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A Child's History of England

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A CHILD'S HISTORY OF ENGLAND

THIS

CHILD'S HISTORY OF ENGLAND

Is Dedicated

TO MY OWN DEAR CHILDREN,

WHOM I HOPE IT MAY HELP, BYE-AND-BYE,
TO READ WITH INTEREST LARGER AND BETTER
BOOKS ON THE SAME SUBJECT.

Christmas, 1851

CHAPTER 1

Ancient England and the Romans

If you look at a Map of the World, you will see, in the left-hand upper corner of the Eastern Hemisphere, two Islands lying in the sea. They are England and Scotland, and Ireland. England and Scotland form the greater part of these Islands. Ireland is the next in size. The little neighbouring islands, which are so small upon the Map as to be mere dots, are chiefly little bits of Scotland – broken off, I dare say, in the course of a great length of time, by the power of the restless water.

In the old days, a long, long while ago, these Islands were in the same place, and the stormy sea roared round them, just as it roars now. But the sea was not alive, then, with great ships and brave sailors, sailing to and from all parts of the world. It was very lonely. The Islands lay solitary, in the great expanse of water. The foaming waves dashed against their cliffs, and the bleak winds blew over their forests; but the winds and waves brought no adventurers to land upon the Islands, and the savage Islanders knew nothing of the rest of the world, and the rest of the world knew nothing of them.

It is supposed that the Phoenicians, who were an ancient people, famous for carrying on trade, came in ships to these Islands, and found that they produced tin and lead; both very useful things, as you know, and both produced upon the sea-coast. The Phoenicians traded with the Islanders for these metals, and gave the Islanders some other useful things in exchange. The Islanders were, at first, poor savages, going almost naked, or only dressed in the rough skins of beasts, and stain-

ing their bodies with coloured earths and the juices of plants. But the Phoenicians, sailing over to the opposite coasts of France and Belgium, and saying to the people there, 'We have been to those white cliffs across the water, which you can see in fine weather, and from that country, which is called Britain, we bring this tin and lead,' tempted some of the French and Belgians to come over also. These people settled themselves on the south coast of England, which is now called Kent; and, although they were a rough people too, they taught the savage Britons some useful arts, and improved that part of the Islands. It is probable that other people came over from Spain to Ireland, and settled there.

Thus, by little and little, strangers became mixed with the Islanders, and the savage Britons grew into a wild, bold people; hardy, brave, and strong.

The whole country was covered with forests, and swamps. The greater part of it was very misty and cold. There were no roads, no bridges, no streets and no houses. A town was nothing but a collection of straw-covered huts, hidden in a thick wood, with a ditch all round, and a low wall, made of mud, or the trunks of trees placed one upon another. The people planted little or no corn, but lived upon the flesh of their flocks and cattle. They made no coins, but used metal rings for money. They were clever in basket-work, and they could make a coarse kind of cloth, and some very bad earthenware. But in building fortresses they were much more clever.

They made boats of basket-work, covered with the skins of animals, but seldom, if ever, ventured far from the shore. They made swords, of copper mixed with tin; but, these swords were of an awkward shape, and so soft that a heavy blow would bend one. They made light shields, short pointed daggers, and spears – which they jerked back after they had thrown them at an enemy, by a long strip of leather fastened to the stem. The butt-end was a rattle, to frighten

an enemy's horse. The ancient Britons, being divided into as many as thirty or forty tribes, each commanded by its own little king, were constantly fighting with one another.

They were very fond of horses. They could break them in and manage them wonderfully well. The horses understood, and obeyed, every word of command; and would stand still by themselves, in all the din and noise of battle, while their masters went to fight on foot. The Britons could not have succeeded in their most remarkable art, without the aid of these sensible and trusty animals. The art I mean, is the construction and management of war-chariots for which they have ever been celebrated in history. Each of the best sort of these chariots, not quite breast high in front, and open at the back, contained one man to drive, and two or three others to fight – all standing up. The horses who drew them were so well trained, that they would tear, at full gallop, over the most stony ways; dashing down their masters' enemies beneath their hoofs, and cutting them to pieces with the blades of swords, or scythes, which were fastened to the wheels for that cruel purpose. In a moment the horses would stop, at the driver's command. The men within would leap out, deal blows about them with their swords like hail, leap on the horses, spring back into the chariots; and, as soon as they were safe, the horses tore away again.

The Britons had a strange and terrible religion, called the Religion of the Druids. It seems to have been brought over, in very early times indeed, from the opposite country of France, anciently called Gaul, and to have mixed up the worship of the Serpent, and of the Sun and Moon, with the worship of some of the Heathen Gods and Goddesses. Most of its ceremonies were kept secret by the priests, the Druids, who carried magicians' wands, and wore, each of them, about his neck, what he told the ignorant people was a Serpent's egg in a golden case. But it is certain that the Druidical ceremonies

included the sacrifice of human victims, the torture of some suspected criminals, and, on particular occasions, even the burning alive, in immense wicker cages, of a number of men and animals together. The Druid Priests had some kind of veneration for the Oak, and for the mistletoe – the same plant that we hang up in houses at Christmas Time now – when its white berries grew upon the Oak. They met together in dark woods, which they called Sacred Groves.

These Druids built great Temples and altars, open to the sky, fragments of some of which are yet remaining. Stonehenge, on Salisbury Plain, in Wiltshire, is the most extraordinary of these. Three curious stones, called Kits Coty House, on Bluebell Hill, near Maidstone, in Kent, form another. We know, from examination of the great blocks of which such buildings are made, that they could not have been raised without the aid of some ingenious machines. I should not wonder if the Druids kept the people out of sight while they made these buildings, and then pretended that they built them by magic. They were very powerful, and very much believed in, and as they made and executed the laws, and paid no taxes, I don't wonder that they liked their trade.

Such was the improved condition of the ancient Britons, fifty-five years before the birth of Our Saviour, when the Romans, under their great General, Julius Caesar, were masters of all the rest of the known world. Julius Caesar had then just conquered Gaul; and hearing, in Gaul, a good deal about the opposite Island with the white cliffs, and about the bravery of the Britons who inhabited it, he resolved, as he was so near, to come and conquer Britain next.

So, Julius Caesar came sailing over to this Island of ours, with eighty vessels and twelve thousand men. He expected to conquer Britain easily: but it was not such easy work as he supposed – for the bold Britons fought most bravely; and, what with not having his horse-soldiers with him (for they had been driven back by a storm),

and what with having some of his vessels dashed to pieces by a high tide after they were drawn ashore, he ran great risk of being totally defeated. However, for once that the bold Britons beat him, he beat them twice; though not so soundly but that he was very glad to accept their proposals of peace, and go away.

But, in the spring of the next year, he came back; this time, with eight hundred vessels and thirty thousand men. The British tribes chose, as their general-in-chief, a Briton, whose name is supposed to have been Caswallon. A brave general he was, and well he and his soldiers fought the Roman army! However, brave Caswallon had the worst of it, on the whole; though he and his men always fought like lions. As the other British chiefs were jealous of him, and were always quarrelling with him, and with one another, he gave up, and proposed peace. Julius Caesar was very glad to grant peace easily, and to go away again with all his remaining ships and men. He had expected to find pearls in Britain, and he may have found a few for anything I know; but, at all events, he found delicious oysters, and I am sure he found tough Britons – of whom, I dare say, he made the same complaint as Napoleon Bonaparte the great French General did, eighteen hundred years afterwards, when he said they were such unreasonable fellows that they never knew when they were beaten. They never *did* know, I believe, and never will.

Nearly a hundred years passed on, and all that time, there was peace in Britain. The Britons improved their towns and mode of life: became more civilised, travelled, and learnt a great deal from the Gauls and Romans. At last, the Roman Emperor, Claudius, sent Aulus Plautius, a skilful general, with a mighty force, to subdue the Island, and shortly afterwards arrived himself. They did little; and Ostorius Scapula, another general, came. Some of the British Chiefs of Tribes submitted. Others resolved to fight to the death. Of these brave men, the bravest was Caractacus, or Caradoc, who gave battle

to the Romans, with his army, among the mountains of North Wales. 'This day,' said he to his soldiers, 'decides the fate of Britain! Your liberty, or your eternal slavery, dates from this hour.' On hearing these words, his men, with a great shout, rushed upon the Romans. But the strong Roman swords and armour were too much for the weaker British weapons in close conflict. The Britons lost the day. The brave Caractacus was betrayed into the hands of the Romans by his false and base stepmother: and they carried him, and all his family, in triumph to Rome. But a great man will be great in misfortune, great in prison, great in chains. His noble air, and dignified endurance of distress, so touched the Roman people who thronged the streets to see him, that he and his family were restored to freedom.

Still, the Britons *would not* yield. They rose again and again, and died by thousands, sword in hand. They rose, on every possible occasion. Suetonius, another Roman general, came, and stormed the Island of Anglesey, which was supposed to be sacred, and he burnt the Druids in their own wicker cages, by their own fires. But, even while he was in Britain, with his victorious troops, the Britons rose. Because Boadicea, a British queen, the widow of the King of the Norfolk and Suffolk people, resisted the plundering of her property by the Romans who were settled in England, she was scourged, by order of Catus a Roman officer; and her two daughters were shamefully insulted in her presence, and her husband's relations were made slaves. To avenge this injury, the Britons rose, with all their might and rage. They drove Catus into Gaul; they laid the Roman possessions waste; they forced the Romans out of London, then a poor little town; they hanged, burnt, crucified, and slew by the sword, seventy thousand Romans in a few days. Suetonius strengthened his army, and advanced to give them battle. They strengthened their army, and desperately attacked his. Before the first charge of the Britons was made, Boadicea, in a war-chariot, with her fair hair streaming in

the wind, and her injured daughters lying at her feet, drove among the troops, and cried to them for vengeance on their oppressors. The Britons fought to the last; but they were vanquished with great slaughter, and the unhappy queen took poison.

Still, the spirit of the Britons was not broken. When Suetonius left the country, they fell upon his troops, and retook the Island of Anglesey. Agricola came, fifteen or twenty years afterwards, and retook it once more, and devoted seven years to subduing the country, especially that part of it which is now called Scotland; but, its people, the Caledonians, resisted him at every inch of ground. They fought the bloodiest battles with him; they killed their very wives and children, to prevent his making prisoners of them; they fell, fighting, in such great numbers that certain hills in Scotland are yet supposed to be vast heaps of stones piled up above their graves. Hadrian came, thirty years afterwards, and still they resisted him. Severus came, nearly a hundred years afterwards, and they worried his great army like dogs, and rejoiced to see them die, by thousands, in the bogs and swamps. Caracalla, the son and successor of Severus, did the most to conquer them, for a time; but not by force of arms. He knew how little that would do. He yielded up a quantity of land to the Caledonians, and gave the Britons the same privileges as the Romans possessed. There was peace, after this, for seventy years.

Then new enemies arose. They were the Saxons, a fierce, sea-faring people from the countries to the North of the Rhine, the great river of Germany. They began to come, in pirate ships, to the sea-coast of Gaul and Britain, and to plunder them. They were repulsed by Carausius, under whom the Britons first began to fight upon the sea. But, after this time, they renewed their ravages. A few years more, and the Scots (which was then the name for the people of Ireland), and the Picts, a northern people, began to make frequent

plundering incursions into the South of Britain. All these attacks were repeated, at intervals, during two hundred years, and through a long succession of Roman Emperors and chiefs; during all which length of time, the Britons rose against the Romans, over and over again. At last, in the days of the Roman Honorius, when the Roman power all over the world was fast declining, and when Rome wanted all her soldiers at home, the Romans abandoned all hope of conquering Britain, and went away. And still, at last, as at first, the Britons rose against them, in their old brave manner.

Five hundred years had passed, since Julius Caesar's first invasion of the Island, when the Romans departed from it for ever. In the course of that time, although they had been the cause of terrible fighting and bloodshed, they had done much to improve the condition of the Britons. They had made great military roads; they had built forts; they had taught them how to dress, and arm themselves, much better than they had ever known how to do before; they had refined the whole British way of living. Agricola had built a great wall of earth, more than seventy miles long, extending from Newcastle to beyond Carlisle, for the purpose of keeping out the Picts and Scots; Hadrian had strengthened it; Severus, finding it much in want of repair, had built it afresh of stone.

Above all, it was in the Roman time, and by means of Roman ships, that the Christian Religion was first brought into Britain, and its people first taught the great lesson that, to be good in the sight of God, they must love their neighbours as themselves, and do unto others as they would be done by. The Druids declared that it was very wicked to believe in any such thing, and cursed all the people who did believe it, very heartily. But, when the people found that they were none the better for the blessings of the Druids, and none the worse for the curses of the Druids, but, that the sun shone and the rain fell without consulting the Druids at all, they just began to

think that the Druids were mere men, and that it signified very little whether they cursed or blessed.

Thus I have come to the end of the Roman time in England. It is but little that is known of those five hundred years; but some remains of them are still found. Wells that the Romans sunk, still yield water; roads that the Romans made, form part of our highways. Traces of Roman camps overgrown with grass, and of mounds that are the burial-places of heaps of Britons, are to be seen in almost all parts of the country. Across the bleak moors of Northumberland, the wall of Severus, overrun with moss and weeds, still stretches, a strong ruin. On Salisbury Plain, Stonehenge yet stands: a monument of the earlier time when the Roman name was unknown in Britain, and when the Druids, with their best magic wands, could not have written it in the sands of the wild sea-shore.

CHAPTER 2

Ancient England under the Early Saxons

The Romans had scarcely gone away from Britain, when the Britons began to wish they had never left it. For the Picts and Scots came pouring in, over the broken and unguarded wall of Severus, in swarms. They plundered the richest towns, and killed the people; and came back so often for more booty and more slaughter, that the unfortunate Britons lived a life of terror. As if the Picts and Scots were not bad enough on land, the Saxons attacked the islanders by sea; and they quarrelled bitterly among themselves as to what prayers they ought to say, and how they ought to say them. So, altogether, the Britons were very badly off, you may believe.

They were in such distress that they sent a letter to Rome entreating help – which they called the Groans of the Britons; and in which they said, 'The barbarians chase us into the sea, the sea throws us back upon the barbarians, and we have only the hard choice left us of perishing by the sword, or perishing by the waves.' But, the Romans could not help them, for they had enough to do to defend themselves against their own enemies, who were then very fierce and strong. At last, the Britons, unable to bear their hard condition any longer, resolved to make peace with the Saxons, and to invite the Saxons to come into their country, and help them to keep out the Picts and Scots.

It was a British Prince named Vortigern who took this resolution, and who made a treaty of friendship with Hengist and Horsa, two

CHAPTER 4

England under Athelstan and the Six Boy-Kings

Athelstan, the son of Edward the Elder, succeeded that king. He reigned only fifteen years; but he remembered the glory of his grandfather, the great Alfred, and governed England well. He reduced the turbulent people of Wales, and obliged them to pay him a tribute in money, and in cattle, and to send him their best hawks and hounds. He was victorious over the Cornish men, who were not yet quite under the Saxon government. He restored such of the old laws as were good, and had fallen into disuse; made some wise new laws, and took care of the poor and weak. A strong alliance, made against him by Anlaf a Danish prince, Constantine King of the Scots, and the people of North Wales, he broke and defeated in one great battle, long famous for the vast numbers slain in it. After that, he had a quiet reign; the lords and ladies about him had leisure to become polite and agreeable; and foreign princes were glad to come on visits to the English court.

When Athelstan died, at forty-seven years old, his brother Edmund, who was only eighteen, became king. He was the first of six boy-kings.

They called him the Magnificent, because he showed a taste for improvement and refinement. But he was beset by the Danes, and had a short and troubled reign, which came to a troubled end. One night, when he was feasting in his hall, and had eaten much and drunk deep, he saw, among the company, a noted robber named

known, and were fast increasing. Hangings for the walls of rooms are known to have been sometimes made of silk, ornamented with birds and flowers in needlework. Tables and chairs were curiously carved in different woods; sometimes decorated with gold or silver; sometimes even made of those precious metals. Knives and spoons were used at table; golden ornaments were worn; dishes were made of gold and silver, brass and bone. A harp was passed round, at a feast from guest to guest; and each one usually sang or played when his turn came. The weapons of the Saxons were stoutly made, and among them was a terrible iron hammer that gave deadly blows, and was long remembered.

I pause to think with admiration, of the noble king Alfred who, in his single person, possessed all the Saxon virtues. Whom misfortune could not subdue, whom prosperity could not spoil, whose perseverance nothing could shake. Who was hopeful in defeat, and generous in success. Who loved justice, freedom, truth, and knowledge. Without whom, the English tongue in which I tell this story might have wanted half its meaning. As it is said that his spirit still inspires some of our best English laws, so, let you and I pray that it may animate our English hearts, at least to this – to resolve, when we see any of our fellow-creatures left in ignorance, that we will do our best to have them taught; and to tell those rulers whose duty it is to teach them, and who neglect their duty, that they have profited very little by all the years that have rolled away since the year nine hundred and one, and that they are far behind the bright example of King Alfred the Great.

chains and jewels might have hung across the streets, and no man would have touched one. He founded schools; the great desires of his heart were, to do right to all his subjects, and to leave England better, wiser, happier in all ways, than he found it. Every day he divided into certain portions, and in each portion devoted himself to a certain pursuit. That he might divide his time exactly, he had wax torches or candles made, which were notched across at regular distances, and were always kept burning. Thus, as the candles burnt down, he divided the day into notches, almost as accurately as we now divide it into hours upon the clock.

All this time, he was afflicted with a terrible unknown disease, which caused him violent and frequent pain that nothing could relieve. He bore it, like a brave good man, until he was fifty-three years old; and then, having reigned thirty years, he died. He died in the year nine hundred and one; but, long ago as that is, his fame, and the love and gratitude with which his subjects regarded him, are freshly remembered to the present hour.

In the next reign, which was the reign of Edward, The Elder, who was chosen in council to succeed, a nephew of King Alfred troubled the country by trying to obtain the throne. The Danes in the East of England took part with this usurper and there was hard fighting; but, the King, with the assistance of his sister, gained the day, and reigned in peace for four and twenty years. He gradually extended his power over the whole of England, and so the Seven Kingdoms were united into one.

When England thus became one kingdom, ruled over by one Saxon king, the Saxons had been settled in the country more than four hundred and fifty years. Great changes had taken place in its customs during that time. The Saxons were still greedy eaters and great drinkers, and their feasts were often of a noisy and drunken kind; but many new comforts and even elegances had become

the Danish camp, defeated the Danes with great slaughter, and besieged them for fourteen days to prevent their escape. But, being as merciful as he was good and brave, he then, instead of killing them, proposed peace; on condition that they should altogether depart from that Western part of England, and settle in the East; and that Guthrum should become a Christian. And Guthrum was an honourable chief; for, ever afterwards he was loyal and faithful to the king. The Danes under him worked like honest men. They ploughed, and sowed, and reaped, and led good honest English lives. And I hope that English travellers, benighted at the doors of Danish cottages, often went in for shelter until morning; and that Danes and Saxons sat by the red fire, friends, talking of King Alfred the Great.

All the Danes were not like these under Guthrum; for, after some years, more of them came over, in the old plundering and burning way – among them a fierce pirate of the name of Hastings, who had the boldness to sail up the Thames to Gravesend, with eighty ships. For three years, there was a war with these Danes; and there was a famine in the country, too, and a plague. But King Alfred, whose mighty heart never failed him, built large ships nevertheless, with which to pursue the pirates on the sea; and he encouraged his soldiers, by his brave example, to fight valiantly against them on the shore. At last, he drove them all away; and then there was repose in England.

As great and good in peace, as he was great and good in war, King Alfred never rested from his labours to improve his people. He loved to talk with clever men, and with travellers from foreign countries, and to write down what they told him, for his people to read. He had studied Latin, and now another of his labours was, to translate Latin books into the English-Saxon tongue, that his people might be interested, and improved by their contents. He made just laws, that they might live more happily and freely; it was a common thing to say that under the great King Alfred, garlands of golden



Alfred in the Neatherd's Cottage

Here, King Alfred, while the Danes sought him far and near, was left alone one day, by the cowherd's wife, to watch some cakes which she put to bake upon the hearth. But, being at work upon his bow and arrows, and thinking deeply of his poor unhappy subjects whom the Danes chased through the land, his noble mind forgot the cakes, and they were burnt. 'What!' said the cowherd's wife, who little thought she was scolding the King, 'you will be ready enough to eat them by-and-by, and yet you cannot watch them, idle dog?'

At length, the Devonshire men made head against a new host of Danes; killed their chief, and captured their flag; on which was represented the likeness of a Raven – a very fit bird for a thievish army like that, I think. The loss of their standard troubled the Danes greatly, for they believed it to be enchanted – woven by the three daughters of one father in a single afternoon – and they had a story among themselves that when they were victorious in battle, the Raven stretched his wings and seemed to fly; and that when they were defeated, he would droop. He had good reason to droop, now, if he could have done anything half so sensible; for, King Alfred joined the Devonshire men; made a camp with them on a piece of firm ground in the midst of a bog in Somersetshire; and prepared for vengeance on the Danes, and the deliverance of his oppressed people.

But, first, as it was important to know how numerous those pestilent Danes were, and how they were fortified, King Alfred, being a good musician, disguised himself as a minstrel, and went, with his harp, to the Danish camp. He played and sang in the very tent of Guthrum the Danish leader, and entertained the Danes as they caroused. While he seemed to think of nothing but his music, he was watchful of their tents, their arms, their discipline, everything that he desired to know. And right soon did this great king entertain them to a different tune; for, summoning all his true followers to meet him at an appointed place, he put himself at their head, marched on

CHAPTER 3

England under the Good Saxon, Alfred and Edward the Elder

Alfred the Great was a young man, three-and-twenty years of age, when he became king. Twice in his childhood, he had been taken to Rome; and, once, he had stayed for some time in Paris. Learning, however, was so little cared for, then, that at twelve years old he had not been taught to read. But he had an excellent mother; and, one day, this lady, whose name was Osburga, happened, as she was sitting among her sons, to read a book of Saxon poetry. The book was what is called 'illuminated,' with beautiful bright letters, richly painted. The brothers admiring it very much, their mother said, 'I will give it to that one of you four princes who first learns to read.' Alfred sought out a tutor that very day, applied himself to learn with great diligence, and soon won the book. He was proud of it, all his life.

This great king, in the first year of his reign, fought nine battles with the Danes. He made some treaties with them too, by which the false Danes swore they would quit the country. They pretended that they had taken a very solemn oath; but they cared little for it, for they thought nothing of breaking oaths, and coming back again to fight, plunder, and burn, as usual. One fatal winter, in the fourth year of King Alfred's reign, they spread themselves in great numbers over the whole of England; and so dispersed and routed the King's soldiers that the King was left alone, and was obliged to disguise himself as a common peasant, and to take refuge in the cottage of one of his cowherds who did not know his face.

wandering about the streets, crying for bread; and that this beggar-woman was the poisoning English queen. It was, indeed, Edburga; and so she died, without a shelter for her wretched head.

On the death of Beortric, so unhappily poisoned by mistake, Egbert succeeded to the throne of Wessex; conquered some of the other monarchs of the seven kingdoms; added their territories to his own; and, for the first time, called the country over which he ruled, England.

And now, new enemies arose, who, for a long time, troubled England sorely. These were the Northmen, the people of Denmark and Norway, whom the English called the Danes. They were a war-like people, quite at home upon the sea; very daring and cruel. They came over in ships, and plundered and burned wheresoever they landed. In the four following short reigns, of Ethelwulf, and his sons, Ethelbald, Ethelbert, and Ethelred, they came back, over and over again, burning and plundering, and laying England waste. In the last-mentioned reign, they seized Edmund, King of East England, and bound him to a tree. Then, they proposed to him that he should change his religion; but he, being a good Christian, steadily refused. Upon that, they beat him, made cowardly jests upon him, shot arrows at him, and, finally, struck off his head. It is impossible to say whose head they might have struck off next, but for the death of King Ethelred from a wound he had received in fighting against them, and the succession to his throne of the best and wisest king that ever lived in England.

said they were Christians too. Augustine built a little church on the ground now occupied by the beautiful cathedral of Canterbury. Sebert, the King's nephew, built on a muddy marshy place near London, where there had been a temple to Apollo, a church dedicated to Saint Peter, which is now Westminster Abbey. And, in London itself, on the foundation of a temple to Diana, he built another little church which has risen up, since that old time, to be Saint Paul's.

After the death of Ethelbert, Edwin, King of Northumbria, held a great council to consider whether he and his people should all be Christians or not. It was decided that they should be. Coifi, the chief priest of the old religion, made a great speech; he told the people that he had found out the old gods to be impostors. 'I am quite satisfied of it,' he said. 'Look at me! I have been serving them all my life, and they have done nothing for me!' When this singular priest had finished speaking, he hastily armed himself with sword and lance, mounted a war-horse, rode at a furious gallop in sight of all the people to the temple, and flung his lance against it as an insult. From that time, the Christian religion spread itself among the Saxons, and became their faith.

The next very famous prince was Egbert. He lived about a hundred and fifty years afterwards, and claimed to have a better right to the throne of Wessex than Beortric, another Saxon prince who was at the head of that kingdom, and who married Edburga. This Queen Edburga was a handsome murderess, who poisoned people when they offended her. One day, she mixed a cup of poison for a certain noble; but her husband drank of it too, by mistake, and died. Upon this, the people revolted, in great crowds; and running to the palace, and thundering at the gates, cried, 'Down with the wicked queen, who poisons men!' They drove her out of the country. When years had passed away, some travellers came home from Italy, and said that in the town of Pavia they had seen a ragged beggar-woman

Saxon chiefs. Hengist and Horsa drove out the Picts and Scots; and Vortigern made no opposition to their settling themselves in that part of England which is called the Isle of Thanet. But Hengist had a beautiful daughter named Rowena; and when, at a feast, she filled a golden goblet to the brim with wine, and gave it to Vortigern, the King fell in love with her. My opinion is, that the cunning Hengist meant him to do so, in order that the Saxons might have greater influence with him.

At any rate, they were married; and, long afterwards, whenever the King was angry with the Saxons Rowena would put her beautiful arms round his neck, and softly say, 'Dear King, they are my people! Be favourable to them, as you loved that Saxon girl who gave you the golden goblet of wine at the feast!' And, really, I don't see how the King could help himself.

In, and long after, the days of Vortigern, fresh bodies of Saxons, under various chiefs, came pouring into Britain. One body, conquering the Britons in the East, and settling there, called their kingdom Essex; another body settled in the West, and called their kingdom Wessex; the Northfolk, or Norfolk people, established themselves in one place; the Southfolk, or Suffolk people, established themselves in another; and gradually seven kingdoms or states arose in England, which were called the Saxon Heptarchy. The poor Britons, falling back before these crowds of fighting men whom they had innocently invited over as friends, retired into Wales and the adjacent country; into Devonshire, and into Cornwall. Those parts of England long remained unconquered.

Kent is the most famous of the seven Saxon kingdoms, because the Christian religion was preached to the Saxons there by Augustine, a monk from Rome. King Ethelbert, of Kent, was soon converted; and the moment he said he was a Christian, his courtiers all said *they* were Christians; after which, ten thousand of his subjects