

Daneby,* for it was part of the large Danish settlement made in the middle east of Great Britain long before the Norman Conquest. Taking kindly to the country of their adoption, the Danes did much forest-clearing and land-draining, though for several succeeding centuries the aspect of nature remained wild and very unlike what it—he is speaking especially of Danby and its surroundings—"is now, and long has been, a bare and treeless moor."[†]

This large district was formerly covered with a dense forest guarded and intersected by morasses so treacherous that not even the Domesday Commissioners, when engaged in their survey of the Conqueror's recently-acquired kingdom, were able to gain access to more than its outermost fringe.

Even in Canon Atkinson's time the diminished swamps were dangerous, especially in rainy seasons. Men did not venture to cross their quaking surface, and cattle instinctively shunned them.

The useful work wrought by the Danes has been continued; and with the shrinkage of the morass area much treasure in the way of bog-oak, as in Ireland, has been exhumed. And we know what beautiful things are carved out of it by the Irish, that nation of artists who produced the Book of Kells and much more besides, of which, unhappily, only a portion has come down to our time.

The locality of these Danby morasses, when not more unmistakably shown, is indicated by what is called "black land," the adjective being the more truthful half of the appellation, for one of the Canon's helpers, during a drain-making process, fell through the land (?) nearly up to his waist into the decayed interior of a large, rotten tree-stump, and when extricated looked as if he had been "painted with the dregs of a few scores of blacking bottles."

The story of the formation of one morass is probably the story of most morasses if not of all. The one into which the unfortunate helper fell was caused by the silting up of the streams

*It is well known that where Thorpe and By occur in our place-names their origin is Danish, By standing for town. On north-European postage-stamps we sometimes see the words By-Post, meaning town or local post; and we still use By in the double word By-Laws for town-laws. Canon Atkinson tells us that when the eminent Danish antiquary Worsaae visited England he found more than four hundred place-names of Danish origin in Yorkshire alone. See the map of the Cleveland country in Canon Atkinson's book.

[†]The passages in quotation marks are in the Canon's own words. The rest of the material used has been much condensed.