

## CHAPTER IV.

### HOSELAND.

It is probable that at this period much of the surrounding forest was felled and the land cleared for agricultural purposes.

A big foreign trade was being carried on in corn and wool, and farming in this country was extensive and profitable.

Here then, we may be sure, cornfields stretched far and wide, and flocks and herds grazed over what is now the Fawkham Valley, and the gorse and Hartley Woods, over Longfield and the land which lies to the south.

All trace of the village fence had long since disappeared. The wild animals were held well in check in such neighbourhoods as this. Only the sheep and cattle by night needed any-fencing in.

Well built farm buildings were to be seen on all sides, granaries, barns, cattle-shelters, and sheep folds.' And in clusters round the site of the old village were the cottages of the labourers, and the red-roofed basilican residences of the farm bailiffs and other of the more important officials on the estate. But the centre and hub of the village life, and of the whole domain, was the mansion of the lord.

We know the exact spot where it stood for some of the foundations are visible to-day.

The approach to the villa house was probably by a well-made chariot road, which followed from the top of Hoseland Hill the track of what we now call the Ash Road. This would run round to the great courtyard which faced the south. Here a paved road led up to the long corridor which gave access to the main apartments, and extended on the one side to the winter quarters and on the other to the kitchens and other offices. Within the mansion we should have found all the domestic accessories which the art and culture of Italy could provide, floors laid down with beautiful mosaics and tesserae of coloured sandstones, walls bright with painted frescoes, windows glazed with small panes of tinted glass, and in the chief apartments costly furniture enriched with silver and bronze, hangings and cushions, books in rolls and musical instruments.

The lord of Hoseland was doubtless a person of importance, beyond the confines of his own domain, a man of influence perhaps in the Roman-British world of commerce and politics. And so something of the life and verve of the great world outside found its way into the village.

It is not at all unlikely that many distinguished visitors came from time to time to the great house

and that the lord entertained here some of the highest personages in the land, perhaps the Ionian Emperor himself. ;

By the second century, the old faith, at any rate in Kent, had almost completely died out. There were political reasons for the suppression of the Druidical hierarchy. And this the Romans successfully accomplished. They seem to have persuaded the people that the Gods of Rome were, in reality, their own deities under different names. We have indeed, some reason to believe that the religion of Rome was really nearer akin to that of their Aryan ancestors than the Druidical faith which they had largely derived from their Iberic predecessors in this land.

And so it came to pass that all over the country the Druid altars were replaced by temples to the Gods of Rome.

By the year 200 A..D. it is probable that the sacred grove of oaks, if such existed, in this village had been cut down and altars raised to Jupiter or Minerva or Apollo.

But we know that not long after the coming of the Romans Christianity was preached in this country. It may have been from the lips of St. Paul himself, or of Joseph of Arimathea, or Christian converts in the ranks of the Roman legions.

At any rate we may well imagine that the heathen altars here were ere long dedicated to Christ, and that the time came when a Christian lord of Hose-land erected a basilican church on his domain for the worship of Christ.