

ART. XII.—*The Village Community in Cumberland, as instanced at Halltown, near Rocliff.* By T. Hesketh Hodgson.

*Read at Rocliff, August 20th, 1891.**

THE field in which we are standing with its singular divisions into long strips separated by "balks" or "raines" as they are called, of turf, is an interesting survival, the only one so far as I know in this neighbourhood, of a system of land tenure and cultivation which is of extreme antiquity and which has prevailed over a widely extended area. It is recognised as still existing in India, our Aryan ancestors carried it westward to the shores of the Atlantic, and even beyond the Atlantic traces of it may be found, for it is on record that the earlier English emigrants organized their homes in New England on the model of what we now know as the Village Community. At the request of our President I have put together a few notes, for which I am indebted chiefly to the works of Sir H. Main, Mr. Seeböhm and Mr. Scrutton, on some of the more prominent features of a system of cultivation once so widely prevalent. To many of you this subject will doubtless be familiar, but to those who are as yet unacquainted with the mass of literature on this question which has appeared during the last twenty years I think even so slight a sketch as I am now able to give will be full of interest, and I hope it may lead some at least to examine the subject for themselves, more especially to place on record such of its fast vanishing traces as still survive. I do not intend to enter on the much vexed question of the history of the English Manor, but rather to attempt to show what a rural township was

* The weather hindered this paper from being read on the *locus in quo*, but it was written to be read there—is so printed.

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like before the early Village Communities were broken up by the movement towards inclosures, which began with the 15th century and has continued to our own day.

Perhaps the clearest notion of a rural township under the Common Field system may be given by a much condensed extract from Marshall, a voluminous writer on agricultural subjects of about 100 years ago. He however describes what he saw to exist, and, in the words of Sir H. Maine, had not the true key to its explanation but figured to himself the collective form of property as a sort of common farm, cultivated by the tenantry of a single landlord. He says that, a very few centuries ago nearly the whole of the lands of England lay in an open and more or less in a commonable state. Round the homesteads in which the tenants resided lay a few small inclosures or grass yards for the rearing of stock, round the hamlet lay a tract of arable fields, and in the lowest situations lay an extent of meadow ground to afford a supply of hay for the winter and spring months, while on the outskirts of the whole or where the land was not adapted for cultivation were the common pastures for the summer grazing of the stock belonging to the community. The arable land was laid out in great open fields, usually though not invariably three in number, sometimes two or four, but for the sake of brevity we will now consider only the three field system. Each field was divided into strips of 40 rods in length and usually four rods of $5\frac{1}{2}$ yards in width, or about a statute acre, separated by ridges of turf known as balks or locally raines; while along the head of each series of strips ran a broad band of turf, the headland or fieldway, on which the plough was turned when it did not by custom turn on some other tenant's land and which served as a road to the various strips in the fields. Corners which from their shape could not be laid out into the usual acre or half acre strips were sometimes divided
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into tapering strips called "gores" or "gored acres" and sometimes pieces of unused land remained which from time immemorial have been known as "no man's land," "any man's land," or sometimes "Jack's land". These strips were allotted in rotation to a certain number of the dwellers in the townships, a very common holding being that known as a "virgate" or "yardland" of 30 acres in which case each holder of a virgate would possess a number of strips scattered through the open fields—10 acres in each—in apparent disorder until the key to the confusion is found in the order of rotation. These strips were not cultivated according to the will of the owner, but according to a settled rotation fixed by long custom, of "tilth grain," *i. e.*, winter crop—wheat or rye,—“etch grain” or spring crop—barley, oats, beans, or peas,—and fallow. It is hardly necessary to remind you that turnips or potatoes, so important in modern husbandry were then unknown. Between harvest and seedtime the cattle of the community enjoyed pasturage in common over the whole of the open fields, and during the whole of the year over the field which in its turn was in fallow. The hay meadows were subject to a similar rule, they were inclosed about Lady Day for the hay harvest and assigned in similar strips, often in a rotation shifting by lot whence they are often known as "lot meadows". After Lammas the fences were thrown down and the meadows were open as common pasture until the inclosure of the following spring.

The cultivation was by a common plough team to which each holder contributed according to his holding. The full plough team was eight oxen to which the holder of a virgate of 30 acres contributed two, the holder of a half virgate, bovate, or ox gang one; the smaller holders do not appear to have contributed to the plough team, but doubtless gave their labour towards the common cultivation. The connection of the holding with the
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mediæval land measures the carucate, or land which could be cultivated by one plough team is obvious: the carucate was four virgates or 120 acres, the acre however varying in size according to the nature of the land, as the carucate is found to vary from 80 to as much as 200 statute acres, but it is always the land which can be cultivated by one plough team, and contains always four virgates. The form of these strips was determined by long usage which fixed the distance traversed by the plough before turning and so invariable was this distance that it has left its mark on our language in the word "furlong" which is of course simply "furrow long", while its measure of 40 rods or 220 yards is shown to be of immemorial antiquity by the use of the Latin word "quarantena" for furlong. The width of the strip was determined by the day's work of the plough which probably by experience was fixed at four rods or 22 yards with sufficient regularity to give size to the measure of area which has finally settled into our statute acre of 220×22 yards or 4840 square yards. Probably the varying quantity which according to the nature of the soil could be ploughed in a day gave rise to the old local acres which as you are doubtless aware frequently differed from our present statute acre. This practice also has left its mark on our language in the word "darrick" or "dayswork" which is not even yet wholly obsolete, for in 1882 an advertisement appeared in the Carlisle papers of land for sale among which was some described as " $3\frac{1}{2}$ darricks in open dales"; dales of course meaning shares or divisions. In other languages besides our own a similar word is found, the monkish Latin "jurnalis" or "diurnalis," French "journal," German "morgen" all equivalent to our acre. The last word seems to indicate, as indeed is indicated by other evidence, that the day's work of this co-operative ploughing was held to end at noon. Doubtless the strips in the field now before us were once laid out in this manner

manner—they would of course be more numerous and be approximately of the same size, but obviously they tend to diminish in number as whenever two contiguous strips came into the hands of the same proprietor the balk or rain would be ploughed up and the strips thrown into one. The field is now in the hands of two proprietors only, and probably ultimately the whole of the balks will disappear.

We will now consider the terrier of the parish of Great Orton of 1704 appended to Bishop Nicolson's memoranda. Those terriers contain many traces of the common field system. I select Orton as containing most of the typical features and as being in this neighbourhood. With some trifling omissions it is as follows:—

LANDS.	BOUNDARIES.
In the Westfield in the Croft 11 Riggs with a Head Rigg, 3 acres	E. Garden and back side of Rectory. North, John Wilson South and West John Moor de Cross.
In Low Croft or East Roods 4 Riggs with a Raine between them and a piece of Meadow at the North End, 1 acre.	West, John Robinson East, John Wilson South, the Field Way.
In the West Roods 4 Riggs one acre lying North and South with a rigg of John Robinson's between them.	West, the Horse Moor Hedge East, John Robinson North, the Rough Nook South, the Field Way.
At the Croft Head two large Riggs lying North and South 1 acre.	East, Wm. Johnston West, Jonathan Bell South and North, the Field Way.
At the Parson's Thorn two long Riggs one acre lying North and South.	East, John Moor de Cross West, Wm. Lowther N. & S., the Field Way.
In Crossland two Riggs 1 acre, lying North and South, with a piece of Meadow at the South end joining to a close of Wm. Lowther.	East, Joseph Hind West, William Lowther North, the Field Way.

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- In the Shaws three Riggs with a piece of Meadow at the low end of them lying North and South one acre. West, John Robinson's closes East, John Robinson South, the Organ Butts North, John Wilson's meadow.
- In the Organ Butts two small Riggs, half an acre lying East and West. South, Jonathan Bell North, John Moor de Cross West, the Common East, John Johnson.
- In Inglands two Riggs with a small piece of Meadow at the low end of them 1 acre lying North and South. East, John Robinson West, a close of Edward Blain's North, a close of John Moor's South, a close of John Wilson's
- In Sheep Coats two Riggs with a broad Raine between them and a piece of Meadow at the low end lying North and South one acre. East, William Moor West, Joseph Hind South, John Wilson's closes North, the Field Way.
- In Crabtreedale two Riggs with a piece of Meadow at the low end of them one acre lying North and South. East, William Johnson West, William Lowther South, William Moor's close North, the Field Way.
- In Grayston Butts two Riggs, half an acre lying North and South East, John Johnson West, John Johnson South, the Field Way North, the Horse Moor.
- More in Grayston Butts two Riggs half an acre lying North and South East, John Moor de Cross West, William Lowther South, the Field Way North, the Horse Moor.
- In the Shaws more two Riggs half an acre lying North and South East, John Moor de Midtown West, John Moor de Cross North, John Moor's Shaw close South, the Field Way.
- Glebe in Orton Rigg Field. In ye West end four Riggs half an acre lying North and South. East, Thomas Blain, the y^r West, John Wilson North, Woodhouses Lane South, Thomas Blain's meadow

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- At the Parson's Lees eight Riggs lying North and South with a Daywork of Meadow at the North end two acres. East, John Wilson, West, Thomas Blain upon the Hill but in the Butts at the North end of the Meadow East, Thomas Blain, West, John Wilson.
- Glebe in Woodhouses Field.
- In Breddick two Riggs half an acre lying East and West. North, Robert Wilson South, William Wilson.
- Underbricks a Butt lying North and South East, Joseph Smallwood West, Robert Wilson.
- Upon the Bank or Priest bush three Riggs with a piece of Meadow at the North and lying North and South. East, Robert Wilson West, Thomas Boek.
- In the East Field four Riggs with a piece of Meadow at the North end, three roods lying North and South. West, Joseph Smallwood East, William Wilson's close
- In Great Orton Moss a large parcel of Moss. East, William Johnson of Bow West, John Moor & Wm. Lowther South Woodhouses Moss North, the Common Moor.
- In the Flatt Moss another great parcel of Moss West, Edward Wilson East, John Hodgson of Burgh North and South, the Common Moor.

Common of Pasture for all the Parson's cattle with four Dayswork of Turf upon all the Moors of Orton within the Parish.

Here you will see that we have all the typical features of the Common Field system—the riggs or acres—seliones is the mediæval Latin name given to them—with their “rains” or “balks” between them—raine is in use here but I think unknown in the south of England, at least I have met with it in none of the books which I have consulted, but it is simply the modern German word for “balk”—the butts, or riggs crossing the ends of the other riggs which abut upon them, the fieldway, the meadows

meadows at the low end of the riggs, the common for pasture, and the closes lying around the homesteads. We also observe that the size of the riggs is very nearly uniform, generally one acre, but always bearing a definite relation to that measure, one, two, or three roods.

I have thus attempted to give such a sketch as time will allow of this most interesting subject, and hope that I have made it intelligible. To us it seems a most cumbrous and extravagant system—the waste of time in getting about, the constrained rotation of crops, the difficulty in keeping land clean when it could be sown with weeds blown from the strips of a careless owner, the quarrelling about headlands and rights of way seem to make it almost impossible of working. Yet though there is ample evidence of the jealousies and heartburnings to which it gave rise there is also evidence that the inclosures necessary to amend it gave rise to much discontent and were bitterly opposed and indeed I think there appears in the schemes now put forward by certain so-called land law reformers some indications of a wish to revert to something very nearly resembling this most inconvenient and now happily obsolete form of cultivation.
