

CHAPTER V.

THE TEUTONIC INVADERS.

It was in 410 A.D. that the Roman legions were withdrawn from Britain.

For a time life flowed much as Usual, at any rate in the country villages in the south. In the north there was trouble, and along the eastern coast incessant raiding by the Saxon hordes.

In the middle of the century the Teutonic invaders came in greater force, and before long had possessed themselves of most of the country. The army which followed Hengist into Kent made desolate the country in all directions.

Let us look at our village towards the end of the century when the storm had passed over the land. It is a scene of waste and desolation. There is scarcely a house that is not in ruins. The Church is a wreck. The farm lands are overrun with bush and bramble. The forest trees are once again asserting themselves and creeping over the cleared areas.

And the inhabitants? Most of them are gone. Many fell by sword and battle-axe defending their homes. Others were driven away into the forest. Some became slaves in the service of the new masters. For a time there may have been a few who by stealth crept in and out of the ruined houses for shelter.

And the Great House? It is a heap of ruins. All that remain standing are portions of the solid masonry. We know nothing of the details of the ruthless destruction of this or of the many other stately and beautiful homes in the country, but we do know that time and again the Saxon hordes left nothing behind them but wreck and ruin.

We do not know what became of the lord and his family and retainers. They may have been slain, driven homeless into the forest, or, sought refuge elsewhere in this country or abroad. All we know is that the beautiful villa-house of Hoseland shared the fate of many another Roman-British mansion, that finally the walls and roofs fell down, the floors crumbled in, and the grass grew over the mounds which covered the site of their ruin and desolation.

The art and refinement of Roman-Britain had for these uncultured hordes no use or meaning. Speaking of the wide-spread destruction of the beautiful country villas and other buildings one historian says "Thus it was throughout the land, scarred heaps of ashes marked the sites of the old villas on their sunny southern slopes, until the baths were choked and the roofs of the hypocausts fell in and the grass grew up through the tesserae, until in a later age the plough in many cases, levelled the mounds which marked the last remains of the happy homes that had passed away."

Undo, the historian of Saxon times says "These people plundered the cities and countryside, they spread the conflagration from the eastern to the western sea. Public, as well as private structures, were overturned. Priests where everywhere slain before the altars. Prelates and people without any respect of persons were destroyed with fire and sword. Some of them fled beyond the seas. Others led a miserable life among the woods and mountains. Many of them, spent with hunger, surrendered themselves into a miserable servitude."

After the defeat of Vortigern and when Hengist was King of Kent the Anglo Saxon tribes, here, as in other parts of the country, began to settle down and colonise the land. Sometimes it was a single family which took possession of the deserted fields of a Roman-British farm. In others, twenty or thirty families joined together in one community and set themselves to reclaim the derelict domain of the late possessors.

Thus one Facca made his ham or home in the adjoining valley calling it after his own name, and which henceforth came to be known as Facca-ham. It was the same at Meppa-ham and Farna-ham. In most cases all trace of the Celtic names in Kent was lost except of such natural features as hills and rivers. Here the old British name has clung on to the northern slope of the hill and strip of woodland

which we still call Hoseland, The river Darent too retains its old name, and other instances further afield are the Thames and Medway.