

CHAPTER II.

CELTIC TIMES. .

We have peeped at our parish in the far away ages of the past, and later at a period some ten thousand years ago. Now let us picture it at about 1,000 B.C.

It was at this period that the first wave of the Celtic branch of the Aryan people found their way into our island. First came the Goidels, at a later age the Brythons, and finally the Belgic Gauls.

This part of the country which we now know as Kent and which the Celts called Cenn or Ceant, the headland, must have been from the first overrun by these people. And so, before long they almost certainly found their way to this spot.

The Celts were in the land for so many hundreds of years that very considerable development in the social life of the race took place.

We will first picture the village at an early stage, but the sketch must necessarily be to some extent imaginary because till the coming of Caesar we have little in the way of historical record to guide us.

The main road to the village was probably along a forest tract over Hoseland Hill and then by way of what is now called Church Road.

This led to the clearing at the top of Stocks Hill, an open space enclosed by a stout oak fence.

Beyond the village pale there was perhaps some open country to the south, but beyond this and upon all the other sides there would be dense forest.

Passing within the oak pale fence we should have found the cluster of wooden huts which formed the village. These were crowned with pointed thatches. Inside was very simple furniture; tables and benches hewn out of solid oak, and skins of bears and other animals.

Hanging on the walls were swords and shields, bows and arrows and bronze pointed spears. There were wooden plates, and vessels of various shapes and sizes—these latter made of hand-moulded sun-baked clay. At meal time there was simple fare of venison, beef or mutton, bread and butter, honey and mead.

For bedding these people used the skins of beasts and if, in the dead of night they heard the howls of the wolves prowling round the village they would feel themselves well protected by the strong oak fence with which they were surrounded.

The village was all astir by dawn of day for they led a busy life. There was the land to till, the flocks to tend, huts to build and repair, clothes to make and mend, weapons and tools to manufacture and keep in working order, divers crafts to follow, bread to make and bake, and mead to brew. There was also much hunting of wild animals for defence

and for food. And there were times when the head man took down his spear and shield and led the men to battle.

These Goidel people were of fine stature and comely in form as were also the Belgae. They had light hair and blue eyes and dressed themselves in coats and skirts of skin. Belonging, as they did, to the Caucasian race they brought with them something more than the elements of civilization, and as life here went on from century to century gradual advance was made in their social condition and manner of living. The time came when skins, as clothing, were discarded and they clad themselves in wool and linen woven on the loom. They wore well-fitting tunics, trousers and cloaks with buttons of bone, jet, or gold, leather shoes, and artistically wrought ornaments.

They learnt to build houses of more and more convenient size and shape, of durable material, and with some pretension to architectural art.

The head man of the village came to be a personage of definitely higher social standing than his neighbours in the little community. He was the forerunner of the lord of the manor of Norman times. As the people's dependence upon him for protection and guidance increased, so did his power

and control over their lives and belongings. His leadership was essential for the very existence and preservation of the village, and in return for this, he demanded and received recompense in service and kind.