

the Angle, was a famous planter of the Anglian race and colony in the country that was afterwards known as Northumbria. But the native Britons could not have been entirely driven from the Roman defences along the line of the Wall, to which we know they long clung, and which afterwards, when led by Caedwallada, they re-occupied, and for a time resumed their sway over Northumbria, terribly ravaging the Anglian community there. It is, therefore, exceedingly probable that the Britons, unable to make a stand against Edelfrid, had called in Aidan, king of the Irish Scots (who were a race of military adventurers rather than a nation in those times), and were endeavouring to hold or regain their ground in the western and northern part of the isthmus, when they were encountered and defeated at this battle. The locality is all in favour of its being the scene of such a struggle. We conceive of the northern forces making their way along the Catrail and being joined by the Romanised Britons, at its junction with the Maiden Way, ready, if they were successful, to make a descent upon the Anglian settlements down the valley of the North Tyne, where Caedwallada advanced in after times to the scene of the battle of Havensfield. But there might and probably would, be another reason for their concentrating at this spot. Bede calls it "a famous place," and probably, because of its being so famous, felt it unnecessary to give any more particular description of its whereabouts. One reason for its being famous might be the number of native remains to be found in the locality, as well as the fact that it was the meeting place of the Pict's Work and the Maiden Way. On the face of the slope, looking to the south, and down upon the railway, there exist three large British camps close together. One, which lies on the shoulder of the hill, has been converted into a sheepfold, and the other two, situated close to the railway, are side by side. They are both remarkably perfect, and one in particular has been stated to be one of the most perfectly preserved examples of a British hut circle to be found in the country. They have all been inhabited camps—that is, in fact, British Villages; and in the case of one it is evident that the outer rampart has been materially strengthened at a period anterior to its original construction. It is more than probable that as late as the period of this battle these hut circles would be habitable, and would form the main encampment of Aidan's army.

Right above these camps was the field of battle. The hill side bears traces of escarpments raised for defence, and is full of small stone mounds, which may have covered the burial-places of the slain warriors. Numerous arrow-heads and other implements have from time to time been picked up on the spot, most of which unfortunately have been scattered, or preserved without any particular record of where they were found. But it requires no elaborate demonstration to convince the visitor that he is certainly standing on the scene of an ancient battlesfield—a battlesfield of the Saxon epoch, which was in all probability one of the spots on

which the great controversy between the Teutonic and the Celtic race for the possession of this island was fought out.

How it was fought out still remains, and is likely to remain, one of the obscurest passages in history. Bede has little information to give us, partly because his field of vision is limited by the beginnings of the Anglian settlement in Northumbria, which was his nation and people, and partly because even in his time the record had grown dim and undecipherable. It may amuse or inspire the antiquarian imagination to build upon the slender and not very trustworthy foundation of the Chronicle of Gildas, ornamented by the poems and legends of Cymric bards, a more or less heroic conception of the struggles of the Britons with the Saxon race. But we have to acknowledge all the while that it is not history, and that even its historic basis is doubtful. This only we really know, that more than a century intervened between the withdrawal of the Romans from their stations on the Wall and the successful invasion of Northumbria by the Angles. Much may have happened within that century, but for us it is blank and voiceless. If the twelve Arthurian battles of Gildas were ever fought, and if Mr Skene be right in saying that they must have been fought in the north, then they took place within that century; and they were not fought with the Angles, who came into England after Ida and his successors. But they may have been fought with the Picts, and with that earlier Saxon colony which, as I have already said, almost certainly existed in the Merse and on the Lothian seaboard even before the withdrawal of the Romans. That colony appears to have been closely connected with the tribes that under Hengist entered Kent; and the colonists were, therefore, Saxons and not Angles. Let us suppose, if we please, that after the withdrawal of the Romans these early northmen swarmed southward and westward in alliance or in rivalry with the northern Picts, and overpowered the Britons who had been left by the Roman commanders to man, as they best could, the stations on the Wall; that they oppressed and harried, but were not strong or numerous enough to dispossess or exterminate, the Britons as far south as York and the Humber. Let us then suppose that the Britons, driven by necessity to close their ranks and sink their sectional disputes that made them an easy prey to the hardy Saxons, found an able and warlike Gulleddig—or "Wall-keeper," the Arthur of like Gulleddig—and that in a series of triumphant battles he defeated the Saxons, and drove them back over the Cheviots, and over the Tweed, and then we should have the basis of fact for the entire Arthurian legend. The era of union and conquest would not last long, and when the Angles arrived in the middle of the sixth century they met with no effective or protracted resistance; for in the course of half a century, as we find, they had rendered themselves masters of all the eastern half of the country, back to the water-shed, and in 603 were able to fight and win this decisive battle of Paegsaetan.