

ROMAN VILLA AT WOOLSTONE.

Here the handsome tessellated pavement, and the half-dozen skeletons which has been found near the villa, were examined with much interest.

Mr. James Parker, who was requested to say a few words, said he supposed he was addressing several who had not seen many Roman villas, and there might be some present who had never seen one at all. He must confess this, that in looking at Roman villas, if they had seen three or four, the chances were that if they saw a fifth, they would find a good deal of difference between it and the previous four. They were arranged on different plans, as modern houses were in the neighbourhood of towns, but there were certain things very common to all of them, one of which was the hypocaust, which up to the present time had been conspicuous by its absence. The hypocaust was a chamber for warming other chambers, but sometimes for warming only one chamber. In many Roman villas the hypocaust was the chief part remaining, and the most interesting part. When the Romans came to occupy England they brought their Eastern customs with them, and one of the Roman habits was to be warm, they were accustomed to it from their Italian sky, and when they came to this country they had of course a sky very different, and weather on the whole very different, and therefore one of the first things they did was to make themselves a warming chamber. What possibly had been the warming chamber had been dug out, and if so, it was possible that the warming apparatus went beneath that. That was the great feature of all Roman villas. Another great feature was that there was one chamber which had a tessellated pavement. Then there was a large room called the triclinium, and that evidently they had found. What struck him as the most interesting of all was the little recess which came out on the southern side of the great passage which ran from east to west. The passage might be roughly estimated at 100 feet long at least—and he did not think they were got to the end of it yet—it was about 8 feet wide, and tiled in different places after a different manner; but on the southern side

there seemed to be a kind of little recess, about 12 or 14 feet long, and 5 or 6 feet wide. That was a chamber in which the household gods were placed, and a chamber which was looked upon with a certain amount of respect, and more or less connected with religious uses. In this particular case the tessellry was of a handsomer pattern and of better workmanship than in the triclinium, and with about one exception was the finest piece of tessellry that had been found in the district, or of which any authority actually remained. They might ask, how comes it that there are these Roman villas found here and there at distances perhaps seven or eight miles a-part? He thought, looking at it from a broad point of view, they must compare the Roman occupation of Britain something like the English occupation of India. They had stations at even distances from each other, so as to prevent any sudden rising in the country, and these villas were occupied by officers holding more or less military positions. Another curious question arose—why was there not a Roman house left? He thought one or two reasons might be assigned, but the chief one was this, that when the Saxons came to this country after the Romans had left, they devastated wherever they went, burning what they could not pull down. In this case they were met with a very difficult problem—very different to the majority of Roman villas. They found bodies of men buried around it—one body buried at one end of the passage, three bodies at the other end, and one at the north-eastern corner. On one of the skeletons a couple of knives were found, and from the position in which they were found, and from the knives themselves, it might be said the skeleton was not Roman, but that it probably belonged to some of the Saxon tribes. The question was further conflicting by the fact that a great many battles had taken place on those hills, the most important of which was the battle of Ashdown, in which Alfred made his name, it being the first reverse that the Danes obtained. What was there in those remains to suggest burial after a battle? At present they had only got those two or three bodies, and from the arrangement of the skeletons he could not tell for certain what was the age or

in those remains to suggest burial after a battle? At present they had only got those two or three bodies, and from the arrangement of the skeletons he could not tell for certain what was the age or sex of those that were buried. It was a very great misfortune that Professor Moseley was not able to be with them that day. When he saw the remains there was not sufficient means for him to examine the skeletons. If there were women buried there in that way, it looked rather as if it was not a battle, but a burial place, and it looked like occupation. Supposing this Roman villa had gone on being used by those who came afterwards—call them Britons or Saxons, and it is then possible that many Britons remained, and there were intermarriages, and some of the Roman villas may have kept on, they would then get the idea that these people as they died, and having no regular cemetery, their remains were buried just outside the great villa in which they lived. On the other hand if they took it to be of a later date, and after some battle had taken place, when they came to bury the dead they got to the tessellated pavements, and finding they could not dig down deep enough, they took the bodies a little to the right or to the left, and that would account for the circumstance of the bodies being found just outside instead of in the middle. Either view might be supported.

Mr. A. Evans said the villa was on the whole of a characteristic form. There was apparently a long passage, which was found in one form or another in Roman villas. He quite agreed with Mr. Parker that the triclinium was there, and it looked to him very much as if the pavement had been a very much larger one, and he thought it probable that the room was considerably larger at one time. It occupied the place chosen for the largest room in the house, a room which was the very centre of Roman home life, a room where the dead were generally deposited, with their feet towards the door, before being carried forth for interment. He quite agreed with Mr. Parker that the evidence from the skeletons which had been found was strongly in favour of their being of Saxon and not of Roman date. The skeleton with the two knives about where the girdle would be,

found was strongly in favour of their being of Saxon and not of Roman date. The skeleton with the two knives about where the girdle would be, the position of the knives, and the character of the knives, entirely agreed with the regular practices amongst the Teutonic tribes of the 4th, 5th and 6th centuries in burying their women. In the case of the men they would find almost without exception either a larger knife or some other weapon which undoubtedly belonged to man and not to woman. In most cases they found several ornaments buried with the women, but where a person was very poor they sometimes found nothing more than one or two knives. In the case of this skeleton the person buried must have been very poor. There was not so much as a knife with the other skeletons which had been found.

Professor Earle said one thing had been overlooked both by Mr. Parker and Mr. Evans. In one of the rooms there were signs of habitation of barbarians. The carpet had wanted repairing, and pieces had been taken from one carpet to patch up the other. That appeared to him to correspond with the bodies which were found, and showed, he thought, that the house had been occupied by barbarian Saxons after the retreat of the Romans.

Mr. Parker said a great deal of the discoveries which had been made from time to time had been lost for want of good supervision, but the family of Lady Craven were very fortunate in having a gentleman of Mr. Dudgeon's great care. He thought the society generally were indebted to those men who, like Mr. Dudgeon, not only did their work well, but took an interest in it. Mr. Dudgeon had done everything he could in order to add to their knowledge of the Roman occupation of Britain, and he thanked him, not only in their own names, but in the names of every archaeological society.

We cannot help remarking that a great omission was made in not giving Mr. R. Walker some credit for his share in the work. From the first he has taken a great interest in the discovery, and has toiled hour after hour, from early morning till late at night, and we believe the most perfect piece of pavement was entirely uncovered and cleaned by him.

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Since the visit of the societies, the most perfect skeleton and the best piece of pavement have been removed to the museum at Oxford. In the event of nothing more being found this is the best perhaps that could be done with it, but it seems rather a pity that the public had not an opportunity of inspecting the remains as they appeared on Saturday.

The excursionists then left Woolstone, and ascended the

WHITE HORSE HILL.

The horse has been recently scoured, and now presents a much more lively appearance than it has done of late, although some of the visitors are of