and white none more than an inch square, most less. The outmost border has in it a greyhound pursuing a hare, a buck pursued by some dogs, and a Mercury's head, as it seems by the wings, in each corner. Within a beautiful square containing a circle are the figures: A woman, dressed, 'tis thought, in a Roman stola with its purple laticlave or border; another, much damaged, which with the former, each gives a hand to fix the cloathes round another woman laid on a couch, naked down to below her waist, and on whom the physician hard by prepares to do some operation by the fire, either cupping or burning. This piece suits the use of the room.[1]

Of the subsequently discovered mosaics, one was also geometrical. The other was a 'fragment of about $3\frac{1}{2}$ ft. by 4 ft. representing two men returning from the chase, carrying a spear each and a dead stag slung from a pole propped on their shoulders with a small dog barking below the stag. The colours are blue, black, red, and a yellowish drab on a white ground.'[2]

Just a mile away and a little north of west, there was another villa in a position (in West Coker parish) closely corresponding to the site just described, except that it was a hundred feet higher in elevation. It faced south and from it the ground sloped gently to the Coker Water, in this case just half a mile away. The field in which the remains were found was also called Chessels, this name corresponding, in the schedule to the Tithe Apportionment Agreement of 1838, to no. 172 on the map accompanying it.[3] The site is that on which was found the Hallstatt brooch, indicating occupation before 600 B.C. It is some 300 yards south of the farm called Feebarrow and about twice that distance south-east of a hill called Camp. The Roman remains there discovered suggested a house of some size and importance and included blue and red tesserae from pavements, painted wall plaster, tiles, roof slates and debris of building stone. 'The excavators thought that the villa had at some time been burnt down, the spot rifled, and a subsequent building of rude character erected with burnt stones.'[4] Samian and other potsherds were found over an area extending to the adjoining fields on the south-east. Among the small objects were many iron nails, a bronze bracelet, a pair of tweezers and coins of the same range as those in the villa last described, showing occupation at least till near the end of the fourth century. A small collection of bronze fibulae or brooches came from this site.[5]

[1] *Yeovil Evening Post*, 23 June 1753.
[2] *Victoria County History, Somerset*, I, p. 330. The fragment is in Taunton Castle Museum
[3] *Som. Arch. Soc. Proc.* LXI, pp. 161–4. [4] *Victoria County History, Somerset*, I, p. 331.
[5] All the objects are in the Yeovil Museum; see article by H. St George Gray, in *Jour. Brit. Arch. Soc.* XVIII, pp. 392–5, or XIX, pp. 321–2.

Perhaps the most interesting of the objects found are an inscribed bronze plate two and three-quarter inches long by one and five-eighths inches high and a bronze statuette of the god Mars about three inches high. The following is a full description of the plate.

The inscription, which is 'punctured' with a sharp punch, indenting the metal in small, sometimes minute, depressions, reads: DEO MARTI RIGISAMO, IVENTIVS SABINVS V.S.L.L.M. [V(otum) S(olvit) L(aetus) L(ibens) M(erito)]. 'To the god Mars Rigisamus, Iuentius Sabinus pays his vow gladly, willingly, deservedly.' The first word has been at first written, very lightly, DO, and then altered to DEO; the same misspelling is found elsewhere, e.g. painted on a jug in the British Museum. The epithet RIGISAMO is written more heavily and clumsily than the rest.... The name 'Mars Rigisamus' is typical of a great number of inscriptions in which Mars is worshipped with a Celtic epithet.... Rigisamus is clearly derived from *rix*, *rig-*, *king*. It is probably a superlative, as if one should derive a Latin 'regissimus' from *rex*; analogous forms are actually found in Greek....We might therefore translate 'Mars Rigisamus' as 'Mars, King of Kings'. 'Iuentius' is a misspelling of a common type for Iuuentius (Juventius). Plates of this kind were often attached to statues.[1]

The statuette itself is thus described:

The god is represented in a style distantly derived from the Greek Ares: nude, except for a helmet, which, however, with its cheek-pieces and crest, is on the whole more Roman than Greek in form; beardless, like the young Ares and unlike the Roman Mars Ultor; the right hand resting on his spear and the left on the rim of his shield.... The statuette has been cast by the *cire perdue* process and roughly finished with various tools, including a round file, a flat file, and a graver. Alike in the modelling and in the metal-working, the level of taste and skill is extraordinarily low; of all the Roman provincial bronzes I have ever seen, this is easily the worst from every point of view, and more than justifies the remarks which have been made on the technical and artistic badness of metal-work in the south-western region of Roman Britain.[2]

It may, however, be unfair to judge of the culture of the Romano-British from this ungraceful specimen which very likely came from the servants' quarters. Its artistic merit is certainly below that of the mosaic pavement which remains to testify to the taste and habits of the builder of the East Coker villa, but it is doubtless the case that, under the influence of the unimaginative and conventional styles introduced from Rome, the vigorous plant and animal forms and the flowing curves of the best late Keltic art suffered debasement, in the same way that the art of the East has deteriorated through the introduction or reproduction of European models.

Life in Roman Britain was comfortable, at any rate for the better-off dwellers in villas. We know, however, very little of the villages or hamlets inhabited by the cultivators of the soil, artificers and labourers, who did not occupy the servant or slave quarters of the villas. From such excavations as have been made they would appear to have consisted of daub and wattle huts, with floors sunk below the level of the ground and probably with thatched

[1] R. G. Collingwood, 'Mars Rigisamus', *Som. Arch. Soc. Proc.* LXXVII, pp. 112–14.
[2] *Ibid.*

roofs. In some cases the huts were walled with painted plaster like a Roman house, and some of them were even fitted with rude T-shaped hypocausts. And between the villa and the native hut came the rude farmhouse, partaking of the nature of both. Often the only indication of the site of a Roman farmhouse, hamlet or hut would be in the nature of the potsherds found in it. In the area we are specially considering—that is within a ten-mile radius of Ilchester—there are, apart from villa remains, evidences of some nine or ten places of permanent settlement in Roman times. Such settlements, in which Roman pottery is associated with remains of structures, are found at Ilchester, Littleton, Ham Hill and Yeovil. At Ham Hill there are sunk floors and huts of the nature already mentioned and on one site south-west of Yeovil close to the road to Durnovaria, part of the circular wall of a hut has been uncovered. At other places near Yeovil where coarse Roman pottery has been found, it has not been associated with remains of buildings. There seems, however, no reason to doubt that such finds represent rubbish from huts of the later Roman period, and the considerable number of them disclosed by excavations for foundations involved by the spreading of a modern town suggests that similar remains exist undiscovered over much of the surrounding country where excavations have not been carried out.

There remains to be considered when and how the settlements and particularly the villas, which formed so notable a part of Roman civilization in the area, grew up, and when and why they disappeared. In the matter of date the coins discovered singly or in hoards are the best guide, though it must be remembered that one or two early ones in a find do not necessarily mean early occupation and that single coins may have been dropped at a site after occupation concluded; the different styles of pottery and of small objects of ornament which were used give some assistance. It is noteworthy that on the sites of the settlement at Ham Hill and of the villas at Yeovil and West Coker, at all of which have been found remains of the Early Iron Age, early Roman coins, and in the case of Ham Hill early Roman ornaments, have been discovered, and it seems possible that residence at these places was continuous from prehistoric times. The British fortress on the hill, for a short time occupied by Roman troops, would afterwards have contained the dwelling of the Romano-British noble when he became the Roman magistrate, and what may have been the cluster of mud huts forming the abode of a British chief and his people at the other places may have developed without change in the class of owner into the well-equipped Roman villa. Finds at places south of Ilchester other than at Ham Hill would seem to indicate early romanization of that part and also the substitution of villas built in the Roman fashion for old hut-dwellings of which the abandoned sites possibly account for sporadic finds of first-century coins and early pottery. Some of these southern villas may have been occupied by A.D. 150 or earlier. Those in the neighbourhood of the road that went northwards from Ilchester would seem not to have been occupied till the middle of the third century. The years A.D. 280–350 according to another authority, mark 'the zenith of Roman history in Britain. It was then that the villas of the lowlands were most numerous, that

corn was exported to the Rhine and cloth to Asia Minor, and that skilled workmen were fetched from Britain to supply the deficiency of Gaulish builders.'[1]

This period of prosperity was soon to end and the end is marked by the abandonment and complete destruction of the villas. Those in the southern part of our area, some of which were occupied earliest, were longest inhabited. Somerton, Yeovil, East Coker, West Coker, Chard and Wayford were occupied till about A.D. 375 while those more to the north, as in most other parts of the south of England, show no evidence of life later than A.D. 350 to 360.

Three peoples contributed to the end of Roman Britain. First of all were those known to the Romans as Saxons and to themselves nearly indifferently as Angles or Saxons. Ever since the latter part of the third century these people had been raiding the coasts of Britain from the Wash to Portchester, occasionally making descents on the shores of Wales. But although the Saxon raids went on during the first part of the fourth century, there is no evidence that they then achieved a scale that can be termed invasion or caused special alarm in the south-west of England. On the other hand the Scots, who had partly migrated to the northern part of Ireland, and the related tribe of Picts, who had remained in Caledonia, were making (A.D. 343–66) destructive inroads into Britain which alarmed the provincials all over the country. In Somerset it was doubtless the Scots that must have been most dreaded, as small parties of these coming across the Irish Sea, up the Severn and by the Avon or Parrett might easily loot and destroy in the night any villa within a few miles of the river-bank and either cut the throats of its inhabitants or carry them off into slavery. In some such raid about the beginning of the fifth century, Patrick, the future missionary and saint, a lad of fifteen, was carried off from the villa, perhaps not far from the Bristol Channel, of his father Calpurnius, a deacon and presbyter. Incursions of this nature would account for the abandonment of so many Somerset villas in the years A.D. 350–60, and at the same time for such abandonment being postponed in the case of villas not easily accessible from the navigable parts of streams. When the survivors of the Somerset villa population fled it was probably to the nearest walled towns, whether north to Venta Silurum (Caerwent), to Glevum (Gloucester), to Corinium (Cirencester), or to nearer Aquae Sulis (Bath) or south to Isca Dumnoniorum (Exeter) cannot be said. Local administration would for a time have been centred in these cantonal towns and from them some resistance may have been put up against raids from north and west. They were made safe also for a few years from more serious invasions by Theodosius who was despatched in 367 by his son, the Emperor Valentinian, to the assistance of the Britons and drove the invaders to the northern angle of the island. But the respite was a short one; the legions were gradually withdrawn and in A.D. 410 the Empire gave up Britain which was left to defend itself as best it could against Irish, Picts and Saxons.

[1] F. Haverfield, *The Roman Occupation of Britain* (1923), p. 265.

CHAPTER II

SOUTH SOMERSET IN SAXON AND DANISH TIMES

THE occupation of Somerset by the Saxon invaders was a slow and a comparatively late process. It was relatively little affected by Saxon conquest and influence in the opening phases of Saxon *adventum* in the fifth and early sixth centuries. According to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, first compiled towards the end of the ninth century, a branch of the West Saxons, known as the Gewissae, made their first settlement in the early part of the sixth century west of the extension of the so-called Jutish territory, in what is now the southern borderland of Hampshire and Wiltshire.[1] They fought the Britons at Cardices Ford (Charford on the Avon) and advanced northwards towards the populated region of Salisbury Plain. The main body of West Saxons, according to archaeological evidence, were, possibly, still in the upper Thames valley in the middle of the sixth century. Then in 577 came the decisive battle at Deorham (Dyrham, just north of Bath) when British rulers were slain and British refugees driven from the ruins of Roman towns at Gloucester, Cirencester and Bath by Ceawlin and his son Cuthwine. The ruins of Bath are thus described in a seventh-century elegiac poem which dwells on earthly mutability, mortality and overshadowing fate:

> Firmly the builder laid the foundations,
> Cunningly bound them with iron bands;
> Stately the palaces, splendid the baths,
> Towers and pinnacles pointing on high;
> Many a mead-hall rang with their revelry,
> Many a court with the clangour of arms,
> Till Fate the all-levelling laid them low.[2]

At 'the spot where the hot springs burst into air'.

By this victory the invaders obtained access to the Severn which they never afterwards lost and thus put a wedge between the Britons in what is now Wales and those who occupied roughly the area in modern times represented by the four or five south-western counties of England. Seven years later we find them again fighting against the Britons, probably on the lower Severn, but no further advance is recorded, and in 591 on the Marlborough downs they suffered a heavy defeat.[3] Thenceforward until the middle of the seventh century the earthwork known as Wansdyke, stretching from the

[1] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, Bohn's Antiquarian Library (1847). See pp. 311–14.
[2] C. W. Kennedy, *Old English Elegies* (1936), pp. 67–9.
[3] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 314.

marshlands near the Severn at Portishead and passing south of Bath to the Wiltshire downs may have marked the southern boundary of the western lands occupied by the West Saxons. These lost such ascendancy as they had among the Saxon kingdoms of Britain which belonged first to Kent in the south-east then to Mercia in the midlands and then to Deira and Bernicia which united to become the northern kingdom of Northumbria. With these changes the West Saxons lost their hold over the lands north of the Thames, but before long we find them compensating themselves in the west for what they lost in the north and east. In 652 Coenwealh, the ruler of the West Saxons, returned from three years' exile in East Anglia, fought the Britons at Bradford-on-Avon,[1] and again six years later 'at Peonna [Penselwood]; and he drove them as far as Pedrida'[2] (Petherton, the 'tun on the Parrett'). He would seem to have included, even if he did not use in his advance, the line of the old Roman road; for the great pestilence of 664 left its evidence in a Saxon cemetery a short distance north of the Fosse Way at Camerton—the 'tun on the river Cameler or Cambrook'—where twenty-eight Saxon iron knives were found with 115 skeletons, as well as a small pair of shears, some iron pins, four iron buckles and six Roman coins distributed among five graves.[3] Remains of an earlier or Romano-British age were also found in the cemetery at Camerton in the shape of three enamelled escutcheons of late Keltic spiraliform design which had been wrenched off hanging bowls and were strung together round the neck of a child.[4]

Further along the Fosse Way there have been three finds at Ilchester indicating Saxon occupation about this time. Two are disc-shaped brooches, $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter, with four series of concentric circles arranged crosswise on the surface; they are of a pattern found in many parts of southern England. The other specimen, a square-headed brooch, 2·4 inches in length, has been judged by certain special features of it to be of a type common in the Isle of Wight and apparently confined originally to the Jutish area which lay to the west of the territory of the South Saxons. It was till lately attributed to the second part of the seventh century, but there are now grounds for believing it to date from nearly a hundred years before that and from not long after the time when were made the square-headed brooches in the grave group at Chesil down in Wiltshire[5] which it closely resembles, though embodying only the slightest remains of animal pattern. It may have been brought with the two disc-shaped brooches to Ilchester when the line of the Parrett was occupied by the Saxons.[6] At that time too, perhaps, was left at Ham Hill an 'iron umbo or boss of shield—the only iron object in the Ham Hill collection which can safely be pronounced as Saxon'.[7] This covered a circular hole in the centre of the shield across which was an iron handle bar to be held in the

[1] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 320.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 325; and E. H. Bates, 'Penselwood', *Som. Arch. Soc. Proc.* L, pt. II, p. 64.
[3] 'Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Camerton', *Som. Arch. Soc. Proc.* XIX, pt. II, pp. 39–63.
[4] T. D. Kendrick, *Anglo-Saxon Art to A.D. 900*, p. 52.
[5] *Victoria County History, Somerset*, I, pp. 373, 374.
[6] *Ibid.* p. 39.
[7] *Som. Arch. Soc. Proc.* XLVIII, pt. II, p. 43.

left hand. Both boss and bar were attached to the wood of the shield by iron rivets.[1]

The finds of Roman coins in the Saxon cemetery at Camerton has been mentioned. But by the middle of the seventh century, or very shortly after, a Saxon silver coinage had appeared in England in succession to Roman coins —or a barbarous imitation of them—and in succession to the gold 'thrymsa' of uncertain value of which the use was short-lived. The silver issue, known as the 'sceat' which illustrates Anglo-Saxon art of the seventh and eighth centuries is not, however, associated with Wessex and no specimens have been discovered in south Somerset.[2]

Saxon remains that have been found in Somerset belong for the most part to the time subsequent to the organization of the Church there. The advance to the Parrett brought into Saxon occupation Ynyswytrin, where British Christianity, that had come down from the Welsh and Irish saints and missioners, had long worshipped within the wattle walls of the old church; and the common interest in this sacred spot, later known as Glastonbury, must have contributed to the peaceful settlement of the country.

The area of Saxon occupation was again extended in 682 when Saxons appear to have driven the Britons to the sea.[3] This more or less concluded their drive to the south-west which had begun in 652, and now resulted in their occupying the line of the Parrett and probably extending their left flank southwards to the sea where the Brit, or possibly the Axe, runs into it. They would have joined up with any extension of Wessex from the east across the Stour and, though we have no record of any Dorset campaign, we can assume that when Ine succeeded to the Kingdom of the West Saxons the Wilsaetan and Dorsaetan were occupying what became the shires of Wilts and Dorset, and the Sumorsaetan the eastern half of what is now the county of Somerset. For many years before that date and for some time afterwards the Parrett constituted, as its name is believed to imply, the main line of frontier and it has been held in modern days to constitute a racial boundary, the light hair and dark eyes of the Saxon predominating on the eastern, and the opposite characteristics of the Kelts on the western side. The name Parrett is Keltic or British. The former name of its tributary, the Yeo, Givel or Gifle, meant 'forked river' and is related to the Welsh *gafl*, 'fork'. One of the headwaters of these rivers is the Coker Water, 'cocre' or 'cokr' being derived from the British *cucra*, 'crooked stream'.[4] Another is the Chinnock Brook formerly Cinnioch or Cinnue, said, though somewhat doubtfully, to be a derivative of the Anglo-Saxon *cinn*, 'fissure, ravine'. Alternatively it might be a British stream-name of which the meaning is unknown. The names which in Domesday Book (1086) appear as Peret, Cinnioch, Cocre, Givele (or Ivle or Ivla), and became the somewhat similar ones of modern places, are no doubt derived from those of the rivers or streams that flow through them. Penne is also British and was originally identical with Welsh *pen*, 'head, top'.

[1] G. Baldwin Brown, *The Arts in Early England* (1915), III, p. 197.
[2] G. C. Brooke, *English Coins* (1932), pp. 5, 6. [3] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 329.
[4] Eilert Ekwall, *Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names* (1936), pp. 109, 110.

Udecombe or Odecombe is either the Anglo-Saxon personal name *Ude* or the word in that language *wudu*, 'wood', combined with the British loan-word *cumb*, 'valley'. Hardington, Sutton, Brympton and Preston, or in their older forms, Hardintone, Sutone or Sutune, Brometons or Brunetone and Prestetone, are clearly of Anglo-Saxon derivation.

Thus British names of natural features or Saxon personal names, and sometimes both, gave rise to settlement names. These were applied to blocks of country allocated to communities for their maintenance, by the authority of the king or a chief. We have instances in the Saxon charters of grants of land to monasteries and churches, and the principles followed would have been the same in the case of grants to lesser chiefs or headmen representing groups of families. Each grant would have been of an area within a defined boundary including a length of stream with its valley and the hills on one or both sides. Its shape was governed by the agricultural requirements of the community; flat or gently sloping high land was included for corn cultivation, meadow and pasture land for cattle and sheep, woodland for grazing, pannage and fuel, and from the woodland as well as from furze and heath within the boundary 'assarts' could, as additional labour became available, be cleared to add to the cultivated area. The boundaries of these units of settlement do not seem to have changed materially as time went on and they became the vills or manors of Domesday and subsequently, for the purposes of the church, the parishes as we know them, though it was not unusual for them to be subdivided into two or sometimes three parts when two or three centres or nuclei grew up. It will be seen that the vill of Cocra of which the people at one time all held of a single lord eventually became East and West Coker and that of Cinnock was divided into East, Middle and West Chinnock.

Before proceeding further with the history of Saxon Somerset which begins to take form in the reign of Ine, it is necessary to take stock of the part which was now being played by the Saxon Church and its local bishops. At the end of the seventh century the Anglo-Saxon Church was nearly a century old, and more than 35 years had elapsed since the Council of Whitby aligned it with the Church of Rome. At about the same time the history of the Church in Somerset was to be greatly influenced by the activities of a great bishop. In 705 or thereabouts, Ine divided the West Saxon diocese of Winchester, which had been created shortly before the synod of Whitby; the first bishop of the new diocese of Sherborne was to be Ealdhelm, a member of the royal house of Wessex, a product of the Canterbury school, who had previously studied the Keltic forms under an Irishman at Malmesbury and later returned there to be monk and then abbot. We hear of him 'chanting his Saxon lays to his harp upon the bridge till, Orpheus-like, he leads his spell-bound hearers within the abbey church for prayer'.[1] He died at Doulting in Somerset in 709, but in the four years which had elapsed since his election he administered his diocese with great energy and efficiency.

The conjunction of Ine, one of the strongest of the West Saxon kings, with the learned and saintly Ealdhelm led not only to the building of churches but

[1] G. Baldwin Brown, *The Arts in Early England* (2nd ed. 1926), I, p. 210.

also to the planting of religious establishments in the western diocese of Wessex. According to tradition, supported by probability, the monastery of Glastonbury was founded anew and that of Muchelney was created. Charters granting to Abbot Beorhwald of the former twenty hides at Doulting (Pilton)[1] and to the latter twenty hides at Yleminster (Ilminster) with boundaries coterminous with those of the modern parish,[2] though they doubtless supported the claims to these lands made at a later period by the monasteries, are no longer considered as original evidence of the validity of the claims. Scarcely more satisfactory is the charter of Ine granting in A.D. 725 lands at Sowy (Middlezoy) to the abbey of Glastonbury.[3] On the other hand the gift of ten hides at Brente (East Brent with hamlets) by him to the Abbot Hengisl can be looked upon as real evidence of a grant.[4] In this same reign of Ine a grant is said to have been made by Baldred of the Mercians of land at Pennard (West and East Pennard) to 'Hamgisl', abbot of Glastonbury.[5]

The church erected by Ine at Glastonbury known as the 'major ecclesia' was of stone and is said to have been larger than the earlier church, the 'vetusta ecclesia', which had been built of wattles and afterwards covered with wood and with lead.[6] The new church was just east of the old one and consisted of a nave and chancel and flanking porticus and a wide chancel arch.[7]

It was after Ealdhelm's death and in the time of Forthhere, his successor as bishop of Sherborne, that Ine extended his territories to the west. Ealdhelm, in a letter written before 705, had represented Geraint, a chief of West Wales, as a person of great importance and power and it was against this king of the Welsh that Ina and Nun his kinsman fought in A.D. 710.[8] The result would seem to have been a wide extension of West Saxon dominion to the west and the foundation of Taunton—the 'tun on the Tone'. The treacherous conduct of a young nobleman led to the razing of Taunton by Ine's wife Ethelburga in 722.[9] In the following years Ine was engaged in fighting against the South Saxons and in 728 he went to Rome where within a year he died. He was succeeded by Aethelheard, thirteenth king (726–40), who is credited with a large grant to Glastonbury of sixty hides at Ponholt or Shapwik (Shapwick, five miles due west of Glastonbury) at the reputed date 729. The survey is a copy of a very early original and the boundaries include six or seven parishes on or at the foot of the Polden hills and a large area of what was then marsh.[10] Early in the next reign—that of Cuthred—a further grant is claimed to have been made in 744 to Glastonbury of ten hides in 'Balteresberghe et Scobbanworth' (Baltonsborough is about three and a half miles south-east of Glastonbury). The survey is considered a copy of one made in early Saxon times. The boundaries exclude the west and north-west part of the present parish which, being below the fifty-foot contour, 'only became usable when in subsequent times it was drained and divided up

[1] G. B. Grundy, *The Saxon Charters of Somerset* (1934), p. 79.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 138. [3] *Ibid.* p. 116. [4] *Ibid.* p. 149.
[5] *Ibid.* p. 174. [6] *Som. Arch. Soc. Proc.* LXIII, p. 40.
[7] A. W. Clapham, *English Romanesque Architecture* (1930), p. 49.
[8] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 333. [9] *Ibid.* p. 334.
[10] G. B. Grundy, *The Saxon Charters of Somerset*, p. 114.

among the various land units abutting on it'. The grantor is one Hella who is not otherwise known.[1]

From the time of Ine the interest of Anglo-Saxon history was divided between the three kingdoms of Northumbria, Mercia and Wessex, for those of Kent, Sussex, Essex and East Anglia were being merged in the more powerful states. Bede, who treats in greater detail the affairs of the two northern kingdoms, in the account of the present state of all Britain with which he concluded his Ecclesiastical History in 731, refers to 'the peaceable and calm disposition of the times'.[2] Two years later the king of Mercia invaded Wessex and conquered Somerton which was afterwards, if not already at that time, the chief place of the Somersaetan. Wars between Mercia and Wessex went on for twenty years until in 752 in a bloody battle in Oxfordshire the Mercians were defeated with great slaughter and the predominance of Wessex was established.

Though these middle decades of the century saw a decline in church life in England in general, religious houses were still receiving grants from the kings. In Somerset the abbey of Muchelney claimed a grant from king Cynewulf in the year 762, eight cassates in Ile between the Ile and the Earn, the present position of Ile Abbots. This charter is held to have been derived from a genuine original. It was witnessed by the hands of the king, of Herewald, bishop of Sherborne, of Kyneheard, bishop of Winchester, and of seven thanes.[3] The other alleged grants of Cynewulf are not of lands, and do not refer to establishments, in south Somerset. The suggestion that he founded Athelney monastery rests on slight foundation.

In 787, Beorhtric being seventeenth king of Wessex, a new era began for England when there

> came three ships of Northmen, out of Hæretha-land [Denmark]. And then the reve rode to the place, and would have driven them to the king's town, because he knew not who they were: and they there slew him. These were the first ships of Danish-men which sought the land of the English nation.[4]

This short notice of misplaced confidence in a central authority, that was assumed by those under it to be capable of protecting all within its borders, illustrates one aspect of the great change that had taken place in the centuries that had elapsed since the first Germanic raiders had come to the coasts of Britain. The fearless, active and successful pirates of the fifth century worshipped fierce gods; followed leaders of their choice whose word was their only law; braved the tempest in skin-covered boats framed of osiers and, descending on defended or defenceless shores or disembarking on river banks, destroyed with fire and battering ram every wall or dwelling they came across, and slaughtered with spear and dagger or with massive club or axe all who resisted them. Then they sailed back to their awaiting kinsfolk with their booty and their slaves. Their descendants of the eighth century practised

[1] G. B. Grundy, *The Saxon Charters of Somerset*, p. 61.
[2] *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, Bohn's Antiquarian Library (1847), p. 293.
[3] *Cartularies of Muchelney and Athelney Abbeys*, Som. Rec. Soc. Publ. XIV, pp. 4, 6, 47.
[4] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 341.

Christianity within the fold of an organized Church and obeyed laws enacted by their king with the advice of his wise men and administered by his ealdormen or sheriffs of shires. They were in the main settled agriculturists growing corn, keeping sheep for their wool and pigs for their flesh and forming village communities in which customs of tenure and agriculture brought from the lands of their origin were adapted to the country of their settlement.

Of the customs of tenure and agriculture there is already an indication in the laws of Ine to which reference has been made. One section of these laws is generally looked upon as containing evidence that the fields of Wessex were then and had long been 'common open fields, the arable being divided into acres and the meadow into strips or doles'. The arable fields were usually two in number, less often three. Where they were three they were respectively autumn-sown, spring-sown and fallow. The division of holdings into acres or half-acres gave equality in the nature of the soil and in the distance from the homestead, all the homesteads of the settlement being clustered at a central site with the fields around it. The even division between the fields ensured the benefit of the crops and the burden of the fallow being equally apportioned.[1] Holdings composed of acres or strips scattered in an estate were already in King Ine's time known as hides, half-hides and yardlands, each measure being half the preceding one. Whether one or other was allotted to a holder depended on the number of beasts contributed by him to the plough-team of eight oxen. The holding was held of a thane or 'hlaford', for 'gafol' or payment in kind or in money and for 'wic-weorc' or a specified number of days' work in the week, the lord supplying a homestead and probably its outfit or 'stuht' which, however, remained his property. The holding was part of a private estate—a 'ham' or 'tun'—with a village community in serfdom upon it, the members of that community being either 'geburs' with such holdings as have been indicated, or 'cotsetles' with smaller holdings, or 'theows' (slaves) without any land at all. The duties of these peasants, their 'gafol' and their weekly work, appear from documents of a later date to have been definitively laid down from early times, though differing in different parts. But always there was division between the 'geneat-land' and the 'thane's inland', the former of which was cultivated by the 'geburs' and 'cotsetles' for themselves and for the thane and the latter exclusively for the thane, mainly by the 'theows'.

As regards the territorial organization of the Church we have seen that from the time of Ine Wessex had contained two bishoprics. The boundaries of these were coterminous with those of the kingdom or of each other. It is believed that already in these early times there had been created the smaller ecclesiastical unit—the 'preost-scir', priest-shire or parish in succession to the system by which a missionary priest was sent by bishop or abbot to preach and administer sacraments at places of public meeting in the different settlements. This 'preost-scir' had a similar relation to the settlement ruled over by a thane as had the 'bishop-scir' or bishopric to the kingdom. It seems, however, likely that the thane himself, as formerly directing the worship of the heathen gods, held ecclesiastical as well as civil and military

[1] H. J. Randall, *History in the Open Air* (1936), chap. IV.

powers over the settled land and its people, becoming for the purpose a deacon or sub-deacon and appointing an ecclesiastic of higher order as mass or altar priest to administer the sacraments. It is probable also that it was in the smaller chamber of the thane's hall that the priest officiated while the congregation occupied the adjoining larger one, and that a similar arrangement obtained when a separate timber church was built with chancel and nave.[1] The thane's hall and the church were alike to disappear with the ravaging of the kingdom within the next two centuries and there is little certain knowledge with regard to them.

According to Aethelward, a noble writer of the end of the first millennium, whose story based on the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle sometimes amplifies it—whether correctly or incorrectly it is scarcely possible to say—the Danish raid of 787 was on the coast of Dorset.[2] There were several raids on this and the neighbouring coasts in the reign of Ecgbeorht, the eighteenth king of Wessex (801–39)—in 833 at Charmouth and in 837 at Southampton and Portland Isle—in each case the raid being put down as of men from thirty-five ships.[3] It is not known how far in this period the attacks were carried into the country. There is evidence that Glastonbury was burnt and probably also Muchelney and in these circumstances it is difficult to believe that Sherborne, where a bishop had his see, or Somerton, where the West Saxon king is supposed to have resided when he was in this part of his dominions, escaped destruction, but there is no record of this in the Chronicle, which asserts that the Danes were victorious or maintained possession of the field in most of the fights. They were less successful in an attack on Cornwall in 835, though they had had the assistance of the British.

> This year a great hostile fleet came to the West Welsh, and they united together, and made war upon Egbert king of the West Saxons. As soon as he heard of it he went thither with an army and fought against them at Hengeston, and there he put to flight both the Welsh and the Danish-men.[3]

The Danish raids did not prevent King Ecgbeorht of Wessex from extending the power of Wessex over other parts of England. By alliance with East Anglia, by victories in Essex, Kent and Sussex and over the men of Surrey and by the important if less permanent conquest of Mercia, he achieved a position of some paramountcy and was hailed as Bretwalda. Ecgbeorht's conquest of Kent, where a mint at Canterbury had served the kings of Mercia and Kent and the archbishop of Canterbury, was followed by the establishment of a Wessex mint at Winchester, whence there had already been a brief issue of silver coins in Beorhtric's reign. This was additional to the Canterbury mint and to one that existed for a short time in London under a tributary Mercian king. From Winchester was issued a coinage of peculiar style on which Ecgbeorht 'is termed *Rex Saxonicorum*; his successor Aethelwulf added the word *Occidentalium* to the title on his similar coins'. The mint was then closed, possibly owing to its exposure to

[1] A. R. Powys, *The English Parish Church* (1930), pp. 8, 9.
[2] *Old English Chronicles*, Bohn's Antiquarian Library (1855), p. 19.
[3] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, pp. 347, 348.

Viking raids, and four out of the five moneyers whose names we know from the coins were transferred to Canterbury.[1]

Danish incursions occurred in Aethelwulf's reign (839–56). In the year 840 there was another raid on Charmouth by thirty-five ships and then in 845 the first recorded attack on North Somerset, when 'Eanwulf the ealdorman, with the men of Somerset, and Bishop Ealstan, and Osric the ealdorman, with the men of Dorset, fought at the mouth of the Parrett against the Danish army, and there made great slaughter, and got the victory'.[2]

According to another version of the story or legend the enemy was driven across England:

> In this year fought
> Eanulf the ealdorman, and defeated the Danes
> Another ealdorman, his name was Osric
> Was with him a captain.
> One led the men of Dorset,
> The other the men of Somerset.
> At the mouth of the Parrett
> The Danes were beaten this year.
> Ceoil the ealdorman pursued them;
> He never stopped till he came to Thanet,
> The lords of Devonshire
> Helped him in pursuit.
> They began at Wembury(?)
> They drove them as far as Thanet.[3]

The Eanulf here mentioned may be the Prince Eanulf to whom Aethelwulf by charter with reputed date of 842 is said to have given twenty-five hides at Dichesgate (Ditcheat, seven and a half miles east by south of Glastonbury),[4] five hides at Lottisham, and land at Bradeleighe (West Bradley, four miles east by south of Glastonbury).[5] Twelve years later according to a charter with reputed date of 854 he made a great gift to Ealhstan, bishop of Winchester, of 133 hides (43,000 acres) round Taunton, possibly in the hope that the Church would obtain divine intercession in the struggle against the Danes.

Their invasion had by this time entered on a new phase, for in 851 'the heathen men, for the first time, remained over winter in Thanet'.[6] Four years later the same thing happened in Sheppey.[6] Raids were to give place to occupation and henceforth 'the army' of the Danes is frequently mentioned in the Chronicle. It was, however, on the east and north of England that fell the brunt of this invasion. Nearly all these parts were in the hands of the Danes when Aelfred became king of Wessex on the death of his brother Aethelred in 871. By that time the storm had burst on Wessex.

And this year nine general battles were fought against the army in the kingdom south of the Thames, besides which Alfred the king's brother, and single ealdormen,

[1] G. C. Brooke, *English Coins* (1950), pp. 42, 43.
[2] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, pp. 347, 348.
[3] Maistre Geffrai Guinier, *Lestorie des Engles*. Linie 2454.
[4] G. B. Grundy, *The Saxon Charters of Somerset*, p. 55.
[5] *Ibid.* p. 72.
[6] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, pp. 348, 349.

and king's thanes, oftentimes made incursions on them, which were not counted: and within the year nine earls and one king were slain. And that year the West Saxons made peace with the army.[1]

The Danes went east and north and the peace of Wessex held for five years. Then 'the army stole away to Wareham, a fortress of the West Saxons'. The king went after them and again made peace with them and took hostages from them but those of them who could get horses stole away by night from the fortress towards Exeter which they occupied before the king could come up with them. Their fleet, however, sailing out of Wareham, met a great storm and 120 ships were wrecked at Swanage. In these circumstances, the army beleaguered in Exeter, sued for peace and delivered to the king hostages, as many as he would have, and passed into Mercia. But in the following year, 878,

during midwinter, after twelfth night, the army stole away to Chippenham, and overran the land of the West-Saxons, and sat down there; and many of the people they drove beyond sea, and of the remainder the greater part they subdued and forced to obey them, except king Alfred: and he, with a small band, with difficulty retreated to the woods and to the fastnesses of the moors.[2]

But the Saxons were able to defeat an attack from the sea and they slaughtered a number of Danes and took their war-flag called the Raven.

After this, at Easter king Alfred with a small band constructed a fortress at Athelney; and from this fortress, with that part of the men of Somerset which was nearest to it, from time to time they fought against the army.[2]

According to another version,

King Alfred was at this time straitened more than was becoming. Ethelnoth also duke of Somerset lived with a narrow retinue in a certain wood, and they build a strong-hold in the island of Athelingay, which seems to have been situated in a marsh. But the aforesaid king fought daily battles against the barbarians, having with him the province of Somerset only; no others assisted him, except the servants who made use of the king's pastures.[3]

Presently Aelfred felt himself strong enough to take the offensive and in May he passed to the east side of Selwood Forest

and there came to meet him all the men of Somerset, and the men of Wiltshire, and that portion of the men of Hampshire which was on this side of the sea; and they were joyful at his presence. On the following day he went from that station to Iglea, and on the day after this to Heddington, and there fought against the whole army, put them to flight, and pursued them as far as their fortress: and there he sat down fourteen days. And then the army delivered to him hostages, with many oaths, that they would leave his kingdom, and also promised him that their king should receive baptism: and this they accordingly fulfilled.[4]

[1] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 354.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 356.
[3] *Old English Chronicles*, p. 31.
[4] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 356.

By the peace of Wedmore Aelfred retained Wessex with its dependencies, Sussex and Kent, and the western half of Mercia. The rest of England as far north as the Tees became the Danelaw where the Danish law prevailed. After fifteen years of comparative peace and security Aelfred had a further four-year struggle with the Danes but he was never in such sore straits again as he had been in the marshes of the Parrett; and the result of the operations he planned from there was that the Danes never made a permanent settlement in Somerset nor indeed in the south and west of England.

No part of the story above related can definitely be allocated to south Somerset but the ravaging operations of the Danes, extending from Chippenham in north Wiltshire to the sea-coast of Dorset and of Devon, make it impossible that the headwaters of the Parrett and of the Yeo should have escaped the visitation of the invaders. They would have occupied if they did not destroy Sherborne and Somerton. They could scarce have avoided using the Roman road that passed through Shepton, that forked at Ilchester to Dorchester and Exeter, and wherever they went they would have destroyed the villages, burnt the crops, and murdered, driven away or enslaved the inhabitants. But when peace came once more civilization would have quickly been restored to these parts. The task of renewing the religious life of the country after the wholesale destruction of monasteries and churches and the slaughter of monks and priests was a serious one. Anxious for the revival of both learning and religion Aelfred founded or possibly refounded monasteries, including that at Athelney on the north bank of the river Tone, where monks might teach boys committed to their care.

There is a charter with reputed date 878, of which the survey, however, is not before 1200 (without bearing evidence that it is a copy of an earlier one), recording the grant by Aelfred of ten hides at 'Sudton' to the monastery of Athelney; there is no reason to doubt that this grant, whenever made, was coterminous with the present parish of Long Sutton, two miles south-south-west of Somerton. The grant is described as of an island 'which is in the English named Aedlingarey'.[1] At Athelney was built a centrally planned church of a type 'introduced from the east probably by way of Constantinople'.[2] Another charter attributed to Aelfred, granting land in Somerset, is that of eight hides at Risctun (A.-S. *risc-tun*, 'bush farm or village'), which corresponds to the parish of Ruishton, one and a quarter miles west of Taunton. The survey belongs to the Saxon age, and is either the original document or a copy of it. The grant, dated 880, is to Denewulf, bishop of Winchester.[3]

Difficulty was experienced in getting the monks for these and other institutions, and resort was had to old Saxony and France. The see of Sherborne becoming vacant, there was appointed to it a Welshman, Asser, who later wrote the king's life, recording his labours for the defence of the country, for the advancement of learning, for the stabilization and administration of the old laws and customs, and generally for the welfare of the people.

[1] G. B. Grundy, *The Saxon Charters of Somerset*, p. 126.
[2] A. W. Clapham, *English Romanesque Architecture* (1930), pp. 147, 148.
[3] G. B. Grundy, *The Saxon Charters of Somerset*, p. 28.

In spite of the destruction of war, one branch of artistic and industrial creation—the coinage of money—went ahead. In the reign of Aethelbert and 'at the accession of Alfred, who in 871 was proclaimed as king of Wessex and of Kent, Canterbury was the only mint in operation. The opening of new mints at Gloucester, London, Oxford, Exeter and Winchester reflects the spread of Alfred's kingdom in Mercia and the more peaceful organization of his Wessex kingdom.' From Canterbury came several types of pennies on one of which the king appears as *Rex Anglor.* and on another as *Rex Sax.* The penny of Gloucester would have been struck after the occupation of south-west Mercia as the result of the treaty of Wedmore in 878; pennies and halfpennies of London after the rebuilding of that city in 886; those of Oxford in the last ten years of the reign; and those from the West Saxon mints, Exeter and Winchester, near its close. Many moneyers were employed and the weight of the different issues varied between twenty and twenty-five grains.[1]

In the year 901, 'Aelfred departed out of this world, that immovable pillar of the Western Saxons, that man full of justice, bold in arms, learned in speech, and above all other things, imbued with the divine instructions'.[2]

Light is thrown on the lands claimed by the Wessex kings in the latter part of the ninth century in south Somerset and elsewhere in the south and west of England by Aelfred's will, drawn up between the years 873 and 889. This document deals with the inheritance his father King Aethelwulf had bequeathed to his three sons which inheritance had all come to Aelfred by the death of his brothers and with the assent of the West Saxon Council. The will affected the king's private estates and booklands and contains no reference to the folklands which were national property and so probably not alienable except by special assent of the council. A translation of the particular clause in the will which relates to lands in south Somerset as well as to some in Hants, Wilts, Dorset and Devon is as follows:

> And to my younger son my estates at Eaderingtun [Adrington], Dene, Meone, Ambresbyrig [Amesbury], Deone, Sturemynster [Sturminster], Gifle [Yeovil], Crucern [Crewkerne], Hwitancyrican [Whitchurch], Axanmuðan [Axmouth], Branecescumbe [Branscombe], Columtune [Cullumpton], Twyfyrde [Twyford], Mylenburnan [Milborne], Exanmynster [Exminster], Suðeswyrðe, Lewtune [Luton], and the lands belonging thereto, namely all that I have among the Welsh except Triconscire.[3]

While these lands went to the younger son Aethelweard, the elder Eadward was left property in north Somerset, in other parts of Wessex and in Kent. The residence at Wellow in Somerset went to the eldest daughter, and residences elsewhere to the second and third daughters, to two nephews, Aethelm and Aethelweald, and to two kinsmen, Osferth and Ealhswith.

Aethelweard, to whom went the royal lands in south Somerset, had sons but not, as far as has been traced, other male descendants, so that, according to

[1] G. C. Brooke, *English Coins*, pp. 44–8. [2] *Old English Chronicles*, p. 37.
[3] F. E. Harmer, *English Historical Documents* (1914), pp. 17, 51.

the spirit of Aelfred's will, his estates in Gifle (Yeovil) and Crucern (Crewkerne) would have reverted to the line of the eldest son Eadward (901–24), who had become king on Aelfred's death and was afterwards known as 'the Elder'. Aethelweald, one of the nephews mentioned in the will, claimed the crown, occupied with his followers for a short time Wimborne in Dorset, then joined the Danes in the north and in 905 was killed in one of their southern incursions. In 918 there was a Danish attack on the coast of Somerset but it was a failure and by this time the forces of Eadward and of his sister Aethelflaed, lady of the Mercians, were establishing their power over the centre as well as the south of England. Throughout Eadward's reign and the reigns of his sons Aethelstan (924–40), Eadmund (940–6) and Eadred (946–55), there were constant wars with the Danes, further subjugation of the Welsh and alternately hostile and generous treatment of the Scots, but by 955 the wisdom and the strength of Aelfred, his son, and his three grandsons had placed England, from Solway Firth to the Channel, under one ruler and had done much to assimilate English and Danes.

By that time also the duties and responsibilities of the Church had also grown. Already in the early years of Eadward the see of Sherborne was found to be too extensive for the proper supervision of its work, and in 909 the see of Wells was created, a Benedictine monk of Glastonbury being made its first bishop. The religious houses of Somerset had been for the most part destroyed by the Danish wars and Glastonbury was scarcely a monastery except in name; its revival came at a somewhat later date. Eaward's son Aethelstan founded or refounded the little monastery of Muchelney in 933 or 937. A charter in the cartulary of the abbey records a grant made by this king of land at Curi (Curry Rivel) together with five hides at Stanwaye. While this charter is looked upon as late and spurious the survey attached to it is considered to be an independent record of considerably earlier date. It shows the grant as consisting of the whole of the modern parish of Drayton and of that part of Huish Episcopi which lies south of the rivers Yeo and Parrett.[1]

There is evidence from the Saxon charters that the grandsons of Aelfred were freely making grants of 'bok-land' not only to religious foundations but also to their own followers. In south Somerset Aethelstan who gave a *mansio* in the place which is called Relengen (Lyng) to the abbey of Athelney in 937,[2] made a grant in 938, confirmed by his successor in 941, of sixteen hides of land at Pipingminstre or Pippingmynstre (Pitminster, about four miles due south of Taunton) to the thegn Aelfhean. The surveys go back to originals of the Saxon age.[3] Aethelstan also granted in 938 five hides at Rimtune (Rimpton about four miles north-north-east of Yeovil) to the thegn Athaered. 'The survey is either a copy or the original of a genuine document of the Saxon age—maybe of the age of the grant.' The boundary, in parts at any rate, corresponds to that of the modern parish.[4]

[1] G. B. Grundy, *The Saxon Charters of Somerset*, p. 131; and *Cartularies of Muchelney and Athelney Abbeys*, Som. Rec. Soc. Publ. XIV, p. 39.

[2] *Cartularies of Muchelney and Athelney Abbeys*, Som. Rec. Soc. Publ. XIV, p. 155.

[3] G. B. Grundy, *The Saxon Charters of Somerset*, p. 30.

[4] *Ibid.* p. 102.

Eadmund is alleged to have granted twenty hides at 'Batecombe' to the thegn Elswick in 940. The grant is coextensive with the parish of Batcomb near Bruton, but there is no evidence that the survey, dating from the first half of the twelfth century, was copied from an earlier one.[1] Eadred granted in 955 twenty hides at 'Pengeard Mynster' to Aelfgith, a nun of Wilton Abbey, on payment of 120 'solidi' of gold. The grant corresponds to the whole of the present parish of East Pennard according to the survey which is certainly of the Saxon age.[2] Eadred also granted in 956 five hides at Rimtune (Rimpton) to the thegn Brihtric. The boundaries of the grant appear in part the same as those of the grant of Aethelstan to the thegn Athaered.

A note is appended to the charter saying that Brihtric granted this land at Rimpton to the Old Monastery (at Winchester) after his death, together with 1 hide of land which he had subsequently acquired, and with it the charter which King Eadred had granted him, to go into their collection of charters, which Aethelstan the king had previously granted on the agreement that he was to enjoy the use of the land during his lifetime, and it was then to pass to the holy place as well provided with 'meat and men and all things' as when he got it, for the benefit of his soul.

The witnesses to this appendix are of an unusual type, viz. Archbishop Dunstan, the bishops Athelwold and Aeldstan, Abbot Aethelgar, the monastery at Glastonbury, and the two monasteries the old and the new, at Winchester.[3]

Eadred also made a grant to the thegn Brihtric in 956 of five hides at Henstesrig (Henstridge, about five and a half miles east-north-east of Sherborne). The survey is a late one and the boundaries have been found difficult to identify.

Other grants were of course made to thegns between the years 901 and 956 but they were not of lands in south Somerset. How far these grants were registered by the Witanagemot is not evident though doubtless some were. This state council played a most important part in the period and met regularly, but the only meeting of a witanagemot we know to have taken place in Somerset was that at Frome in 934, this being one of the many occasions when land in the south-west of England was granted to Winchester Cathedral. In the following reign a witanagemot was held at Cheddar (941) and one at Winchcombe in Dorset (942), and in that of Eadred one at Somerton in south Somerset. In a charter granted at that meeting 'Sumurtun' is referred to as *villa famosissima*. This charter is signed by the king with the consent of his great nobles: by Oda, archbishop of Canterbury; Wulfstan, archbishop of York; Theodred, bishop of London; Wulfsige, bishop of Wells; Cynesige, bishop of Lichfield; and by various ealdormen, abbots, ministers, thegns, etc. This is by no means an unusual number of exalted persons to attend a witanagemot or to witness a deed even of no great importance like the one signed at Somerton which made a grant of land in Derbyshire to the thegn Ulfketel.[4]

One wonders how in those far-away days so many great men could have

[1] G. B. Grundy, *The Saxon Charters of Somerset*, p. 86.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 65. [3] *Ibid.* pp. 108–9.
[4] W. de G. Birch, *Cartularium Saxonicum* (1893), III, p. 27.

been accommodated at or near Somerton. There might have been here and there in the neighbourhood some thegn's 'heal' or 'ham' of timber, but the bulk of the population would have been housed in rough constructions with wattle and daub or wicker walls and board or thatched roofs with hangings to keep out the draughts and to give some appearance of comfort. But the recently built or rebuilt abbey of Muchelney was less than five miles away and Glastonbury was but seven. Here Dunstan, entrusted with the restoration and reform of the abbey since 943 and abbot since 946, had 'according to his biographer Osbern, set about to lay the foundation of a large church and a complete set of monastic offices according to a plan which had been shown to him'.[1] In extension to the east 'he built a chancel (21 feet by 17 feet) perhaps surmounted by a tower, and added rectangular chapels to the north and south of it. Within this chancel was a small crypt of earlier date'.[2] At Muchelney and Glastonbury the high ecclesiastical authorities and maybe the king himself would have found shelter in the intervals between the sittings of the great council which probably took place in the open air on the high hill which overlooks the King's Moor.

The great church built at Glastonbury by Dunstan lasted another 150 years and was probably of stone, which by this time had become the material for important buildings, at any rate for those of an ecclesiastical character. The church at Bradford-on-Avon has been attributed to a much earlier date—that of Ealdhelm—but such attribution is now held to be doubtful, and the two flying angels above the chancel arch of that church are looked upon as playing their part in the Romanesque revival of the tenth century and may be nearer 950 in date than 900.[3] At Shepton Mallet within the county are traces and some remnants of original masonry, maybe from the middle of the tenth century, of an early tall, narrow, nave—37 feet 2 inches in length, only 14 feet 5 inches in width and 25 feet in height—much like that of Bradford-on-Avon and still more resembling that in a Saxon church in county Durham.[4] A fragment of a column with an interlacing pattern of early character has also been found within the precincts of the church at Shepton Mallet. Interlaced patterns are met with on fragments of Saxon crosses which survive in other churches; they are generally reputed to be of earlier date than that at which we have now arrived and occur for the most part in the north-east part of the county, and one of very intricate if somewhat decadent snake design from West Camel, four miles east-north-east of Ilchester,[5] has recently been 'assigned to the period 860–80, certainly not later than the beginning of Alfred's reign'.[6] A few instances of a particular feature of late Saxon work are to be found to the south-east of the county. Of the Saxon bishop's church at Sherborne, nine miles east of West Coker but in Dorset, 'there remains embedded in the west wall of the present edifice a late Saxon blocked door-

[1] R. Willis, *The Architectural History of Glastonbury Abbey* (1866), p. 8.
[2] A. W. Clapham, *English Romanesque Architecture*, pp. 91, 92.
[3] T. D. Kendrick, *Anglo-Saxon Art to A.D. 900*, p. 220.
[4] *Som. Arch. Soc. Proc.* LIII, pt. II, p. 5.
[5] *Ibid.* XXXVI, pt. (II), p. 81.
[6] T. D. Kendrick, *Anglo-Saxon Art to A.D. 900*, p. 211.

way, the evidence of which in strip-work round the opening renders its character and general date assured'.[1] This work is the use of plastic strips for the enrichment of the jambs and flanks of an opening, such strips being continued round the extrados of the arch.[2] At Milborne Port, three miles east of Sherborne but in Somerset, 'the south wall of the chancel of this fine Norman church shows unmistakable reminiscences of Saxon pilaster strips';[3] but the distinguished writer who draws attention to this decoration looks on it in a building of Norman construction as unusual, without sense of fitness and 'in the nature of a freak'.[4]

In another branch of art also of late date but displaying considerable artistic sense is the open-work brooch of gilt bronze found at Pitney some three miles west of Somerton; the interlaced pattern represents an animal encircled by a snake.[5] There is a suggestion of Irish art in the design and in this connexion we have been reminded that Irish pilgrims are said to have settled at Glastonbury and educated St Dunstan in the early part of the tenth century.

There was much fighting in the north of England in the time of Eadred, but there was quiet in the south, and England was free from barbarian attack in the reigns of Eadred's nephews, the self-indulgent Eadwig (955–9) and the peaceful Eadgar (959–75). The restraining influence of Dunstan, abbot of Glastonbury, was resented by Eadwig and he was driven from the country, but Eadgar recalled him in 959 'and gave him the bishopric at Worcester; and afterwards the bishopric at London'.[6] Both kings issued a large number of charters, but although some of these were grants of lands in Somerset they were in nearly every case to the abbey of Bath, neither Glastonbury nor the monasteries in south Somerset benefiting except in one case in which the grant of ten hides at Yli (Isle Abbotts, four miles north of Ilminster) is alleged to have been made by Eadgar to Muchelney. The survey is of an earlier date than most of those in the cartulary of that abbey, but is not above suspicion; some of the boundaries at any rate (for instance, the river Isle) correspond with those of the modern parish.[7]

Eadgar's predilection for Bath Abbey is evidenced by his second coronation there by Archbishop Dunstan in 973, two years before his death. But he was buried at Glastonbury.

Here Edgar died,
ruler of Angles,
West Saxons' joy,
and Mercians' protector.
... ...
No fleet was so daring,
nor army so strong,
that 'mid the English nation,

[1] G. Baldwin Brown, *The Arts in Early England*, II, p. 477.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 29. [3] *Ibid.* p. 470.
[4] *Ibid.* p. 428. [5] D. P. Dobson, *The Archaeology of Somerset* (1931), p. 183.
[6] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 381.
[7] G. B. Grundy, *The Saxon Charters of Somerset*, p. 139.

took from him aught,
the while that the noble king
ruled on his throne.[1]

In his peaceful reign developments in various directions that had come about during the wars became stabilized. His ordinance as to local courts 'contains the first clear proof of the division of the shires for judicial purposes into moderately sized units called "hundreds", each with its own "moot" sitting every four weeks'.[2] By Eadgar's time also the folk-moot or general assembly of the free men of the shire, had become known as the shire-moot—the original county court. It met twice a year! '...and let there be present the bishop of the shire and the ealdorman, and there both expound as well the law of God as the secular law'.[3]

After Eadgar's death evil times came to England. There was in the following year a widespread famine and manifold commotions among the English people. Eadward, Eadgar's son (975–9) who had succeeded him, was murdered at Corfe-gate in circumstances, possibly connected with the feud between the regular and secular clergy, that led to his canonization. He was in turn succeeded by Aethelred (978–1016), Eadgar's other son who was known as 'the Redeless' or 'man of no counsel'. In 980 there began a fresh series of raids from the sea. Southampton and the Cornish, Devon and Welsh coasts were ravaged, and in 988 Watchet. In 991 the attacks were on East Anglia, and on the advice of Sigeric or Siric, a new archbishop of Canterbury, and of two ealdormen desirous of purchasing peace for their respective districts, a tribute of £10,000 was paid to the Danes to keep them from the coasts, and thus the hated danegeld began. This expedient of ransom was repeated when later the invasion was led by deposed kings, Olave (or Anlaf) of Norway and Swegen (or Sweyn) of Denmark; and after an unsuccessful attempt on London, 'the army came to Southampton, and there took up their winter quarters: and there they were victualled from all the realm of the West Saxons, and they were paid sixteen thousand pounds of money'.[4] The tribute levied exclusively from Wessex came to be known as 'mitsung', that from the whole of England as 'gafol'.

In 997 there was much burning and manslaying in Severnmouth and on the south-west coasts, and Watchet again suffered. In the following year the army went 'into Frome-mouth and everywhere they went up as far as they would into Dorset'.[5] There was a temporary respite in 1000 but in the first year of the new century, after being strenuously resisted at Exmouth, the army went

through the land, and did all as was their wont; destroyed and burnt. Then was collected a vast force of the people of Devon and of the people of Somerset, and they then came together at Pen. And so soon as they joined battle, then the people

[1] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 386.
[2] *Cambridge Medieval History* (1922), III, p. 376.
[3] W. Stubbs, *Select Charters* (1890), p. 71.
[4] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 391. [5] *Ibid.* p. 394.

gave way: and they made great slaughter, and then they rode over the land, and their last incursion was ever worse than the one before: and then they brought much booty with them to their ships.[1]

Another version of the Chronicle refers to the burning of the villages of Pen and of Clifton 'and of many goodly towns'. This Pen is now allowed to be Pinhoe, near Exeter, which the natives call 'Peenhoe' to this day. But another possibility, though not supported by any authority ancient or modern, is that the two villages were Pen (now Pendomer) and Clifton (now Clifton Maybank) on the headwaters of the Yeo and Parrett in south Somerset. Again ransom was paid—this time of £24,000.

And so it went on, raids alternating with short purchased truces, and in all fights the Danish men having possession of the place of carnage. Attempts at counter-attack on the ships 'both by sea and land effected nothing, except the people's distress and waste of money and the emboldening of their foes'. The old chronicles contain many attempts to excuse the constant defeats of the English alleging the treachery or incompetence of leaders, but their unsuccess seems really to have been due to complete disorganization against which the character of their king offered no safeguard.

Incidents in the hopeless struggle were an attempted massacre of Danes on St Brice's mass day in 1002, a grim famine throughout the land in 1005, an order for the building of ships on the basis of an assessment of 300 hides in 1008, an ordinance by king and witan proclaiming a national fast in 1009, the capture of Canterbury and its archbishop, Aelfheah or Elphege, in 1011 and his martyrdom in the following year. Then at last in 1013 there came a change. The north of England submitted to Sweyn, king of Denmark, then Mercia; and when Sweyn sat down at Bath, Wessex submitted. Finally London delivered hostages. Meanwhile Aethelred had fled to Richard of Normandy, son of Richard the Fearless, whose daughter Emma he had married in the hope of strengthening his position. He remained there until such time as Sweyn was dead, when having promised amendment and amnesty he came home to his people. There was war between Aethelred and Cnut, son of Sweyn and king of Denmark, in the course of which 'came king Canute to Sandwich; and soon after went about Kent into Wessex, until he came to the mouth of the Frome: and then he ravaged in Dorset, and in Wiltshire, and in Somerset. Then lay the king sick at Corsham'.[2]

Presently 'the men of Wessex submitted, and delivered hostages, and horsed the army; and then was it there until mid-winter'.[2] In the following year there were confused operations in Northumbria and Mercia and then on St George's mass day (1016) King Aethelred died. His son Eadmund was chosen king. The Danes attacked London.

Then had the King Eadmund, before that gone out; and he overran Wessex, and all the people submitted to him. And soon after that he fought against the army at Pen near Gillingham. And a second battle he fought, after mid-summer, at Sherston; and there much slaughter was made on either side, and the armies of themselves separated.[3]

[1] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 396. [2] *Ibid.* p. 406. [3] *Ibid.* p. 407.

This Pen is identified with Penselwood, near where was fought the battle of 658, and is five miles from Gillingham.[1] Later, from his base in Wessex, Eadmund moved against the Danes in Essex and fought them at the down called Assington where Cnut had the victory. This was followed by a peace by which Eadmund obtained Wessex and Cnut Mercia and the northern districts. But in November of the same year Eadmund died. He was buried at Glastonbury with his grandfather Eadgar, and Cnut (1016–1035) was chosen king.

It is difficult to gauge the extent to which the material civilization that had been moulded by Aelfred and his immediate successors was destroyed in south Somerset by later Danish invasions. Watchet had been twice ravaged, but it is not stated that the army penetrated any distance from it. If the identification of Pen, where the Devon and Somerset people fought the Danes in 1001, with Pinhoe near Exeter is correct, the raid on this occasion did not involve any overrunning of Somerset. A list of the counties overrun by 1011 is given in the Chronicle for that year and includes much of Wiltshire but makes no reference to counties further west, and though we are told that Somersetshire was ravaged by Cnut in 1016 there is no evidence that he penetrated far into it or that Glastonbury suffered in the way that Canterbury had done in 1013. There are, however, no recorded grants during the war-time to Glastonbury under Abbot Aelfweard. Muchelney received from Aethelred in 995 a confirmatory charter which is actually extant. 'The confirmation includes firstly a restitution of Ilminster which at another date, in the term of three heirs, had foolishly been taken away from the monastery; and secondly, a gift of Cantmeel, identified by the rubric as West Camel, which Leofric the abbot had purchased by outside aid.'[2] The same king in 1007 made a donation to Athelney, then under Abbot Aelfric, of a small portion of land reckoned at three perches in a place known as Hamme (Hamp, which occupies the southern portion of the parish of Bridgwater, west of the Parrett);[3] Cnut gave land at Wellow (four miles south of Bath) to Bath Abbey.

Lands that had originally formed the subject of grants seem to have passed with the licence of the king by testamentary disposition. We have extant two such wills referring to lands in Somerset, both of women and dated about 995. The first, that of Wulfwaru whose parentage is unknown, opens with a petition to King Aethelred 'that I may be worthy of my testament'. She leaves lands in north Somerset to the abbot of Bath and to her two sons and two daughters, in each case, 'with meat and with men and with all the tilth'. To her children also she leaves cups and brooches, hall hangings, chamber hangings and table coverings. She also leaves a legacy to each of four pages and a charge on her property to provide once a year a refection in Bath 'as good as they can supply it'. The other will is that of Wynflaed, daughter of an unknown father and of one Beorhtwyn. Her lands were in Berkshire and in Somerset; the beneficiaries of her will were her son's daughter Eadgifu, her

[1] E. H. Bates, 'Pen Selwood', *Som. Arch. Soc. Proc.* L, pt. II, p. 65.
[2] *Cartularies of Muchelney and Athelney Abbeys*, Som. Rec. Soc. Publ. XIV, pp. 7, 43.
[3] *Ibid.* p. 146.