

A change in the story of an old river, even more striking than that of the Thames, has taken place in the history of what was once an important stream further south. Before the formation of the Straits of Dover, the solid land of England, formed of Cretaceous and Eocene strata, extended far south into what is now the English Channel. The Isle of Wight still exists as an outlying fragment of that land. At that time the Nine Barrow Chalk Downs, north of Weymouth Bay and Purbeck, were directly joined as a continuous ridge with the Downs that cross the Isle of Wight from the Needles to Culver Cliff. Old Harry and his Wife, off the end of Nine Barrow Downs, and the Needles, off the Isle of Wight, are small outlying relics, left by the denudation of the long range of Downs that once joined the Isle of Wight to the so-called Isle of Purbeck, and of the land that lay still farther south of Portland Bill the Isle of Wight and Beachy Head.

North of this old land, the Frome, which rises in the Cretaceous hills east of Beaminster, still runs, and, much diminished, discharges its waters into Poole Harbour. But in older times the Solent formed part of its valley, where, swollen by its affluents, the Stour, the Avon, the Test, and the Itchin, it must have formed a large river, which, by great subsequent denudations and changes in the level of the land, has resulted in the synclinal hollow through which the semi-estuarine waters of the Solent now flow.¹

The same kind of argument that has been applied

¹ See Mr. T. Codrington 'On the Superficial Deposits of the South of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.' *Quart. Jour. Geol. Soc.* 1870, vol. xxvi., p. 528, and Mr. John Evans, 'Stone Implements,' Chap. XXV.