

ON A CAVE NEAR MARGATE.

IN February last, having been apprised by Mr. Cobb, of Margate, that a cave had been discovered in a field belonging to Mr. Reeve of that place, I immediately proceeded to Mr. Reeve's brick-field, which is situated on the highest land in Thanet, not far from the monument and sea mark. The brick-earth which covers the chalk, on this elevated ground, must not be confounded with the drift clay (which commonly goes by the name of brick-earth, and which is of late geological date), as it consists entirely of Thanet beds, a formation anterior in date to the London clay, which is here about four or five feet in thickness, and rests upon the chalk. At the place where the cave was found, this had been disturbed at some remote period, and a hole was found in the chalk below, much in shape and appearance like an ordinary well ; this had been loosely filled in with surrounding materials, and fell in some distance while the workmen stood on it. On removing the material filling the hole, at a depth of twelve feet, upon the north side of the shaft, a cavern was found, the mouth of which had apparently been stopped up with large flint boulders, which, with the surrounding earth, nearly filled the cavern. On removing this material we found a large number of bones of animals, a few pieces of Roman pottery, a Roman quern, and a great many common snail shells. The cave was oven-shaped, flat at the bottom, and domed at top, the crown of it being about six feet in height, the breadth of it twelve feet, and the length nine feet. I examined it carefully for any channel or communication with the surface, but could find but one apparent rabbit burrow, which had gone in some distance. The bones found were mixed with the earth, and were for the most part fragments of a great many different individuals, many portions of skulls being found. So far as I could ascertain, they belonged

to the following animals, viz :—several bones and skulls of the common pig, mostly young ; a great many of the goat, perhaps more than one species ; the sheep, the calf, and ox ; a portion of the jaw and antlers of *Cervus dama*, fallow deer, perhaps also red deer, but I am rather uncertain about this ; a tooth of a horse, but the appearance of the latter led me to believe that it came from nearer the surface. The pottery consisted of portions of a sepulchral urn of dark colour ; a few fragments of perhaps two or three other vessels of Roman pattern ; a small piece of red Samian ware ; also the handle of an amphora. The Roman coin was a large brass of *Faustina* the elder. The portion of quern was cut from a conglomerate or pudding stone. I could find no trace of fire in the cave, but there were several portions of decayed wood. The bones did not appear to have been introduced by animals, for they were not gnawn as if by carnivora, and some of them were cut or sawn asunder. Below the level of the cave, the shaft or well descended through the chalk to a depth of thirty feet, but nothing more of importance was found.

The circumstances above stated lead me to conclude that this cave had been used as a human hiding place, most probably excavated in the side of a well. At what period it had been so used we can only conjecture, but the Roman remains, taken in connection with the rather singular remains of animals, lead me to conclude that it must have been during, or not long after, the occupation of Britain by the Romans. When they finally withdrew, and even before that time, the Saxons came over and ravaged the eastern portions of the country with fire and sword, as did the Danes at a later period. It seems probable, therefore, that this cave may take us back to a very early date. Its situation, on the highest point of Thanet, was probably the site of a village, very likely surrounded by a wood long since laid bare by the hands of the cultivator.

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