

# HARTLEY THROUGH THE AGES.

## THE STORY OF A KENTISH VILLAGE.

### CHAPTER I.

#### EARLY TIMES.

The historical records of a village by no means exhaust the interest of its by-gone days. There is a peculiar charm in probing into pre-historic times and picturing the past in the light of old-world lore.

This is not all myth and fable as some people imagine. We often glean from the unwritten past quite as reliable information as that which we read in the facts and figures of recorded history.

"We will not limit the range of our enquiry then in regard to the village of Hartley by the bounds of the Anglo-Saxon chronicles, or the Norman survey of the 11th century, but commence our story at the close of the glacial age a hundred thousand years ago,—or thereabout.

There was a keenness in the air in those days here which we do not experience now. Snow hung most of the year on the boughs of the forest trees, for the winter was prolonged far into our present-day summer.

The conformation of the land was much the same

as we know it, but the flora and fauna were very different. Arctic conditions further north had driven southward the plants and animals which belonged to those regions, and so the woolly rhinoceros and the mammoth, the cave-bear, the musk-ox and the reindeer, were seen in the land, and the plants and the trees were, most of them, those which belonged to more northern latitudes.

That there were people here in those far-off times we know because they have left behind them their handiwork in the soil. Although their bones have crumbled into dust, the stones, which they handled and shaped, remain to tell the tale of their sojourn in the land.

We know that they were here, and we are able to picture something of the kind of life they led.

For dwelling-places they dug holes in the chalk, or found a shelter in the natural excavations. The chief employment of their lives must have been hunting. There is nothing to show that they cultivated the land or kept flocks and herds. They had no metals, but they were in possession of fire. The family hearth was a feature of their habitations. That their homes were well barricaded we may be sure, for not all the animals that lived around them were as harmless as the reindeer and the wild horses.

These people, lived and died here generation after generation, age after age, and, although we have no recorded history of their residence in the land, there is scarcely a corner of the parish that does not speak of their presence and of their mode of life.

But there came a time when the homes in the chalk were deserted and the people and all that pertained to them passed away.

How long they were here we do not know; perhaps till the age when this country was finally cut off from the continent and became an island. And till the hordes from the south crept over the Pyrenees and crossed into Kent.

Whether the new comers found in the land any of the old inhabitants we do not know, but we do know that by this time the great ice sheet in the north had melted once for all, and that the climate here was much the same as we have it to-day.

These new-comers have been called the men of the Neolithic age. They certainly belonged to a different epoch, and they brought with them the rudiments of a higher culture than that possessed by their predecessors.

That some of them lived generation after generation on this spot we have ample proof in the stone weapons and tools which they, like their predeces-

sors, left behind them in the soil, and we know enough about their records elsewhere to be able to picture the kind of life they lived here.

It would be somewhere on the high ground that we should have found a cluster of their dwellings. These were a great advance on the holes in the chalk of their predecessors. They were single, double or even multiple huts, circular structures built of loose stones, with convex roofs covered with turf. They were six or eight feet high with small doorways and sometimes inter-communication between two or more huts.

These people, at any rate when they came and for long after, possessed no metals, but they were adepts at grinding and polishing flint stones into tools and weapons. Upon these weapons their very lives depended. They hunted deer and wild boars for food, and had to defend themselves from the wolves and other wild animals with which the forest abounded.

The time came when they kept sheep and goats, and cultivated the land with the help of their flint hoes. They sowed corn and made bread, and grew flax, which they wove into a coarse linen.

We know this and a good deal more about them, for although concerning themselves and their doings, they have here, on this spot, left only the scantiest records, their kinsfolk in other places have

bequeathed us a wealth of information in the remains of their temples, burial places and dwellings.