

CHAPTER XXXII.

PRIMEVAL MAN.

THE history of our race, traced back a few thousand years, loses itself in traditions and myths. We come down out of a cloud of obscurity, in which we can just discern the rude forms of men clad in skins, frequenting the caves of wild beasts, fashioning rude pottery, and practicing in the chase with the primeval bow and arrow. Out of the haze which hangs over the verge of antiquity come sounds of conflict in arms, pæans of peace, hymns to religion, and the hum of barbaric industry.

Our written history does not extend back to the origin of man. The Mosaic records, which are undoubtedly the oldest of our authentic documents, represent the western portion of Asia as swarming with a population tolerably advanced in the arts at a period two or three thousand years antecedent to our era. There was, consequently, a long interval of human history still anterior to this date. What destinies befell our race—how did they live, whither did they wander, during that prolonged infancy of which—Revelation aside—we have no other information than such as we have gleaned of the Mastodon, the Megatherium, or the Zeuglodon?

The quickened intellectual activity of the modern age has started new and interesting inquiries in this direction. There are no questions which more profoundly interest us than the history of primeval man. The investigation has been pushed far beyond the limits of the most ancient written documents. It has passed over the remoter domain of