

CHAPTER III.

THE COMING OF THE ROMANS.

Upon a July day in the year 54 B.C. there must have been great excitement in the little community here. The news had come that Julius Caesar had landed his troops on the coast near Sandwich.

The British Army which included, we may be sure, our squire and his men from this village, was awaiting the Roman hosts at Canterbury. The earthworks which they threw up near the river Stour may be seen to-day.

And then, not many days after, it was known that the legions of Rome had crossed the Medway and were marching from Rochester to Bromley on their way to the Thames. From time to time news came to the village of Caesar's successful advance as far as St. Albans, and of the last fruitless efforts of Cassivellaunus and the four Kings of Kent to resist the might of the Roman Army.

There were perhaps men from our Village among the captives carried back by Cassar to Rome.

It was nearly a hundred years before the Romans returned. When they came the valiant defence maintained by Caractacus and Queen Boadicea was of no avail. The Roman legions were victorious, the Emperor was able to add to his title that of

HARTLEY THROUGH THE AGES.



Excavation on Land belonging to Mr; A. J. Dennis.

"Britannicus," and the men of our village with the rest of their fellow-countrymen became Roman citizens.

A new era for Britain dawned with the advent of Agricola and the introduction into this country, under his auspices, of Roman ways and manner of living. A new order was set up in the land and in due time the culture and education and amenities of Italy made themselves felt in the everyday life of the nation. These were but the beginnings of a great transformation.

We must remember that the Roman occupation of this country lasted for four hundred years, as long a period as that from the war of the Roses to the present time. During this period the British people were thoroughly Romanised. Many, at any rate among the upper classes, became as highly civilised and educated as the Romans themselves.

Immense changes came over the country, peace and tranquillity reigned in the land. There were many Britons who became rich and prosperous, for the Romans introduced improved methods of agriculture and manufacture, and established commercial relations with Italy and other countries of Europe.

By way of the south eastern extremity of Britain, always the point of easiest access from the continent of Europe, all the successful conquerors of

Britain seem to have made inroad into the land,

Here then we may expect to find the earliest and fullest evidences of their presence.

In respect to the Roman occupation there is perhaps no area in the whole of the country more likely to tell the tale of their activity and influence than that which lies between the river Thames and the Mouth east coast.

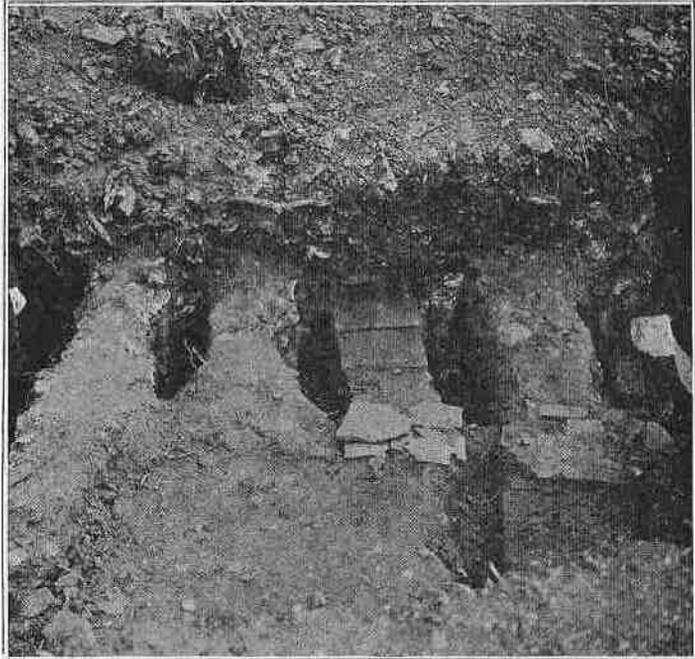
We cannot be surprised then to find that our particular neighbourhood was included in the hub of Roman-British life. It is situated mid-way between two great water highways of the Cantium kingdom, the River Medway on the east and the Darent on the west, while on the north ran Watling Street, and on the south the ancient road, called in later times the Pilgrim Way. . This particular district may well, during these centuries of Roman rule, have teemed with Roman-British life and activity.

It was in the immediate vicinity, too, of the Roman headquarters at Rochester and Dartford, while nearer still was the military station of Vagniacae, or Springhead, as it has subsequently been called.

That this neighbourhood was indeed at this time a centre of busy social and commercial life we know from the numerous Roman-British remains that have been discovered here.

Besides, the large Roman Villa at Darenth there

have on all sides been found earthworks, entrenchments, burial places, coins, weapons and other remains.



Excavation Showing Eoman Hypocaust.

And more recently we have discovered in our very midst the foundations of a large and important mansion, evidence that here about was the domain of a wealthy Roman-British family, lords of the land perhaps for many generations, in the 3rd and 4th centuries of Roman rule.