

CHAPTER CLIX.

ANCIENT EUROPE.

THE SWISS LAKE-DWELLERS.

DISCOVERY OF THE DWELLINGS AND RELICS—MODE OF BUILDING THE HOUSES—POPULATION OF THE LAKES—GENERAL CHARACTER OF THE RELICS.

MANY of my readers may be aware of the remarkable discovery that was made in 1853-4, showing that even in Europe there lived, at one time, a race of men having exactly the same habits as the swamp-dwellers of New Guinea, or the lake-dwellers of Maracaibo on the Amazon. During the winter months of those two years, the weather in Switzerland was very dry and very cold, so that the rivers did not receive their usual supplies of water. Consequently, the water in the lakes fell far below its usual level, and this disclosed the remarkable fact that in those lakes had once been assemblages of human habitations, built upon piles driven into the bed of the lake.

These houses, appropriately called "Pfahlbauten," or Pile-buildings, were, as their name implies, built upon piles; and it is a most interesting fact, that not only have the piles been discovered, on which the houses were built, but also fragments of the walls of those houses; many specimens of the weapons and implements of the inhabitants, their ornaments, and even their food, have been brought to light, after having been buried for centuries beneath the water.

The resemblance, not to say the identity, between many articles found under the waters of the Swiss lakes and those which are still used by savage tribes of the Western hemisphere is absolutely startling; and not the least remarkable point about the relics which have just been discovered is, that several of them are identical with inventions which we fondly deem to be modern.

The chief part of these lake-dwellings was constructed during the Stone period, *i. e.* a period when axes, spear-heads, etc., were made of stone, the use of fire being unknown. This is proved by the quantity

of stone weapons and implements which have been found in the lakes. That various improvements have been made in the architecture is also shown by the difference in details of construction.

From the relics that have been discovered, it is easy to see what these lake-dwellings must have been. They were built on a scaffolding made of piles driven into the bed of the lake, and connected with cross-beams, so as to make the foundation for a platform. Upon this platform the huts themselves were built. They were mostly circular, and the walls were made of wattle, rendered weather-tight by the clay which could be obtained in any quantity from the bed of the lake.

The reason for building these edifices is analogous to the feeling which induces military engineers to surround their forts with moats filled with water. In those primitive times, man waged an unequal war against the wild animals, such as the bear, the wolf, and the boar, and in consequence, these lacustrine habitations proved to be strongholds which such enemies could not assault. It is natural, also, that persons thus threatened should congregate together, and in consequence we find that in one lake alone, that of Neufchâtel, a population of some five thousand had congregated.

A vast number of relics of this bygone age have been recovered from the lakes, and are of absorbing interest to the anthropologist. In the first place, the original piles have been discovered, still standing, and several have been drawn, in order to ascertain the depth to which they were driven. Portions of the wattled walls of the huts have also been found, together with great numbers of stone implements, denoting a very early age. Great quantities