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**Witcombe Villa**

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## WITCOMBE VILLA.

A PAPER READ BY W. ST. CLAIR BADDELEY

*(President of the Society),*

AT THE GUILDHALL, GLOUCESTER, ON FEBRUARY 3RD, 1908.

I FEAR that the Secretary of our Society has asked me (and I appreciate the honour) to do a rather difficult thing. It is to talk to you for the best part of an hour on a local subject, and with especial reference to Witcombe Villa, near Brockworth; that is, about the villa by the remains of which the Society has been endeavouring to do a solid duty, namely replacing the fallen sheds (which hitherto protected the mosaic pavements and baths discovered by Lysons in 1818) by more lasting structures. I feel I must, having no slides to enliven my demonstration by, crave every indulgence it is in your power to give.

For it is positively tantalising to reflect how easy the whole matter might be for us had there turned up, in the course of the repairs, a single good inscription belonging to any one of the several successive proprietors of that villa, giving, as such inscriptions usually do, his names, place of origin, date of tenure, &c.; or, still better by far for us, had there come to light (say, in Spain or in Brittany) a batch of letters from an official in Roman Britain addressed to his wife in Gaul, just describing the easy stages of a ride along one of our great high-roads. We might picture such an official journeying from Londinium, via Calleva (or Silchester) and Spinæ (Speen), bent on a three-night or week-end sojourn with the Governor of Corinium, and thence passing onward to the country-seat of a hospitable kinswoman at Witcombe, whose husband (let us assume) happened to be a local magnate of Glevum, and bearing with him dispatches for the prefect of the legion at Caerleon (Isca Silurum).

Every sentence of such letters, however ill-worded, would probably be worth (to students of Romano-British life under the Empire) its weight in diamonds. And we, down here in Gloucestershire, should all feel that we possessed once and for ever in our midst one of the most interesting sites in Europe, a bit of ground in human interest almost as rich as a section of Pompeii. Such a treasure would illuminate, as with an electric flash, the long-observed, the silent centuries, and would once more bring us face to face with the very form and pressure of civil and military life here, say, in the third century A.D.

After our imagined traveller had jotted down what he had witnessed, or enjoyed, at those well-known towns, it is likely he might rather annoy us by belittling them as compared with the larger and more luxurious cities of his native Gaul. He might declare the life here to be less piquant and the climate far less brilliant than over there, although he might be hoping for more lively 'entertainments up at the northern wall, or "Vallum," whither he was presently bound. Yet equally he might confess that the Romano-British estates and houses (though none of them much above a century old, and often inferior in extent to those over the water), were occasionally both large and comfortable in their appointments, and set in extremely beautiful situations. Gaul, it should be recalled, was a more prosperous province than Britain.

Let us, then, for the sake of drawing closer to the subject, take him to have written that he had travelled on horseback in company of two friends along a certain great line of road from Corinium on a genial summer morning, making for the town of Glevum, upon the "territorium" or official property-boundary of which they had already entered when, at the brow of what we call the Cotteswold escarpment, that town and the river-vale came into their view. There, while dismounting to breathe their horses before the sharp descent, our traveller had suddenly been made aware by his companions that the beautiful villa of his kinswoman, Volusia, and Vitalis, her husband, was the one he could now descry enthroned on the opposite side of

the deep emerald hollow beneath their gaze, rich with wheat-fields below it and with green pastures above—a sight difficult to forget. That, then, was to be his happy lodging for a couple of nights and days. Indeed; it did not belie the rather enthusiastic description he had been given at the provincial governor's table at Corinium, where, of course, it was well known. For the social standing of his kinswoman, its owner, had been a good one there before she married a wealthy municipal magistrate and senator of Glevum, the descendant of a Gallic veteran in Agricola's army. The lady, although unable to boast so many family honours as her husband, had also come of a family that was well-to-do on these same hills when the un-Romanised Dobuni possessed them, whose language the peasants still talked, although broad Latin alone was to be heard in the villa, and at all stations along the road.

It was not difficult for him to note, even at that distance above it, that the villa was laid out in a superior style, being set above a wide colonnaded court and gardens; on each side of which rose a subordinate group of buildings—doubtless the baths on one side and the service rooms upon the other. Besides, spotted about in the valley he could detect several elaborate outbuildings and much cattle feeding on either side of the long white line of dusty main road speeding direct like a stretched thread or an arrow to well-walled Glevum, with its towers overlooking the Sabrina and the green lowlands beyond that. We may, therefore, leave him descending Birdlip Hill.

Now this mere bit of rough "sketching-in" will, perhaps, serve (in lack of its original) sufficiently well to bring us to the consideration of the villa in Britain, and what it was. And also of the region in Britain to which villas appear to have been limited by the political vicissitudes of the country, or province, throughout imperial days.

For there are large tracts of Northern and Western Britain where no villas, at least built of stone and tile, ever were. For instance, there are no traces of villas north of Aldborough

(Isaurium), just above York. There are none west of Llantwit, in Glamorganshire, or Wroxeter (Uriconium) in Shropshire. Roman roads are there; Roman camps and Roman stations, at regular intervals, are there; but there are no villas. Where the villas are not all was under a strict military regime.

This is of serious topographical value. For it indicates clearly the regions where trustworthy security prevailed. It comes, therefore, to this—that the villa, wheresoever it occurs, is the sure token of the tranquil condition of the Romanised peoples of certain areas of Britain under imperial rule. The villa makes its appearance only in the non-military districts of the province. It is the peaceful outcome of a century and more of perfected Romanisation. There is no villa in Britain of which the remains have yielded constructive evidences that can be dated earlier than the first quarter of the second century A.D.; while most of the villas can be proven to belong to a considerably later period—that is, to the only really prosperous conditions of the province during the third and fourth centuries. Does it not follow from this that they must have crept very warily out of their nearest town-centres?

The reason for this is, perhaps, not hard to divine. We hear little indeed about Britain from the historians of the second century; and the little they do say points to grave disturbances, or outbreaks, throughout the Antonine Age—a condition of things unfavourable to the security of country estates, or at least to the safety of permanently built villas. Or, again, it may have been that strong fortifiable villas were not encouraged or permitted by the rulers, perhaps for political prudence, sake. That there were villas of timber construction, which became the immediate parents of the later and more durable ones of stone and brick, I shall have cause to infer later on.

But before the development of villas, at any rate, there were the Romanised cantonal centres, and there were the military stations along the chief roads, themselves potentially centres of development.

As far as the extent of modern Gloucestershire is concerned, we are all familiar with the main road and its two Romano-British towns (Corinium and Glevum). It is exceptionally rich in villa remains, of which about fifteen are known by their sites. If we multiply this by  $2\frac{1}{2}$  times, we shall probably not much exceed the number of villas its area once knew. And we may reckon that between them they controlled 130,000 acres, in addition to the land held by the two towns.

It is possible, however, that some of these villas and their land lay within the "territorium" officially granted to the larger of these towns. This is even probable, seeing how near the Hucclecote "villa" lay to Glevum. Unfortunately, we possess no means of determining the extent of the "territorium" owned by Glevum, when, while only an incipient Romano-British town, it was granted the much-coveted title of Colonia, and veterans of the army were granted land there, with the "jus Italicum" or full Roman rights. The discovery, in the hypocaust of the Painswick Villa, in 1902, of tiles stamped with the "Glevum" token of R.P.G. (Republica Glevensium), as Mr. Haverfield noticed to me at the time, rather prompts the question whether these "territoria" may not have been extended on to that hill—the same whence Glevum probably drew the stone for her public buildings? Yet it could scarcely be safe to assume that. The owner of the Painswick Villa may have received his bricks in return for quarried stone.

No similar evidence is unfortunately to be deduced from the bricks of Witcombe Villa. They bear no stamps, and they may have been made on that estate. At the villas at Bisley and at Chalford (Brownshill) the tiles bear stamped letters more suggestive of connection with Corinium than with Glevum.

And here (it being manifest how nearly related the villas must always have been to their market town and centre) it will not be travelling outside my subject if I attempt to convey to you an idea of the growth of Glevum and its life as a Romano-British town of prime importance in the south-west.

For though the subject is not exactly new, the archæology of Roman Britain has been on the move forward, and points of view adopted very generally until only the other day have given way to others, as no doubt these in turn will be subject to modifications as time goes on.

Even in one of the most recently-circulated county books I notice that the same old misreading of the passage in the *Annals of Tacitus* is served up once more, by which Ostorius, in the year A.D. 47, is made to have set a scientific chain of camps between the Bristol Avon and the Severn, all along the Cotswold escarpment, in order to overthrow the Silures; a thing which most certainly he never did. As long as this very inadequate conception of the magnitude of the Roman military operations prevails there can be no possible understanding of their tactics or gauging their practised intelligence, and there will be apt to arise a very great misunderstanding of the numerical forces at the disposal of the enemy. I will, therefore, briefly advert to the real reading of the corrupt passage in *Tacitus*, as advanced in 1883 by Mr. Henry Bradley, fully accepted by Mommsen, and since by every student of Romano-British history.

This passage was formerly rendered to mean that a string of camps had been placed by that commander in the position referred to. The words "Castris Antoam" should have been "cis Trisantonam," thus making the whole passage:—"cunctosque cis Trisantonam et Sabrinam fluvios cohibere parat," which is, indeed, a different matter altogether, and on a becoming scale! It will be remembered that "Antoam" was supposed to mean the Bristol Avon. There is really no allusion to the Avon, or to "castris"—that is, forts or camps—at all. It simply says that the general prepared to secure all the country south of the Severn and the Trehanta, or Trent. That is a large sweeping operation including all our hills and the river itself, from Staffordshire downwards. To have made a frontier of the Cotswolds would not have appealed to a Roman bent on conquering an entire country, and that at most but

a small province. The few camps in the Cotswolds that are Roman can be accounted for sufficiently without travelling back even to the first or second centuries of Roman rule.

We know in the possession of what Brythonic tribe the Cotswold region then lay; and that not only it owned an important tribal centre at Kings Holm (now included in Gloucester), but that the northern and eastern portion of the tribe was subject to the "Cattivellauni," a more powerful people. Consequently, when the Cattivellauni surrendered as they did to Ostorius, the Dobuni, such as were then subjects, gave way too. The silence of the historians of the campaign as to any resistance whatever on the part of the Dobuni should be satisfactory evidence in the case. Yet it is necessary to look very closely for a moment at the position of this divided tribe—as regards their Roman invaders. For it follows, almost to a certainty, that the portion of the Dobuni not subject to the Cattivellauni was the less accessible portion, and that the reason of its non-subjection was partly because it occupied the land west of the Severn, in fact, it was the conquering part of the tribe, which had driven forward the Silures. Probably their frontier was already the River Wye.

Now let us see what was the Roman objective. Certainly it was no vague and unthought-out campaign; nothing involving waste of force or loss of time. From every point of view, we must take it that the possession of the Severn and its mouth on both banks was the natural Roman objective. The mouth of the Severn and the land on both sides of it had to be appropriated and secured before a campaign should be undertaken against the Silures, and above them against the more formidable hold of Druidism in North Wales. Tacitus expressly tells us that Ostorius carried on war in the Severn lands. That was before the year A.D. 51; and as the Brythonic Dobuni were natural enemies to the Silures beyond the Wye, it is probable that, after perhaps a brief resistance, the former were used (whether willingly or not) by the conqueror against them. For we must not for a moment forget that the Brythonic-Celtic



tribes had themselves been conquerors of the older Goidels, and also of the aborigines, and that the Roman had found them already settled in possession fully two-thirds across Southern Britain, when as the superior conqueror he displaced them, and set about Romanising their cantons, after the manner he had observed in Gaul. In or about the year 50-51 Ostorius, we are told, actually planted the legions among the Silures (Bk. xii. 32); and he deprived of arms all people whom he considered doubtful. This makes it certain that he had settled the Dobuni.

It is true that Nodens (whose shrine was at Lydney) may have been a divinity of the Silures. He may, however, have been common to them and their conquerors, the Dobuni. But that would not preclude the possibility of the sacred spot having already come into the possession of the Dobuni. By the appropriation of *Caer Glouw*, or *Glevum*, and their subsequent march forward across the Forest of Dene lands, Lydney and all the land east of the Wye down to Chepstow would be in possession of the Roman legions. As the Dobuni, moreover, had up till then coined gold and silver coins, we may take it that their possession of these Severn lands and the river and sea trade was not a recent one. It was possibly a century or more old. In addition, as their coins bore the names of their chiefs with the adoption of the word "Rex," from the Latin, upon them, we may gather that we have certainly underrated the advanced nature of the Dobunic civilisation, as well as the force of pre-conquest Roman influence among the Brythonic Celts of lower Britain. Perhaps this enables us to understand better what Tacitus has called the eagerness manifested by them for Romanisation, while is also a proof that they were ripe for it. For tribes live by custom and ritual, down even to minute details, and they are universally conservative. They also live by military superiority to their neighbours. Their chief care is, therefore, their war-footing and their religious observances. But possessing stamped coins (which the Silures

had not) it is certain that the Dobuni were advanced traders.

As such, therefore, it is obvious that they were not in a primitive or stationary condition of metallic civilisation, but in a progressive one. They were thus far more adaptable to innovation and co-operativeness than their less civilised neighbours, and likely to fully recognise the superiorities of the Romans. As military resistance to their own invaders would have been hopeless to but half a tribe thus advanced in civilisation, let us briefly note what advantages Roman rule (provided not too tyrannically pressed) placed before them.

For, without question, it offered not a few. It offered both military and civil institutions superior in all respects to their own. It offered or imposed compulsory peace. It offered a regular system of administration of justice. It promised extension of trade and territorial compensation for services; while as regarded religion, that all-important point, it was the known observance of the Roman to respect the shrines and divinities of the subject peoples, with the one exception of politico-theological Druidism. Conquest or surrender to the Roman invaders to such people as the Dobuni, it is clear, was not without its compensations, if not its obvious advantages.

To return to Glevum itself—say from A.D. 51-65—the new fortified town being created by the legionaries was at first no more nor less than a powerful military station, established for strategic purposes upon the Severn; next to the tribal-centre *Caer Glou* (or “*Glevidunum*,” as the name probably was, before it dropped into shorter “*Glevum*.”) Around this, native and other traders, as well as interested native allies, settled both for protection and for business, all sharing interests in common, for the rapid settlement of the country. As time went on, and organisation developed more and more with the road-making, this population (allowed to retain most of their own customs under Roman administration) became duly absorbed, and gradually picked up the Latin speech,

and more rapidly the Gallo-Roman costume. Until the complete subjugation of the Silures about the year 75 A.D. the reinforcements of the Second Legion may have been raised at and around Glevum. Between A.D. 58 and 61 successful expeditions against them under Quintus Veranius are recorded; and that commander, in his last will, informed the Emperor Nero that, if he should survive, he expected within two years to entirely subdue (western) Britain. Every success against this really troublesome little foe hastened the development of Glevum, and it is to this period, of course, that the origin of Romano-British Carwent and Carleon (Venta and Isca, Silurum) belongs. No doubt there occurred temporary "set backs"; but by the year A.D. 76 the Silures were finally conquered under Frontinus, and before the close of the century the Emperor Nerva rewarded the time-expired veterans of the legions at Glevum by advancing their town settlement to the coveted status of a Roman "Colonia," in precisely the same manner as had been done at Colchester (Camelo Dunum). The time-expired soldier required, nay exacted, proper provision. His settlement on the soil and marriage, with a grant of land exempt from certain taxes, proved a means for rapidly extending the desired Romanisation. The inducement to settlers was greatly emphasised by such an act, and the climatic conditions, in any case, were milder here than in northern Gaul, or even in eastern Britain.

But we must not be under the impression that Glevum yet possessed her stone six-foot precinct wall, far less that the time for building isolated stone or permanent brick villas had yet arrived. Perhaps even within the town itself only the public buildings, such as the Basilica and the temple of Augustus, were yet of stone; the rest of the town, as became a well-timbered locality, was built expertly enough by native workmen of wood. More than a century before that date Julius Cæsar had referred to the excellence of Celtic joinery in Gaul. The kinsfolk here in Britain seem to have been no whit their kinsmen's inferior. Later on we find British joiners actually

deported to Gaul itself for the purpose of building timbered structures there, at Augustodunum (Autun).

Meanwhile, the great trunk roads here were being steadily extended westward and northward, while the old southern native trackway from Aquæ Sulis, or Sul (our Bath), was treated to scientific pavement and solid repairs. As long as Glevum was little more than a Roman military centre, civilians had been forbidden to dwell within her, though they might flock to her market, or forum, at stated hours. These traders and others dwelt in lines of wooden huts or "cannabæ" (*i.e.* cabins) clustering like martins' nests around her, but leaving her four gates free. When, however, the purely military regime became probably unnecessary, these out-dwellers obtained corporate recognition, saddled, however, equally with those who dwelt within the trenches or ramparts, with perhaps vexatious contributions, according to their status, to the local and provincial revenues, both in corn, wool, or other merchandise, and they found themselves governed by an official caste as before, yet with both further regulations and greater privileges, all calculated, however, to mould the town as it grew, into harmony with the central government of the empire. For uniformity was the iron policy of Rome.

As to the "territorium" granted to Glevum, and which presumably stretched around on every side of her, it is probable that its delimitation by official measures (or Agrimensorers) did not prevent its further extension, if need and official favour permitted. The Roman rights, or "Jus Italicum," which as a corporation Glevum received, implied that her inhabitants were to be free from ordinary land-taxation, but it did not imply their immunity from war-indemnities (*stipendia*), or perhaps, at first, from the payment of the Colonist, or husbandman-farmer of a tithe (*decuma*) of the produce of the given land. The gauging of the resources of that land, and of the personal wealth of its remoter inhabitants must have afforded plentiful employment to the lawyers who followed the military. Besides, there were to be paid the port-dues

(portoria), revenues from mines, quarries and the like. There was doubtless a bureau in Glevum where all such assessments were registered, and kept by a comptroller of taxes. The collectors were held responsible at Rome for any deficit, and the municipalities of the towns were held responsible for the collectors. It is not unlikely that the repeated troubles which disturbed Britain during Hadrian's and the three reigns following his were chiefly due to maladministration of the taxes; and were therefore not so much tribal, as provincial revolts. We do not hear for certain whether such outbreaks affected our part of Britain. But if they did, it would to no little extent account for the fact that in a stone and timber district like this of Glevum there was so very little progress in villa-building of a permanent character.

A "Colonia," then, stood for a special form of local government in a Roman province. It connected a military organisation with a power of raising recruits, yet in the shape of a civil and privileged community having a radiative Romanising power. For such an organic centre as this there was but one direct model, and that was Rome herself. All the institutions of such a town, civil and religious, were by consequence intimately related to the one and supreme centre. But probable no one thing so forcibly gave representative life to this town as the institution of the worship of the divinity of the Cæsars. This was established by means of guilds of freedmen, called "Augustales." This body spread the imperial cultus throughout the province. As Professor Greenidge expresses it: "The worship of Augustus by granting the 'insignia' and certain proud moments in which their possessors appeared to dazzling effect before the public eye, compensated for the loss of privileges which the law withheld." These Augustales were not priests like the Flamines and Sacerdotes, but were merely a civic order wearing certain "insignia," the "prætecta" and "fasces," which they displayed in the performance of their official duties. To the provincial mind Cæsar was a remote but very real incarnation

of (supreme) wisdom and order. The Augustales voiced the new nationality and loyalty of the Romano-British province.

Secure, then, from the Silurian attacks of former days, we may picture Glevum of the second century as a regular oblong town covering about forty-five acres of ground, fortified on all sides by the original "vallum," or bold mound (perhaps a double one) and the Sabrina, or Severn, additionally protecting the long western side.

The natural divisions of the Roman camp by means of roads passing through it at right angles was retained in the growing town, the four quarters subdividing themselves into "insulæ" (or square blocks) of wooden houses opening on to alleys: while the public buildings gradually were becoming translated from wood into stone, as well as here and there the houses of certain private owners. Somewhere just outside it there was probably a bull-ring, in which the white wild cattle of the country were baited on festival days, together with boars (and perhaps wolves) by the powerful mastiff dogs, for which breed Britain was already famous in Europe. In due time baths and porticoes had obtained in every town of importance: and according to Tacitus, even the delicacies of the table, as well as the toga and collared-cloak were to be found everywhere: although it is probable the well-to-do native sported finely-coloured tunics fastened by rich Celtic enamelled brooches, which we know had owned none of their beauty of design to the art of Rome.

Let us, therefore, in fancy glance for a moment at the market, or forum, of Glevum, and see what variety of articles is being sold. The first stall happens to be a metal-smith's, where there are seen tweezers, sword-handles and blades, bronze lamps and bowls, small spoons, steel-yards, bodkins and brooches. Hard by the fruit vender is dealing prosperously in apples, medlars, bullaces and sloes, and a certain sort of nuts: dyed wool and cloth and skins catch the eye as we turn a corner and come before a fish-stall. Here is a representative corner; for everyone eats fish. Oysters abound, tench, trout, lampreys;

and salmon and shad are there, but are rapidly disappearing to purchasers. In the next lane we notice quantities of objects made of horn, and bone combs, knife-handles, cups and needles ; then next it is a stall full of pottery and mortars of all qualities, both British and Romano-British, and imported Ballic : leather goods : harness, and saddles, and shoes ; finally, glass wares, and small votive-offerings for suspension in temples. In fact, there is great variety of goods, and both sexes are exceedingly busy examining and bargaining ; for the rather muddy and smelly streets are full of life. Here and there among the crowd is seen a soldier of the Second Legion (on leave from Isca Silurum) among his kindred ; and again, here and there, a swarthy small Silurian or so, his former foes. By this time the second great Welsh road was nearly completed. It was that one (now called Sarn Helen) descending from Conovium (Conway) to Nidum (Neath) on the coast of Carmarthenshire, by which all Wales was to become held as in a vice, not only from outbursts from within, but safeguarded from the not infrequent invasions of the piratical Iberic folk out of the south of Ireland, against whom (as much as against the said Silures) the Severn, and its ferry and its fisheries had long been secured both by watch-towers and by coast-guards. It was for this reason that the Second Legion did not change its position, but remained strategically fixed at Isca (Caerleon) for good and all. It held safe the coast ; it provided for the protection of the foreign trade ; and besides, kept the native clans and races in order.

The position of Glevum, therefore, in the second century is seen to have become that of a western provincial emporium, from which Romano-British roads radiated in most directions ; and with such a system of communications, no combination of native malcontents could hope to oppose corresponding offensive forces, unless by rare chance the military became temporarily withdrawn or relaxed in discipline.

There, consequently, arises the rather pertinent question : If such was the condition of things, how is it that we find Glevum

and Corinium and Carwent to have become elaborately walled round and securely gated, as though to enable each of thees towns to withstand siege? Surely the Irish and the Silures together could scarcely have dreamed of attacking such places!

The reply to this question is that these walls (however theoretically economical) were not made until even a much later day, possibly not until the days of the civil wars in the third century, when a Romanised Celtic leader, like the vigorous Carausius (a born genius, if an adventurer), set himself up and was largely accepted as emperor, and boldly cut Britain temporarily apart from the empire—a most critical and interesting development in British history. It was in vain that armies and fleets were sent out against him by the actual Emperor Maximianus. The latter at last was compelled to acknowledge Carausius for colleague, and to accept his coinage. Later on Carausius was basely slain by Allectus, who set up similar pretensions and coined his own coins, until Constantius Chlorus finally overcame him, and restored the revolted province to Rome. It is quite possible that Haresfield and Sodbury, Conderton, and Shenbarrow camps may all belong to this late date. No early coins occur among all those found in them, but chiefly those of Carausius, Allectus, and the Constantines. But the abundance of “minimi,” or very small pieces, assures us of the trade—convenience for which this medium had been found needful. “This is the period,” says Professor Haverfield, “which must have seen the greatest extension of Romano-British rural life, and then, we may think, the villas were most definitely occupied. The period was a fragment of a happy age for Britain. It can be no accident that the farm and country-house of the province were the most numerous, and, as it seems, the most fully inhabited.” (*Victoria Hist., Co. Somerset*, p. 299.)

And now I can turn back to our noble villa at Witcombe; for it is, in all probability, to a rather earlier date than even this that it owes its origin; and doubtless at that date it was in its full glory.



Nor is it to be overlooked, while so doing, that at a distance of under twelve miles southward of it there had already, before its own date, been flourishing one country-seat still more magnificent in every respect, namely at Woodchester, probably to be dated to the middle of the second century. It is strange that Woodchester Villa should seem to have antedated all others in the Cotswolds by so long a time, an exception as it were. But, of course, had Britain earlier proved more attractive and prosperous as a residence to wealthy Gauls or retiring officials of rank, such villas would have multiplied. To all appearance they did not multiply; and Britain (we know) did not pay. Therefore Woodchester would seem to stand for a bold second-century pioneer, which was not imitated until much later in any neighbouring district. For this reason it stands very much alone among Romano-British villas, both in its proportions and the beauty of its details.

The great push given to the development of country villa-building perhaps resulted from the visit of Severus and Caracalla early in the third century, and more especially from the grant by the latter of the Roman franchise to all free inhabitants of the empire.

At that period, then, we may safely picture the wealthy owner of some thousands of fertile acres stretching on both sides of the Ermin street along its last section from Corinium to Glevum, replacing an extensive timbered farmhouse, or manor-hall, with the beautiful brick, stone and marble courtyard villa that stood at Witcombe.

What that antecedent manor-hall was like we can only conjecture from circumstantial evidence. That the ground-plan may have (in small) in certain cases resembled the later villa is at least likely for this reason: the villas in Britain are not Italian in their outlay, however Italian in some of their details. They constitute a type exemplified only in northern Gaul. They are Celtic mansions modified by Roman influences. It must be recalled that the stone columns invariably found in them—cap, collar and shaft all made in one piece—are not of

Italian type at all. They have been turned in lathes. They are, in fact, direct translations, just as so many marble statues in our museums are translations from bronze originals, from wood into stone. Hence we may conclude that the rural villas in their primary condition in this island were no more than presentable colonial timber-houses, having verandahs carried upon low wooden columns of the very same kind as later on were "turned" in local stone.

There were few exceptions in Britain whereïn was used the far more precious imported marble.

Fortunately, in Witcombe Villa we have precisely one of these exceptions. For when Lysons excavated a considerable portion of this villa in 1818 he expressly mentions that in addition to the mosaic pavements and other proofs of the grade of the villa, he found fragments (now at Witcombe Park) of cornices of white marble. A fragment of one is still preserved at Witcombe Park. These may have decorated a small shrine, perhaps, rather than the dwelling-house.

Now to have been present in this villa, these cornices must perforce have been carried on caps and columns of the same beautiful material. What, then, we ask, has become of these? Lysons certainly did not find them, that anyone knows of. We have no record of them further. It is true also that he did not excavate the entire villa. The columns (as so often has been the case) may well have been broken up, or carried off for lime, long before his time. But I venture to think I know where the capitals are. And they are as beautiful for their period as any that exist in England, and quite the most perfectly preserved Romano-British objects in this county.

Three of these, of the Ionic order (and of Belgian marble), were found buried in the garden of Paradise House, at Painswick, more than forty years back, and one of them, painted red at the time (or but a little later), was used until only the other day as a stilt for a fountain in a pond on the lawn there. Eight years ago, finding them to be not only of Roman make, and very good, but with all their mason's

setting-out lines still clear upon them, I persuaded my good neighbour, Mr. Hawkins Herbert, to draw the third one out of the said pond and place it honourably in his house. They are all three together now.

Now who procured these? Who, perhaps clandestinely, brought these fine Roman capitals to that neighbouring spot is not known. At the time they were found, in the sixties, the house and garden at Paradise belonged to some folk of the name of Cockayne, who, I believe, left a few years later. Did a member of the Hicks-Beach family ever temporarily reside at Paradise while Witcombe Park underwent repairs?

But people do not carry three heavy marble Ionic capitals of Roman make of the second or third centuries about with them; and I must leave you to conjecture, if you can do so, any other means of accounting for their presence at a small out-of-the-way residence in the hilly neighbourhood of this great villa. They certainly belonged to no Roman villa at Painswick itself; and no trace of marble material has been discovered at the Painswick Villa, a mile off on the opposite slope of Painswick Hill. We, therefore—unless we can reasonably appropriate them to Witcombe Villa—have to imagine some gentleman of the early nineteenth century who was in the habit of carrying some capitals of the second or third century about with him, and leaving them behind when he changed his abode.

In conclusion, let me, for a few moments, consider the household of the important unknown proprietor of Witcombe Villa, reminding myself that under the later Empire such personages exercised the full powers of municipal decuriones, or town councillors and justices.

Life went on in such a centre on a rather grand scale of organised labour. Such a mansion constituted a centre of civil law, husbandry, and social culture. As in the mediæval manor, the owner probably held the land immediately around the mansion as demesne, and let out the rest to tenants, while the

labour was done by half-serf "Coloni." But more we do not yet know.

Probably, like other proprietors of luxurious villas in his day here, he was served at table on abundant silver plate. A small but beautiful bronze statuette of Diana has decorated some favourite piece of his furniture. Coal was used in his fires and the furnaces for his baths; window-glass kept out the wind and damp. An ivory comb tells its tale of use.

In fine, such a rich house must have sheltered, in addition to the family priest, troops of servants, forming quite a little population. There were, besides the steward, the secretary and the amanuensis, the porter (or janitor), the "Hortulani" or gardeners, "arboratores" or woodmen, cooks, smiths, leather-workers, hairdresser, bathing-men, "custos vivarii" or keeper of the live-stock, the keeper of the dogs, and the "chauffeurs" for the furnaces, and the textores or weavers of household linen; while for the ladies' apartments there was a staff of "delicatæ" or housemaids.

The most beautiful rooms will have been the "tablinum" or library, the "triclinia" or summer and winter dining-halls, and the "lararium" or chapel. These, doubtless, crowning the uppermost level of the sloping ground occupied, looked down over successive terraces to the rich and beautiful valley, and across to Birdlip Hill, where (as we before hinted) the family might descry their approaching guest descending the brow of the hill on the most excellent of Romano-British roads.

Let us leave them to welcome him!