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***AFTER
LONDON;
OR, WILD
ENGLAND***

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After London; Or, Wild England

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The End

Part I

The Relapse into Barbarism

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CHAPTER I

THE GREAT FOREST

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The old men say their fathers told them that soon after the fields were left to themselves a change began to be visible. It became green everywhere in the first spring, after London ended, so that all the country looked alike.

The meadows were green, and so was the rising wheat which had been sown, but which neither had nor would receive any further care. Such arable fields as had not been sown, but where the last stubble had been ploughed up, were overrun with couch-grass, and where the short stubble had not been ploughed, the weeds hid it. So that there was no place which was not more or less green; the footpaths were the greenest of all, for such is the nature of grass where it has once been trodden on, and by-and-by, as the summer came on, the former roads were thinly covered with the grass that had spread out from the margin.

In the autumn, as the meadows were not mown, the grass withered as it stood, falling this way and that, as the wind had blown it; the seeds dropped, and the bennets became a greyish-white, or, where the docks and sorrel

were thick, a brownish-red. The wheat, after it had ripened, there being no one to reap it, also remained standing, and was eaten by clouds of sparrows, rooks, and pigeons, which flocked to it and were undisturbed, feasting at their pleasure. As the winter came on, the crops were beaten down by the storms, soaked with rain, and trodden upon by herds of animals.

Next summer the prostrate straw of the preceding year was concealed by the young green wheat and barley that sprang up from the grain sown by dropping from the ears, and by quantities of docks, thistles, oxeye daisies, and similar plants. This matted mass grew up through the bleached straw. Charlock, too, hid the rotting roots in the fields under a blaze of yellow flower. The young spring meadow-grass could scarcely push its way up through the long dead grass and bennets of the year previous, but docks and thistles, sorrel, wild carrots, and nettles, found no such difficulty.

Footpaths were concealed by the second year, but roads could be traced, though as green as the sward, and were still the best for walking, because the tangled wheat and weeds, and, in the meadows, the long grass, caught the feet of those who tried to pass through. Year by year the original crops of wheat, barley, oats, and beans asserted their presence by shooting up, but in gradually diminished force, as nettles and coarser plants, such as the wild parsnips, spread out into the fields from the ditches and choked them.

Aquatic grasses from the furrows and water-carriers extended in the meadows, and, with the rushes, helped to destroy or take the place of the former sweet herbage.

Meanwhile, the brambles, which grew very fast, had pushed forward their prickly runners farther and farther from the hedges till they had now reached ten or fifteen yards. The briars had followed, and the hedges had widened to three or four times their first breadth, the fields being equally contracted. Starting from all sides at once, these brambles and briars in the course of about twenty years met in the centre of the largest fields.

Hawthorn bushes sprang up among them, and, protected by the briars and thorns from grazing animals, the suckers of elm-trees rose and flourished. Sapling ashes, oaks, sycamores, and horse-chestnuts, lifted their heads. Of old time the cattle would have eaten off the seed leaves with the grass so soon as they were out of the ground, but now most of the acorns that were dropped by birds, and the keys that were wafted by the wind, twirling as they floated, took root and grew into trees. By this time the brambles and briars had choked up and blocked the former roads, which were as impassable as the fields.

No fields, indeed, remained, for where the ground was dry, the thorns, briars, brambles, and saplings already mentioned filled the space, and these thickets and the young trees had converted most part of the country into an immense forest. Where the ground was naturally moist, and the drains had become choked with willow roots, which, when confined in tubes, grow into a mass like the brush of a fox, sedges and flags and rushes covered it. Thorn bushes were there, too, but not so tall; they were hung with lichen. Besides the flags and reeds, vast quantities of the tallest cow-parsnips or "gicks" rose five or six feet high, and the

willow herb with its stout stem, almost as woody as a shrub, filled every approach.

By the thirtieth year there was not one single open place, the hills only excepted, where a man could walk, unless he followed the tracks of wild creatures or cut himself a path. The ditches, of course, had long since become full of leaves and dead branches, so that the water which should have run off down them stagnated, and presently spread out into the hollow places and by the corner of what had once been fields, forming marshes where the horsetails, flags, and sedges hid the water.

As no care was taken with the brooks, the hatches upon them gradually rotted, and the force of the winter rains carried away the weak timbers, flooding the lower grounds, which became swamps of larger size. The dams, too, were drilled by water-rats, and the streams percolating through, slowly increased the size of these tunnels till the structure burst, and the current swept on and added to the floods below. Mill-dams stood longer, but, as the ponds silted up, the current flowed round and even through the mill-houses, which, going by degrees to ruin, were in some cases undermined till they fell.

Everywhere the lower lands adjacent to the streams had become marshes, some of them extending for miles in a winding line, and occasionally spreading out to a mile in breadth. This was particularly the case where brooks and streams of some volume joined the rivers, which were also blocked and obstructed in their turn, and the two, overflowing, covered the country around; for the rivers brought down trees and branches, timbers floated from the

shore, and all kinds of similar materials, which grounded in the shallows or caught against snags, and formed huge piles where there had been weirs.

Sometimes, after great rains, these piles swept away the timbers of the weir, driven by the irresistible power of the water, and then in its course the flood, carrying the barks before it like battering rams, cracked and split the bridges of solid stone which the ancients had built. These and the iron bridges likewise were overthrown, and presently quite disappeared, for the very foundations were covered with the sand and gravel silted up.

Thus, too, the sites of many villages and towns that anciently existed along the rivers, or on the lower lands adjoining, were concealed by the water and the mud it brought with it. The sedges and reeds that arose completed the work and left nothing visible, so that the mighty buildings of olden days were by these means utterly buried. And, as has been proved by those who have dug for treasures, in our time the very foundations are deep beneath the earth, and not to be got at for the water that oozes into the shafts that they have tried to sink through the sand and mud banks.

From an elevation, therefore, there was nothing visible but endless forest and marsh. On the level ground and plains the view was limited to a short distance, because of the thickets and the saplings which had now become young trees. The downs only were still partially open, yet it was not convenient to walk upon them except in the tracks of animals, because of the long grass which, being no more regularly grazed upon by sheep, as was once the case, grew

thick and tangled. Furze, too, and heath covered the slopes, and in places vast quantities of fern. There had always been copses of fir and beech and nut-tree covers, and these increased and spread, while bramble, briar, and hawthorn extended around them.

By degrees the trees of the vale seemed as it were to invade and march up the hills, and, as we see in our time, in many places the downs are hidden altogether with a stunted kind of forest. But all the above happened in the time of the first generation. Besides these things a great physical change took place; but before I speak of that, it will be best to relate what effects were produced upon animals and men.

In the first years after the fields were left to themselves, the fallen and over-ripe corn crops became the resort of innumerable mice. They swarmed to an incredible degree, not only devouring the grain upon the straw that had never been cut, but clearing out every single ear in the wheat-ricks that were standing about the country. Nothing remained in these ricks but straw, pierced with tunnels and runs, the home and breeding-place of mice, which thence poured forth into the fields. Such grain as had been left in barns and granaries, in mills, and in warehouses of the deserted towns, disappeared in the same manner.

When men tried to raise crops in small gardens and enclosures for their sustenance, these legions of mice rushed in and destroyed the produce of their labour. Nothing could keep them out, and if a score were killed, a hundred more supplied their place. These mice were preyed upon by kestrel hawks, owls, and weasels; but at first they made

little or no appreciable difference. In a few years, however, the weasels, having such a superabundance of food, trebled in numbers, and in the same way the hawks, owls, and foxes increased. There was then some relief, but even now at intervals districts are invaded, and the granaries and the standing corn suffer from these depredations.

This does not happen every year, but only at intervals, for it is noticed that mice abound very much more in some seasons than others. The extraordinary multiplication of these creatures was the means of providing food for the cats that had been abandoned in the towns, and came forth into the country in droves. Feeding on the mice, they became, in a very short time, quite wild, and their descendants now roam the forest.

In our houses we still have several varieties of the domestic cat, such as the tortoise-shell, which is the most prized, but when the above-mentioned cats became wild, after a while the several varieties disappeared, and left but one wild kind. Those which are now so often seen in the forest, and which do so much mischief about houses and enclosures, are almost all greyish, some being striped, and they are also much longer in the body than the tame. A few are jet black; their skins are then preferred by hunters.

Though the forest cat retires from the sight of man as much as possible, yet it is extremely fierce in defence of its young, and instances have been known where travellers in the woods have been attacked upon unwittingly approaching their dens. Dropping from the boughs of a tree upon the shoulders, the creature flies at the face, inflicting deep scratches and bites, exceedingly painful, and

sometimes dangerous, from the tendency to fester. But such cases are rare, and the reason the forest cat is so detested is because it preys upon fowls and poultry, mounting with ease the trees or places where they roost.

Almost worse than the mice were the rats, which came out of the old cities in such vast numbers that the people who survived and saw them are related to have fled in fear. This terror, however, did not last so long as the evil of the mice, for the rats, probably not finding sufficient food when together, scattered abroad, and were destroyed singly by the cats and dogs, who slew them by thousands, far more than they could afterwards eat, so that the carcasses were left to decay. It is said that, overcome with hunger, these armies of rats in some cases fell upon each other, and fed on their own kindred. They are still numerous, but do not appear to do the same amount of damage as is occasionally caused by the mice, when the latter invade the cultivated lands.

The dogs, of course, like the cats, were forced by starvation into the fields, where they perished in incredible numbers. Of many species of dogs which are stated to have been plentiful among the ancients, we have now nothing but the name. The poodle is extinct, the Maltese terrier, the Pomeranian, the Italian greyhound, and, it is believed, great numbers of crosses and mongrels have utterly disappeared. There was none to feed them, and they could not find food for themselves, nor could they stand the rigour of the winter when exposed to the frost in the open air.

Some kinds, more hardy and fitted by nature for the chase, became wild, and their descendants are now found in

the woods. Of these, there are three sorts which keep apart from each other, and are thought not to interbreed. The most numerous are the black. The black wood-dog is short and stoutly made, with shaggy hair, sometimes marked with white patches.

There can be no doubt that it is the descendant of the ancient sheep-dog, for it is known that the sheep-dog was of that character, and it is said that those who used to keep sheep soon found their dogs abandon the fold, and join the wild troops that fell upon the sheep. The black wood-dogs hunt in packs of ten or more (as many as forty have been counted), and are the pest of the farmer, for, unless his flocks are protected at night within stockades or enclosures, they are certain to be attacked. Not satisfied with killing enough to satisfy hunger, these dogs tear and mangle for sheer delight of blood, and will destroy twenty times as many as they can eat, leaving the miserably torn carcasses on the field. Nor are the sheep always safe by day if the wood-dogs happen to be hungry. The shepherd is, therefore, usually accompanied by two or three mastiffs, of whose great size and strength the others stand in awe. At night, and when in large packs, starving in the snow, not even the mastiffs can check them.

No wood-dog, of any kind, has ever been known to attack man, and the hunter in the forest hears their bark in every direction without fear. It is, nevertheless, best to retire out of their way when charging sheep in packs, for they then seem seized with a blind fury, and some who have endeavoured to fight them have been thrown down and seriously mauled. But this has been in the blindness of their

rush; no instance has ever been known of their purposely attacking man.

These black wood-dogs will also chase and finally pull down cattle, if they can get within the enclosures, and even horses have fallen victims to their untiring thirst for blood. Not even the wild cattle can always escape, despite their strength, and they have been known to run down stags, though not their usual quarry.

The next kind of wild wood-dog is the yellow, a smaller animal, with smooth hair inclining to a yellow colour, which lives principally upon game, chasing all, from the hare to the stag. It is as swift, or nearly as swift, as the greyhound, and possesses greater endurance. In coursing the hare, it not uncommonly happens that these dogs start from the brake and take the hare, when nearly exhausted, from the hunter's hounds. They will in the same way follow a stag, which has been almost run down by the hunters, and bring him to bay, though in this case they lose their booty, dispersing through fear of man, when the hunters come up in a body.

But such is their love of the chase, that they are known to assemble from their lairs at the distant sound of the horn, and, as the hunters ride through the woods, they often see the yellow dogs flitting along side by side with them through bush and fern. These animals sometimes hunt singly, sometimes in couples, and as the season advances, and winter approaches, in packs of eight or twelve. They never attack sheep or cattle, and avoid man, except when they perceive he is engaged in the chase. There is little doubt that they are the descendants of the dogs which the

ancients called lurchers, crossed, perhaps, with the greyhound, and possibly other breeds. When the various species of dogs were thrown on their own resources, those only withstood the exposure and hardships which were naturally hardy, and possessed natural aptitude for the chase.

The third species of wood-dog is the white. They are low on the legs, of a dingy white colour, and much smaller than the other two. They neither attack cattle nor game, though fond of hunting rabbits. This dog is, in fact, a scavenger, living upon the carcasses of dead sheep and animals, which are found picked clean in the night. For this purpose it haunts the neighbourhood of habitations, and prowls in the evening over heaps of refuse, scampering away at the least alarm, for it is extremely timid.

It is perfectly harmless, for even the poultry do not dread it, and it will not face a tame cat, if by chance the two meet. It is rarely met with far from habitations, though it will accompany an army on the march. It may be said to remain in one district. The black and yellow dogs, on the contrary, roam about the forest without apparent home. One day the hunter sees signs of their presence, and perhaps may, for a month afterwards, not so much as hear a bark.

This uncertainty in the case of the black dog is the bane of the shepherds; for, not seeing or hearing anything of the enemy for months altogether, in spite of former experience their vigilance relaxes, and suddenly, while they sleep, their flocks are scattered. We still have, among tame dogs, the mastiff, terrier, spaniel, deerhound, and greyhound, all of which are as faithful to man as ever.

CHAPTER II

WILD ANIMALS

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When the ancients departed, great numbers of their cattle perished. It was not so much the want of food as the inability to endure exposure that caused their death; a few winters are related to have so reduced them that they died by hundreds, many mangled by dogs. The hardiest that remained became perfectly wild, and the wood cattle are now more difficult to approach than deer.

There are two kinds, the white and the black. The white (sometimes dun) are believed to be the survivors of the domestic roan-and-white, for the cattle in our enclosures at the present day are of that colour. The black are smaller, and are doubtless little changed from their state in the olden times, except that they are wild. These latter are timid, unless accompanied by a calf, and are rarely known to turn upon their pursuers. But the white are fierce at all times; they will not, indeed, attack man, but will scarcely run from him, and it is not always safe to cross their haunts.

The bulls are savage beyond measure at certain seasons of the year. If they see men at a distance, they retire; if they come unexpectedly face to face, they attack. This characteristic enables those who travel through districts known to be haunted by white cattle to provide against an encounter, for, by occasionally blowing a horn, the herd that may be in the vicinity is dispersed. There are not often more than twenty in a herd. The hides of the dun are highly prized, both for their intrinsic value, and as proofs of skill

and courage, so much so that you shall hardly buy a skin for all the money you may offer; and the horns are likewise trophies. The white or dun bull is the monarch of our forests.

Four kinds of wild pigs are found. The most numerous, or at least the most often seen, as it lies about our enclosures, is the common thorn-hog. It is the largest of the wild pigs, long-bodied and flat-sided, in colour much the hue of the mud in which it wallows. To the agriculturist it is the greatest pest, destroying or damaging all kinds of crops, and routing up the gardens. It is with difficulty kept out by palisading, for if there be a weak place in the wooden framework, the strong snout of the animal is sure to undermine and work a passage through.

As there are always so many of these pigs round about inhabited places and cultivated fields, constant care is required, for they instantly discover an opening. From their habit of haunting the thickets and bush which come up to the verge of the enclosures, they have obtained the name of thorn-hogs. Some reach an immense size, and they are very prolific, so that it is impossible to destroy them. The boars are fierce at a particular season, but never attack unless provoked to do so. But when driven to bay they are the most dangerous of the boars, on account of their vast size and weight. They are of a sluggish disposition, and will not rise from their lairs unless forced to do so.

The next kind is the white hog, which has much the same habits as the former, except that it is usually found in moist places, near lakes and rivers, and is often called the marsh-pig. The third kind is perfectly black, much smaller in size, and very active, affording by far the best sport, and also the

best food when killed. As they are found on the hills where the ground is somewhat more open, horses can follow freely, and the chase becomes exciting. By some it is called the hill-hog, from the locality it frequents. The small tusks of the black boar are used for many ornamental purposes.

These three species are considered to be the descendants of the various domestic pigs of the ancients, but the fourth, or grey, is thought to be the true wild boar. It is seldom seen, but is most common in the south-western forests, where, from the quantity of fern, it is called the fern-pig. This kind is believed to represent the true wild boar, which was extinct, or merged in the domestic hog among the ancients, except in that neighbourhood where the strain remained.

With wild times, the wild habits have returned, and the grey boar is at once the most difficult of access, and the most ready to encounter either dogs or men. Although the first, or thorn-hog, does the most damage to the agriculturist because of its numbers, and its habit of haunting the neighbourhood of enclosures, the others are equally injurious if they chance to enter the cultivated fields.

The three principal kinds of wild sheep are the horned, the thyme, and the meadow. The thyme sheep are the smallest, and haunt the highest hills in the south, where, feeding on the sweet herbage of the ridges, their flesh is said to acquire a flavour of wild thyme. They move in small flocks of not more than thirty, and are the most difficult to approach, being far more wary than deer, so continuously are they hunted by the wood-dogs. The horned are larger,

and move in greater numbers; as many as two hundred are sometimes seen together.

They are found on the lower slopes and plains, and in the woods. The meadow sheep have long shaggy wool, which is made into various articles of clothing, but they are not numerous. They haunt river sides, and the shores of lakes and ponds. None of these are easily got at, on account of the wood-dogs; but the rams of the horned kind are reputed to sometimes turn upon the pursuing pack, and butt them to death. In the extremity of their terror whole flocks of wild sheep have been driven over precipices and into quagmires and torrents.

Besides these, there are several other species whose haunt is local. On the islands, especially, different kinds are found. The wood-dogs will occasionally, in calm weather, swim out to an island and kill every sheep upon it.

From the horses that were in use among the ancients the two wild species now found are known to have descended, a fact confirmed by their evident resemblance to the horses we still retain. The largest wild horse is almost black, or inclined to a dark colour, somewhat less in size than our present waggon horses, but of the same heavy make. It is, however, much swifter, on account of having enjoyed liberty for so long. It is called the bush-horse, being generally distributed among thickets and meadow-like lands adjoining water.

The other species is called the hill-pony, from its habitat, the hills, and is rather less in size than our riding-horse. This latter is short and thick-set, so much so as not to be easily ridden by short persons without high stirrups. Neither of

these wild horses are numerous, but neither are they uncommon. They keep entirely separate from each other. As many as thirty mares are sometimes seen together, but there are districts where the traveller will not observe one for weeks.

Tradition says that in the olden times there were horses of a slender build whose speed outstripped the wind, but of the breed of these famous racers not one is left. Whether they were too delicate to withstand exposure, or whether the wild dogs hunted them down is uncertain, but they are quite gone. Did but one exist, how eagerly it would be sought out, for in these days it would be worth its weight in gold, unless, indeed, as some affirm, such speed only endured for a mile or two.

It is not necessary, having written thus far of the animals, that anything be said of the birds of the woods, which every one knows were not always wild, and which can, indeed, be compared with such poultry as are kept in our enclosures. Such are the bush-hens, the wood-turkeys, the galenæ, the peacocks, the white duck and the white goose, all of which, though now wild as the hawk, are well known to have been once tame.

There were deer, red and fallow, in numerous parks and chases of very old time, and these, having got loose, and having such immense tracts to roam over unmolested, went on increasing till now they are beyond computation, and I have myself seen a thousand head together. Within these forty years, as I learn, the roe-deer, too, have come down from the extreme north, so that there are now three sorts in the woods. Before them the pine-marten came from the

same direction, and, though they are not yet common, it is believed they are increasing. For the first few years after the change took place there seemed a danger lest the foreign wild beasts that had been confined as curiosities in menageries should multiply and remain in the woods. But this did not happen.

Some few lions, tigers, bears, and other animals did indeed escape, together with many less furious creatures, and it is related that they roamed about the fields for a long time. They were seldom met with, having such an extent of country to wander over, and after a while entirely disappeared. If any progeny were born, the winter frosts must have destroyed it, and the same fate awaited the monstrous serpents which had been collected for exhibition. Only one such animal now exists which is known to owe its origin to those which escaped from the dens of the ancients. It is the beaver, whose dams are now occasionally found upon the streams by those who traverse the woods. Some of the aquatic birds, too, which frequent the lakes, are thought to have been originally derived from those which were formerly kept as curiosities.

In the castle yard at Longtover may still be seen the bones of an elephant which was found dying in the woods near that spot.

CHAPTER III

MEN OF THE WOODS

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So far as this, all that I have stated has been clear, and there can be no doubt that what has been thus handed down from mouth to mouth is for the most part correct. When I pass from trees and animals to men, however, the thing is different, for nothing is certain and everything confused. None of the accounts agree, nor can they be altogether reconciled with present facts or with reasonable supposition; yet it is not so long since but a few memories, added one to the other, can bridge the time, and, though not many, there are some written notes still to be found. I must attribute the discrepancy to the wars and hatreds which sprang up and divided the people, so that one would not listen to what the others wished to say, and the truth was lost.

Besides which, in the conflagration which consumed the towns, most of the records were destroyed, and are no longer to be referred to. And it may be that even when they were proceeding, the causes of the change were not understood. Therefore, what I am now about to describe is not to be regarded as the ultimate truth, but as the nearest to which I could attain after comparing the various traditions. Some say, then, that the first beginning of the change was because the sea silted up the entrances to the ancient ports, and stopped the vast commerce which was once carried on. It is certainly true that many of the ports are silted up, and are now useless as such, but whether the silting up preceded the disappearance of the population, or whether the disappearance of the population, and the consequent neglect caused the silting, I cannot venture to positively assert.

For there are signs that the level of the sea has sunk in some places, and signs that it has become higher in others, so that the judicious historian will simply state the facts, and refrain from colouring them with his own theory as Silvester has done. Others again maintain that the supply of food from over the ocean suddenly stopping caused great disorders, and that the people crowded on board all the ships to escape starvation, and sailed away, and were no more heard of.

It has, too, been said that the earth, from some attractive power exercised by the passage of an enormous dark body through space, became tilted or inclined to its orbit more than before, and that this, while it lasted, altered the flow of the magnetic currents, which, in an imperceptible manner, influence the minds of men. Hitherto the stream of human life had directed itself to the westward, but when this reversal of magnetism occurred, a general desire arose to return to the east. And those whose business is theology have pointed out that the wickedness of those times surpassed understanding, and that a change and sweeping away of the human evil that had accumulated was necessary, and was effected by supernatural means. The relation of this must be left to them, since it is not the province of the philosopher to meddle with such matters.

All that seems certain is, that when the event took place, the immense crowds collected in cities were most affected, and that the richer and upper classes made use of their money to escape. Those left behind were mainly the lower and most ignorant, so far as the arts were concerned; those that dwelt in distant and outlying places; and those who

lived by agriculture. These last at that date had fallen to such distress that they could not hire vessels to transport themselves. The exact number of those left behind cannot, of course, be told, but it is on record that when the fields were first neglected (as I have already described), a man might ride a hundred miles and not meet another. They were not only few, but scattered, and had not drawn together and formed towns as at present.

Of what became of the vast multitudes that left the country, nothing has ever been heard, and no communication has been received from them. For this reason I cannot conceal my opinion that they must have sailed either to the westward or to the southward where the greatest extent of ocean is understood to exist, and not to the eastward as Silvester would have it in his work upon the "Unknown Orb", the dark body travelling in space to which I have alluded. None of our vessels in the present day dare venture into those immense tracts of sea, nor, indeed, out of sight of land, unless they know they shall see it again so soon as they have reached and surmounted the ridge of the horizon. Had they only crossed to the mainland or continent again, we should most likely have heard of their passage across the countries there.

It is true that ships rarely come over, and only to two ports, and that the men on them say (so far as can be understood) that their country is equally deserted now, and has likewise lost its population. But still, as men talk unto men, and we pass intelligence across great breadths of land, it is almost certain that, had they travelled that way, some echo of their footsteps would yet sound back to us.

Regarding this theory, therefore, as untenable, I put forward as a suggestion that the ancients really sailed to the west or to the south.

As, for the most part, those who were left behind were ignorant, rude, and unlettered, it consequently happened that many of the marvellous things which the ancients did, and the secrets of their science, are known to us by name only, and, indeed, hardly by name. It has happened to us in our turn as it happened to the ancients. For they were aware that in times before their own the art of making glass malleable had been discovered, so that it could be beaten into shape like copper. But the manner in which it was accomplished was entirely unknown to them; the fact was on record, but the cause lost. So now we know that those who to us are the ancients had a way of making diamonds and precious stones out of black and lustreless charcoal, a fact which approaches the incredible. Still, we do not doubt it, though we cannot imagine by what means it was carried out.

They also sent intelligence to the utmost parts of the earth along wires which were not tubular, but solid, and therefore could not transmit sound, and yet the person who received the message could hear and recognise the voice of the sender a thousand miles away. With certain machines worked by fire, they traversed the land swift as the swallow glides through the sky, but of these things not a relic remains to us. What metal-work or wheels or bars of iron were left, and might have given us a clue, were all broken up and melted down for use in other ways when metal became scarce.

Mounds of earth are said to still exist in the woods, which originally formed the roads for these machines, but they are now so low, and so covered with thickets, that nothing can be learnt from them; and, indeed, though I have heard of their existence, I have never seen one. Great holes were made through the very hills for the passage of the iron chariot, but they are now blocked by the falling roofs, nor dare any one explore such parts as may yet be open. Where are the wonderful structures with which the men of those days were lifted to the skies, rising above the clouds? These marvellous things are to us little more than fables of the giants and of the old gods that walked upon the earth, which were fables even to those whom we call the ancients.

Indeed, we have fuller knowledge of those extremely ancient times than of the people who immediately preceded us, and the Romans and the Greeks are more familiar to us than the men who rode in the iron chariots and mounted to the skies. The reason why so many arts and sciences were lost was because, as I have previously said, the most of those who were left in the country were ignorant, rude, and unlettered. They had seen the iron chariots, but did not understand the method of their construction, and could not hand down the knowledge they did not themselves possess. The magic wires of intelligence passed through their villages, but they did not know how to work them.

The cunning artificers of the cities all departed, and everything fell quickly into barbarism; nor could it be wondered at, for the few and scattered people of those days had enough to do to preserve their lives. Communication between one place and another was absolutely cut off, and

if one perchance did recollect something that might have been of use, he could not confer with another who knew the other part, and thus between them reconstruct the machine. In the second generation even these disjointed memories died out.

At first it is supposed that those who remained behind existed upon the grain in the warehouses, and what they could thresh by the flail from the crops left neglected in the fields. But as the provisions in the warehouses were consumed or spoiled, they hunted the animals, lately tame and as yet but half wild. As these grew less in number and difficult to overtake, they set to work again to till the ground, and cleared away small portions of the earth, encumbered already with brambles and thistles. Some grew corn, and some took charge of sheep. Thus, in time, places far apart from each other were settled, and towns were built; towns, indeed, we call them to distinguish them from the champaign, but they are not worthy of the name in comparison with the mighty cities of old time.

There are many that have not more than fifty houses in the enclosure, and perhaps no other station within a day's journey, and the largest are but villages, reckoning by antiquity. For the most part they have their own government, or had till recently, and thus there grew up many provinces and kingdoms in the compass of what was originally but one. Thus separated and divided, there came also to be many races where in the first place was one people. Now, in briefly recounting the principal divisions of men, I will commence with those who are everywhere

considered the lowest. These are the Bushmen, who live wholly in the woods.

Even among the ancients, when every man, woman, and child could exercise those arts which are now the special mark of nobility, *i.e.* reading and writing, there was a degraded class of persons who refused to avail themselves of the benefits of civilization. They obtained their food by begging, wandering along the highways, crouching around fires which they lit in the open, clad in rags, and exhibiting countenances from which every trace of self-respect had disappeared. These were the ancestors of the present men of the bushes.

They took naturally to the neglected fields, and forming "camps" as they call their tribes, or rather families, wandered to and fro, easily subsisting upon roots and trapped game. So they live to this day, having become extremely dexterous in snaring every species of bird and animal, and the fishes of the streams. These latter they sometimes poison with a drug or a plant (it is not known which), the knowledge of which has been preserved among them since the days of the ancients. The poison kills the fishes, and brings them to the surface, when they can be collected by hundreds, but does not injure them for eating.

Like the black wood-dogs, the Bushmen often in fits of savage frenzy destroy thrice as much as they can devour, trapping deer in wickerwork hedges, or pitfalls, and cutting the miserable animals in pieces, for mere thirst of blood. The oxen and cattle in the enclosures are occasionally in the same manner fearfully mutilated by these wretches, sometimes for amusement, and sometimes in vengeance

for injuries done to them. Bushmen have no settled home, cultivate no kind of corn or vegetable, keep no animals, not even dogs, have no houses or huts, no boats or canoes, nothing that requires the least intelligence or energy to construct.

Roaming to and fro without any apparent aim or object, or any particular route, they fix their camp for a few days wherever it suits their fancy, and again move on, no man knows why or whither. It is this uncertainty of movement which makes them so dangerous. To-day there may not be the least sign of any within miles of an enclosure. In the night a "camp" may pass, slaughtering such cattle as may have remained without the palisade, or killing the unfortunate shepherd who has not got within the walls, and in the morning they may be nowhere to be seen, having disappeared like vermin. Face to face the Bushman is never to be feared; a whole "camp" or tribal family will scatter if a traveler stumbles into their midst. It is from behind a tree or under cover of night that he deals his murderous blow.

A "camp" may consist of ten or twenty individuals, sometimes, perhaps, of forty, or even fifty, of various ages, and is ruled by the eldest, who is also the parent. He is absolute master of his "camp", but has no power or recognition beyond it, so that how many leaders there may be among them it is not possible even to guess. Nor is the master known to them as king, or duke, nor has he any title, but is simply the oldest or founder of the family. The "camp" has no law, no established custom; events happen, and even the master cannot be said to reign. When he becomes feeble, they simply leave him to die.