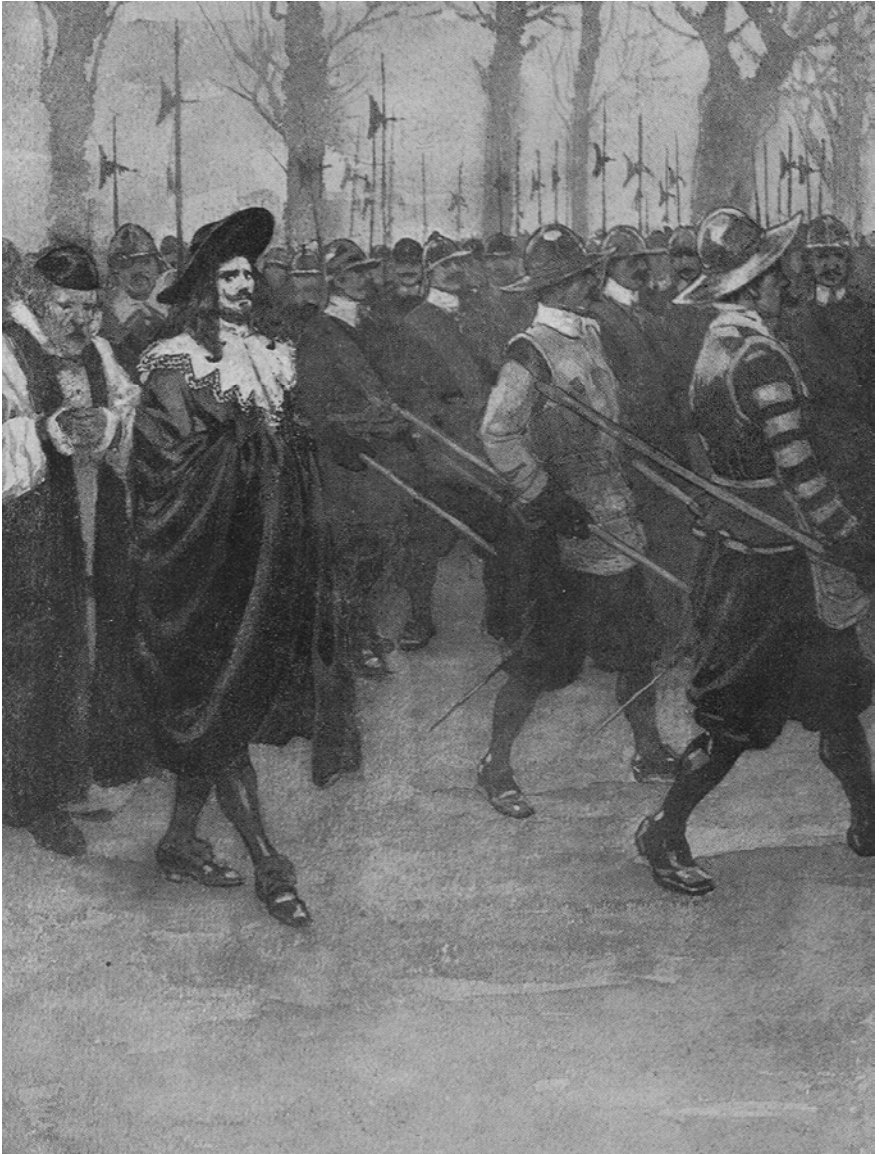


OUR ISLAND STORY



CHARLES THE KING WALKED FOR THE LAST TIME THROUGH THE STREETS OF LONDON

OUR ISLAND STORY

**A HISTORY OF ENGLAND
FOR BOYS AND GIRLS**

BY H. E. MARSHALL

WITH PICTURES

BY A. S. FORREST



**YESTERDAY'S CLASSICS
CHAPEL HILL, NORTH CAROLINA**

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TO
SPEN AND VEDA

HOW THIS BOOK CAME TO BE WRITTEN

“What a funny letter, Daddy,” said Spen, as he looked at the narrow envelope which had just arrived, and listened to the crackle of the thin paper.

“Do you think so?” said Daddy. “It is from home.”

“From home!” said Spen, laughing, “why, Daddy, this is home.”

“I mean from the old country, Spen.”

“The old country, Daddy?” said Veda, leaving her dolls and coming to lean against her father’s knee, “the old country? What do you mean?”

“I mean, ‘the little island in the west’ to which we belong, and where I used to live,” said Daddy.

“But this is an island, a great big one, Mother says, so how can we belong to a little island?” asked Spen.

“Well, we do—at least, the big island and the little island belong to each other.”

“Oh, Daddy, do ’splain yourself, you are not ’splaining yourself at all,” said Veda.

“Well,” said Daddy with a sigh, “long, long ago——”

“Oh!” said Spen, “it’s a story,” and he settled himself to listen.

“Yes,” said Daddy, “it’s a story, and a very long one, too. I think I must ask some one else to tell it to you.”

And Daddy did ask some one else, and here is the story as it was told to Spen and Veda. I hope it will interest not only the children in this big island, but some of the children in “the little island in the west,” too.

I must tell you, though, that this is not a history lesson, but a story-book. There are many facts in school histories, that seem to children to belong to lessons only. Some of these you will not find here. But you will find some stories that are not to be found in your school books,—stories which wise people say are only fairy tales and not history. But it seems to me that they are part of Our Island Story, and ought not to be forgotten, any more than those stories about which there is no doubt.

So, although I hope you will not put this book beside your school books, but quite at the other end of the shelf, beside *Robinson Crusoe* and *A Noab’s Ark Geography*, I hope, too, that it will help you to like your school history books better than ever, and that, when you grow up, you will want to read for yourselves the beautiful big histories which have helped me to write this little book for little people.

Then, when you find out how much has been left untold in this little book, do not be cross, but remember that, when you were very small, you would not have been able to understand things that seem quite simple and very interesting to you as you grow older. Remember, too, that I was not trying to teach you, but only to tell a story.

H. E. MARSHALL.

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CHAPTER I

THE STORIES OF ALBION AND BRUTUS

ONCE upon a time there was a giant called Neptune. When he was quite a tiny boy, Neptune loved the sea. All day long he played in it, swimming, diving, and laughing gleefully as the waves dashed over him.

As he grew older he came to know and love the sea so well that the sea and the waves loved him too, and acknowledged him to be their king. At last people said he was not only king of the waves, but god of the sea.

Neptune had a very beautiful wife who was called Amphitrite. He had also many sons. As each son became old enough to reign, Neptune made him king over an island.

Neptune's fourth son was called Albion. When it came to his turn to receive a kingdom, a great council was called to decide upon an island for him.

Now Neptune and Amphitrite loved Albion more than any of their other children. This made it very difficult to choose which island should be his.

OUR ISLAND STORY

The mermaids and mermen, as the wonderful people who live in the sea are called, came from all parts of the world with news of beautiful islands. But after hearing about them, Neptune and Amphitrite would shake their heads and say, "No, that is not good enough for Albion."

At last a little mermaid swam into the pink and white coral cave in which the council was held. She was more beautiful than any mermaid who had yet come to the council. Her eyes were merry and honest, and they were blue as the sky and the sea. Her hair was as yellow as fine gold, and in her cheeks a lovely pink came and went. When she spoke, her voice sounded as clear as a bell and as soft as the whisper of the waves, as they ripple upon the shore.

"O Father Neptune," she said, "let Albion come to my island. It is a beautiful little island. It lies like a gem in the bluest of waters. There the trees and the grass are green, the cliffs are white and the sands are golden. There the sun shines and the birds sing. It is a land of beauty. Mountains and valleys, broad lakes and swift-flowing rivers, all are there. Let Albion come to my island."

"Where is this island?" said Neptune and Amphitrite both at once. They thought it must indeed be a beautiful land if it were only half as lovely as the little mermaid said.

"Oh, come, and I will show it to you," replied she. Then she swam away in a great hurry to show

ALBION AND BRUTUS

her beautiful island, and Neptune, Amphitrite, and all the mermaids and mermen followed.

It was a wonderful sight to see them as they swam along. Their white arms gleamed in the sunshine, and their golden hair floated out over the water like fine seaweed. Never before had so many of the sea-folk been gathered together at one place, and the noise of their tails flapping through the water brought all the little fishes and great sea monsters out, eager to know what was happening. They swam and swam until they came to the little green island with the white cliffs and yellow sands.

As soon as it came in sight, Neptune raised himself on a big wave, and when he saw the little island lying before him, like a beautiful gem in the blue water, just as the mermaid had said, he cried out in joy, "This is the island of my love. Albion shall rule it and Albion it shall be called."

So Albion took possession of the little island, which until then had been called Samothea, and he changed its name to Albion, as Neptune had said should be done.

For seven years Albion reigned over his little island. At the end of that time he was killed in a fight with the hero Hercules. This was a great grief to Neptune and Amphitrite. But because of the love they bore to their son Albion, they continued to love and watch over the little green island which was called by his name.

For many years after the death of Albion the

OUR ISLAND STORY

little island had no ruler. At last, one day there came sailing from the far-off city of Troy a prince called Brutus. He, seeing the fair island, with white cliffs and golden sands, landed with all his mighty men of war. There were many giants in the land in those days, but Brutus fought and conquered them. He made himself king, not only over Albion, but over all the islands which lay around. He called them the kingdom of Britain or Britannia after his own name, Brutus, and Albion he called Great Britain because it was the largest of the islands.

Although after this the little island was no longer called Albion, Neptune still loved it. When he grew old and had no more strength to rule, he gave his sceptre to the islands called Britannia, for we know—

“Britannia rules the waves.”

This is a story of many thousand years ago. Some people think it is only a fairy tale. But however that may be, the little island is still sometimes called Albion, although it is nearly always called Britain.

In this book you will find the story of the people of Britain. The story tells how they grew to be a great people, till the little green island set in the lonely sea was no longer large enough to contain them all. Then they sailed away over the blue waves to far-distant countries. Now the people of the little island possess lands all over the world. These lands form the empire of Greater Britain.

ALBION AND BRUTUS

Many of these lands are far, far larger than the little island itself. Yet the people who live in them still look back lovingly to the little island, from which they or their fathers came, and call it "Home."

CHAPTER II

THE COMING OF THE ROMANS

HUNDREDS of years passed after Brutus conquered Albion and changed its name to Britain, during which time many kings and queens reigned over the island. Our great poet Shakespeare has written about one of these kings who was called King Lear. Some day you must read his story.

There were many good and wise rulers among these ancient British kings. But it would take too long to tell of them, so we must pass on to the time when another great warrior heard of the little lonely island and came to conquer it.

The name of this great warrior was Julius Cæsar. He was a Roman. At that time the Romans were a very powerful people. They called themselves the masters of the world.

It is true they were very clever. They had taught themselves how to fight, how to make swords and armour, and how to build fortresses, better than any of the peoples who lived then. So it happened that the Romans generally won the victory over all who fought against them.

THE COMING OF THE ROMANS

But they were a very greedy people and, as soon as they heard of a new country, they wanted to conquer it and call it part of the Roman Empire.

Julius Cæsar had been fighting in Gaul, or France as we now call it. While there, he heard of the little island with white cliffs over the sea. He was told that the people were very big and brave and fierce. He also heard that it was a rich land full of tin, lead, and other useful metals, and that the shores were strewn with precious pearls. So he resolved to conquer this land and add it to the Roman Empire.

Cæsar gathered together about eighty ships, twelve thousand men, and a great many horses. These he thought would be enough with which to conquer the wild men of Britain. One fine day he set sail from France and soon came in sight of the island. The Britons in some way or other had heard of his coming and had gathered to meet him. As he drew near, Cæsar saw with surprise that the whole shore was covered with men ready for battle. He also saw that the place which he had chosen for landing was not good, for there were high, steep cliffs upon which the Britons could stand and shower darts upon his soldiers. So he turned his ships and sailed along the coast until he came to a place where the shore was flat.

The Roman ships were called galleys. They had sails, but were also moved by oars. The rowers sat in long lines down each side of the galley. Sometimes there were two or three tiers of them sitting one above the other. These rowers were

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THE SHORE WAS COVERED WITH MEN READY FOR BATTLE

generally slaves and worked in chains. They were often soldiers who had been taken prisoner in war, or wicked men who were punished for their misdeeds by being made to row in these galleys.

It was a dreadful life. The work was very hard, and in a storm if the vessel was wrecked, as often happened, the poor galley slaves were almost sure to be drowned, because their heavy chains prevented them from swimming.

As the Roman galleys sailed along the coast, the British warriors with their horses and war chariots followed on land.

The war chariots of the British were very terrible. They were like light carts and held several

THE COMING OF THE ROMANS

men; one to drive the horses and the others to fight. On either side, from the centre of the wheels, swords stuck out. As the wheels went round these swords cut down, killed, or wounded every one who came within reach. The Britons trained their horses so well, that they would rush madly into battle or stand stock still in a moment. It was a fearful sight to see these war chariots charge an enemy.

After sailing along the coast a little way, Cæsar found a good place at which to land, and turned his vessels inshore. But the great galleys required so much water in which to sail that they could not come quite close to land.

Seeing this, Cæsar told his soldiers to jump into the water. But the soldiers hesitated, for the Britons had rushed into the water to meet them and the Romans did not like the idea of fighting in the sea.

Although the Romans were very good soldiers, they were not such good sailors as might have been expected. They did not love the water as the Britons did.

These fierce “barbarians,” as the Romans called the Britons, urging their horses into the waves, greeted the enemy with loud shouts. Every inch of the shore was known to them. They knew exactly where it was shallow and where it was deep, so they galloped through the water without fear.

Suddenly a brave Roman, when he saw how the soldiers hesitated, seized a standard and leaped

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overboard crying, "Leap forth now, soldiers, if you will not betray your ensign to the enemy, for I surely will bear myself as is my duty."

The Romans did not have flags such as we have in our army. Their standard was an eagle which was carried upon a pole. The eagle was of gold, or gilded to look like gold. Wherever the eagle led, there the soldiers followed, for it was the emblem of their honour, and they fought for and guarded it as their most precious possession.

So now, when the Roman soldiers saw their standard in the midst of the enemy, they followed with all haste. Their fear was great lest it should be taken. It was counted as a terrible disgrace to the Romans if they returned from battle without their standard. Death was better than disgrace, so they leaped into the water to meet the fierce Britons.

A fearful fight followed. The Romans could not keep their proper order, neither could they find firm footing. Weighed down with their heavy armour, they sank in the sand or slipped upon the rocks. All the while the Britons showered darts upon them and struck at them fiercely with their battle-axes and swords.

The Britons were very brave, but they had not learned the best ways of fighting as the Romans had. So after a terrible struggle the Romans reached the land. On shore they formed in close ranks and charged the Britons.

The Britons in their turn charged the Romans with their war chariots. The horses tore wildly along,

THE COMING OF THE ROMANS

neighing and champing their bits, and trampling underfoot those who were not cut down with the swords on the wheels. As they galloped, the fighting men in the cars threw darts and arrows everywhere among the enemy. When they were in the thickest of the fray the horses would suddenly stand still. Then the soldiers, springing out of the chariot, would fight fiercely for a few minutes with their battle-axes, killing every one within reach. Again they would leap into the car, the horses would start forward and once more gallop wildly through the ranks of the enemy, leaving a track of dead behind them wherever they passed. But in spite of all their wild bravery the Britons were beaten at last and fled before the Romans.

Thus Cæsar first landed upon the shores of Britain. But so many of his soldiers were killed and wounded that he was glad to make peace with these brave islanders.

He sailed away again in such of his ships as had not been destroyed. For fierce storms had arisen a few days after his landing and wrecked many of his vessels.

Cæsar did not gain much glory from this fight. Indeed, when he went away, it seemed rather as if he were fleeing from a foe than leaving a conquered land.

CHAPTER III

THE ROMANS COME AGAIN

CÆSAR must have felt that he had not really conquered the Britons for, as soon as he arrived safely in France, he began to gather together another army. In the spring of the following year, he again sailed over to Britain. He came now not with eighty, but with eight hundred ships and many thousands of men. But this time there was no one to meet him when he landed. The Britons indeed had heard of his coming, and had gathered in great force to resist him. But, when they saw such a huge number of ships, their hearts were filled with fear, and they fled into the forests and hills to hide.

It must have been a wonderful sight, in the eyes of the ancient Britons, to see so many ships sailing on the sea all at once. They knew scarcely anything of the great lands which lay beyond the blue sea surrounding their little island. They had not even dreamed that the whole world contained as many ships as they now saw. So it was not surprising that at first they were afraid and fled. But they did not lose courage for long. They soon returned and many battles were fought.

THE ROMANS COME AGAIN

The Romans seemed to think that they won all these battles, but the Britons were not at all sure of it. Certainly a great many people on both sides were killed. If the Britons had been less brave than they were, they would have been very badly beaten, for the Romans wore strong armour and carried shields made of steel, while the Britons had little armour, if any at all, and their shields were made of wood covered with skins of animals. The Roman swords too were strong and sharp, while those of the Britons were made of copper. Copper is a very soft metal, and swords made of it are easily bent and so made useless.

The Britons at this time were divided into many tribes, each following their own chief. They often used to quarrel among themselves. Now, however, they joined together against their great enemy and chose a brave man, called Cassivellaunus, to be their leader.

Cassivellaunus led the Britons so well, and Cæsar found it such a difficult task to conquer them, that at last he was glad to make peace again and sail back to his own country.

He did not like to go away as if he had been defeated, so he sent messengers to the British chief, saying, "If you let me take some of your warriors back to Rome as a sign that you are now Roman subjects and will not rebel against me, I will go away."

The Britons were only too glad to be rid of Cæsar and his soldiers at any price. They gave him

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some British soldiers to take back to Rome, and even promised to pay him a certain sum of money every year.

But it almost seemed as if Neptune had been doing battle for his beloved Albion with his winds and waves. For while Cæsar had been fighting the Britons, such fierce storms arose that his ships were thrown upon the rocky shore and many of them dashed to pieces. Indeed so few of his ships remained fit to put to sea again that Cæsar could not take all his soldiers away at one time. As many went as could, and the ships came back again for the others.

Cæsar did not leave any soldiers in Britain at all, so it does not seem as if he had really conquered the land. These things happened in the year 54 B.C., that is, fifty-four years before Christ was born. All Christian lands count time from the year in which Christ was born, because His coming is the most wonderful thing which has ever happened. Anything that took place before Christ was born is said to be in such and such a year B.C. Everything which has taken place since then is said to be A.D. or Anno Domini, which means, "in the year of our Lord." For instance, this book is written in the year 1905 A.D. or 1905 years after the birth of Christ.

CHAPTER IV

HOW CALIGULA CONQUERED BRITAIN, AND HOW CARACTACUS REFUSED TO BE CONQUERED

AFTER the second coming of Cæsar, years passed during which the Romans left the Britons in peace. But they had by no means forgotten about the little green island in the blue sea.

Julius Cæsar had been dead many years when a Roman emperor called Caligula said he would go to Britain and thoroughly conquer the island. He did not mean to land and fight in one small part of it as Julius Cæsar had done. He meant to march over the island, north, south, east, and west, and bring it all under the power of Rome. That is what he said he was going to do. What he really did was something quite different.

He gathered a great army and marched from Italy right through France till he reached the coast. There news came to him that Guilderius, the king of Britain, had heard of his coming and had also gathered his soldiers together.

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Caligula must have been afraid when he heard that the brave Britons were ready to fight him, for this is how he conquered Britain.

He drew his soldiers up in battle array upon the shore. Then he himself went into his galley and told his sailors to row him out to sea. After they had rowed him a short way he told them to return. When he had landed again he climbed into a high seat like a pulpit, which he had built on the sands. Then he sounded a trumpet and ordered his soldiers to advance as if to battle.

But there was no enemy there. In front of the soldiers there was nothing but the blue sea and the sandy shore covered with shells. They could not fight against the waves and the sand, and the brave Britons, whom they had come to fight, were far away on the other side of the water and quite out of reach.

So the soldiers stood and wondered what to do. Then Caligula ordered them to kneel down upon the sand and gather as many shells as they could.

The first thing a Roman was taught, was to obey. So now the soldiers did as their general commanded and gathered the cockle shells which lay around in hundreds.

It must have been a curious sight to see all these strong soldiers, armed with sword, shield, and helmet, picking up shells upon the sea-shore.

When they had gathered a great quantity, Caligula made a speech. He thanked the soldiers as if they had done him some great service. He told them

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that now he had conquered the ocean and the islands in it, and that these shells were the spoils of war. He praised the soldiers for their bravery, and said that the shells should be placed in the temples of Rome in remembrance of it. Then he rewarded them richly and they marched home again.

That was how Caligula conquered Britain.

After the death of Caligula, another Roman called Claudius tried to conquer Britain. He sent generals and came himself, but he could not thoroughly subdue the Britons. A few chiefs indeed owned themselves beaten, but others would not. They would rather die than be slaves of Rome, they said.

Among those who would not yield was a brave man called Caractacus. A great many of the Britons joined him and fought under his orders. Caractacus and his men fought well and bravely, but in the end the Romans defeated them.

After many battles Caractacus chose for his camp a place on the top of a hill on the borders of Shropshire, Cheshire, and Lancashire. There he made a very strong fortress surrounded by three walls and a deep ditch. The walls were so well built that after all these long years they can still be seen quite plainly to-day.

When the Roman soldiers came to the foot of the hill, Caractacus prepared for battle. He called his soldiers together and made a speech to them. "Show yourselves to be men," he said. "To-day is either the

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beginning of Liberty or of eternal bondage. Remember how your forefathers fought against Julius Cæsar, and fight now for your homes, as they did for theirs.”

Then all the Britons called out, “We will die for our country.” The noise of their shouts was carried by the wind to the camp of the Romans. It sounded to them as if the Britons were rejoicing. The Romans feared Caractacus. They knew how brave he and his men were. They knew that it would be very difficult to take his strong fortress. Yet they felt quite sure of taking it in the end, and they wondered what cause the Britons had for rejoicing.

And it happened as the Romans expected. After fierce fighting and great slaughter on both sides the camp was taken. Caractacus, his wife and daughter, and all his brothers were made prisoner and led in chains to Rome, and there was great sorrow in Britain.

Whenever a Roman emperor returned from battle and victory, he used to have what was called a Triumph. Every one in Rome had a holiday; the streets were gay with flowers and green wreaths. The conqueror, dressed in beautiful robes and wearing a crown of bay leaves, rode through the streets. He was followed by his soldiers, servants, and friends. Then came a long train of the captives he had made during the war, with the armour, weapons, jewels, and other riches he had taken from the conquered people.

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After the war with Britain was over Claudius had a Triumph. The fame of Caractacus had already reached Rome, and when it became known that he had been taken prisoner and would walk in the Triumph there was great excitement. The people crowded into the streets eager to see this brave warrior. And although in chains he looked so proud and noble that many even of the Romans were sorry for him.

When he was brought before the Emperor and Empress, Claudius and Agrippina, he did not behave like a slave or a captive, but like the freeborn king and Briton he was.

“I am as nobly born as you,” he said proudly to Claudius. “I had men and horses, lands and great riches. Was it wonderful that I wished to keep them? You fight to gain possession of the whole world and make all men your slaves, but I fought for my own land and for freedom. Kill me now and people will think little of you: but if you grant me my life, all men will know that you are not only powerful but merciful.”

Instead of being angry, Claudius was pleased with the proud words of Caractacus. He was so pleased that he set him at liberty with his wife and all his family. But whether Caractacus ever returned to his dear country, or whether he died in that far-off land, we do not know. We do not hear anything more about him.

CHAPTER V

THE STORY OF A WARRIOR QUEEN

ALTHOUGH the Britons had lost their great general Caractacus, still they would not yield to the Roman tyrants.

Soon another brave leader arose. This leader was a woman. Her name was Boadicea, and she was a queen. She ruled over that part of the country which is now called Norfolk and Suffolk.

As I said before, the Romans were a very greedy people. They wanted to take away the freedom of Britain and make the island into a Roman province. They also wanted to get all the money and possessions which belonged to the Britons for themselves.

The husband of Boadicea knew how greedy the Romans were, and when he was about to die he became very sad. He was afraid that the Roman Emperor would rob his wife and daughters of all their money, when he was no longer there to take care of them. So, to prevent this, he made the Emperor a present of half of his money and lands,

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and gave the other half to his wife and children. Then he died happy, thinking that his dear ones would be left in peace.

But the greedy Romans were not pleased with only half of the dead king's wealth. They wanted the whole. So they came and took it by force. Boadicea was a very brave woman. She was not afraid of the Romans, and she tried to make them give back what they had stolen from her.

Then these cruel, wicked men laughed at her. And because she was a woman and had, they thought, no one to protect her, they beat her with rods and were rude to her daughters.

But although the Romans were clever, they sometimes did stupid things. They thought very little of their own women, and they did not understand that many of the women of Britain were as brave and as wise as the men, and quite as difficult to conquer.

After Boadicea had been so cruelly and unjustly treated, she burned with anger against the Romans. Her heart was full only of thoughts of revenge. She called her people together, and, standing on a mound of earth so that they could see and hear her, she made a speech to them. She told them first how shamefully the Romans had behaved to her, their Queen. Then, like Caractacus, she reminded them how their forefathers had fought against Julius Cæsar, and had driven the Romans away for a time at least. "Is it not better to be poor and free than to have great wealth and be slaves?"

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she asked. "And the Romans take not only our freedom but our wealth. They want to make us both slaves and beggars. Let us rise. O brothers and sisters, let us rise, and drive these robbers out of our land! Let us kill them every one! Let us teach them that they are no better than hares and foxes, and no match for greyhounds! We will fight, and if we cannot conquer, then let us die—yes, every one of us—die rather than submit."

Queen Boadicea looked so beautiful and fierce as she stood there, with her blue eyes flashing, and her golden hair blowing round her in the wind, that the hearts of her people were filled with love for her, and anger against the Romans. As she spoke, fierce desires for revenge grew in them. They had hated their Roman conquerors before, now the hatred became a madness.

So, when Boadicea had finished speaking, a cry of rage rose from the Britons. They beat upon their shields with their swords, and swore to avenge their Queen, to fight and die for her and for their country.

Then Boadicea, leaning with one hand upon her spear, and lifting the other to heaven—prayed. She prayed to the goddess of war, and her prayer was as fierce as her speech, for she had never heard of a God who taught men to forgive their enemies.

As she stood there praying, Boadicea looked more beautiful than ever. Her proud head was thrown back and the sun shone upon her lovely hair and upon the golden band which bound her

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forehead. Her dark cloak, slipping from her shoulders, showed the splendid robe she wore beneath, and the thick and heavy chain of gold round her neck. At her feet knelt her daughters, sobbing with hope and fear.

It was a grand and awful moment, and deep silence fell upon the warriors as they listened to the solemn words. Then, with wild cries, they marched forward to battle, forgetful of everything but revenge.

The battles which followed were terrible indeed. The words of Queen Boadicea had stirred the Britons until they were mad with thoughts of revenge, and hopes of freedom. They gave no mercy, and they asked none. They utterly destroyed the towns of London and of St. Albans, or Verulamium as it was then called, killing every one, man, woman and child.

Again and again the Romans were defeated, till it almost seemed as if the Britons really would succeed in driving them out of the country. Boadicea herself led the soldiers, encouraging them with her brave words. "It is better to die with honour than to live in slavery," she said. "I am a woman, but I would rather die than yield. Will you follow me, men?" and of course the men followed her gladly.

At last the Roman leader was so downcast with his many defeats that he went himself to the British camp, bearing in his hand a green branch as a sign of peace. When Boadicea was told that an ambassador from the Romans wished to speak to

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“WILL YOU FOLLOW ME, MEN?”

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her, she replied proudly, "My sword alone shall speak to the Romans." And when the Roman leader asked for peace, she answered, "You shall have peace, peace, but no submission. A British heart will choose death rather than lose liberty. There can be peace only if you promise to leave the country."

Of course the Romans would not promise to go away from Britain, so the war continued, and for a time the Britons triumphed.

But their triumph did not last long. The Roman soldiers were better armed and better drilled than the British. There came a dark day when the Britons were utterly defeated and many thousands were slain.

When Boadicea saw that all hope was gone, she called her daughters to her. "My children," she said sadly, as she took them by the hand and drew them towards her, "my children, it has not pleased the gods of battle to deliver us from the power of the Romans. But there is yet one way of escape." Tears were in her blue eyes as she kissed her daughters. She was no longer a queen of fury but a loving mother.

Then taking a golden cup in her hands, "Drink," she said gently.

The eldest daughter obeyed proudly and gladly, but the younger one was afraid. "Must I, mother?" she asked timidly.

"Yes, dear one," said Boadicea gently. "I too will drink, and we shall meet again."

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When the Roman soldiers burst in upon them, they found the great queen dead, with her daughters in her arms.

She had poisoned both herself and them, rather than that they should fall again into the hands of the Romans.

CHAPTER VI

THE LAST OF THE ROMANS

CARACTACUS was dead, Boadicea was dead, many other brave British leaders were dead, but the Britons still continued to give the Romans a great deal of trouble.

At last Vespasian, who was then Emperor of the Romans, sent a general called Julius Agricola to see if he could subdue the people and govern the island of Britain.

Julius Agricola was a very clever soldier and a wise man. When he had gained one or two victories over the Britons, he tried what kindness would do. This was something the Romans had never done before.

Julius Agricola tried to understand the people. He was just and fair. He not only took away many of the heavy taxes which the Romans had made the British pay, but he built schools and had the people taught to read and write. For up to this time the Britons had had no teachers and no schools. None of them could read or write, and perhaps there was not a single book in the whole island.

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Of course, books in those days were quite different from what they are now. There was no paper, and printing was unknown, so when people wanted to make a book they wrote upon strips of parchment, which was made from the skins of animals. These strips were then rolled up, and looked very much like the maps we hang upon the wall, only they were smaller.

Besides building schools, Agricola built public halls and courts where the people might come and ask for justice, whenever they had been wronged. He taught the Britons what obedience, law and order meant, and in every way tried to make them live good lives.

Soon the Britons began to understand that the Romans could give them some things which were worth having. So there was much more peace in the land.

Julius Agricola also built a line of forts across the island from the Forth to the Clyde. He did this to keep back the wild Picts and Scots, or people of the north. For as they could not be brought under Roman rule nor tamed in any way, he thought it was better to try to shut them into their own country. Later on an emperor, called Antonine, built a great wall along the line of Agricola's forts for the same purpose.

But while Julius Agricola was doing all this good work in Britain, the emperor who had sent him died, and another ruled instead.

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This emperor was jealous of Agricola because he managed the people of Britain so well. He was so jealous that he told Agricola to come back to Rome, and sent another man to govern Britain instead of him.

It was very foolish of a great emperor to be angry with his general because he did his work well. He ought rather to have been glad.

The people of Britain soon showed him how foolish he had been, for they once more rebelled against Roman rule.

Later on another great emperor who was called Hadrian reigned, and he himself came to Britain. He found the wild people of the north very troublesome, so he built a wall across Britain from the Tyne to the Solway. He did not try to drive these wild people so far north as Agricola had done. The wall which Hadrian built is still called by his name, and is still to be seen to this day; so you can imagine what a very strong wall it was and what a fierce people they were who lived beyond it.

Hadrian was wise as Agricola had been. He taught the Britons many things which were good and useful to know. But very soon after he left the island, the people rebelled again.

And so it went on until, at last, nearly five hundred years after the first coming of Julius Cæsar, the Romans gave up and left Britain altogether. That was about the year 410 A.D. The wonder is that they had stayed so long, for the Britons had certainly

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given them a great deal of trouble.

But after all, although the Britons always fought against the Romans, they had learned many things from them.

Before the Romans came, the Britons had been very ignorant and wild. In many parts of the country they wore no clothes at all. Instead, they stained their bodies blue with a dye called woad. Their houses were only little round huts, with a hole in the middle of the roof which let some light in and the smoke of the fire out. There were no schools, and little boys and girls were taught nothing except how to fish and hunt, and how to fight and kill people in battle.

There were hardly any roads and there were no churches.

The ancient Britons were heathen. They worshipped the oak-tree and the mistletoe.

The British priests were called Druids. It is said that they received their name from Druiis, who was a very wise king of Albion in far-off times.

The Druids were the wisest people in the land. When any one was in doubt or difficulty he would go to them for advice. They were very solemn and grand old men with long white beards and beautiful robes. There were no churches, as I said, but the people worshipped in dark hollows in the woods and in open spaces surrounded by great oak-trees. Some of the teaching of the Druids was very

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beautiful, but some of it was very dreadful, and they even killed human beings in their sacrifices.

But the Romans taught the Britons many things. They taught them how to build better houses and how to make good roads, how to read and write, and much more that was good and useful. And presently priests came from Rome, bringing tidings of a new and beautiful religion.

They came to tell the people of Britain how the Son of God came to earth to teach men not to hate and kill each other, but to love each other, and above all to love their enemies.

It is difficult to understand what a wonderful story this must have seemed to the wild island people. For they were a people who were born and who lived and died among wars and hatred. Yet many of them believed and followed this new religion. Gradually the Druids disappeared, and the priests of Christ took their place.

Although the religion of Christ came from Rome, the Romans themselves were nearly all pagans. And one of the last Roman emperors who tried to rule Britain hated the Christians very much. He forbade the worship of God and Christ, and killed and tortured those who disobeyed his orders.

But the people who had once become Christian would not again become heathen. They chose rather to die. A person who dies for his religion is called a martyr.

In the next chapter is the story of the first

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Christian martyr in Britain.

CHAPTER VI

THE STORY OF ST. ALBAN

THE first Christian martyr in Britain was called Alban. He lived in the town called Verulamium. He was a Briton, but he was one of those who had learned many things from the Romans. When he was a boy he had even travelled to Rome, and had seen the beautiful city from which these conquerors took their name. And all that he had seen and learned had helped him to grow up a noble, generous man.

Alban had a great deal of money, and with it he used to help the poor people who lived around him. Every one loved and trusted him. Even the Christians loved and trusted him although he was a heathen. If any one was in trouble he would go for help to Alban the great, rich, kind man.

When the wicked Roman Emperor sent men to kill the Christians in Britain, a holy man called Amphibalus, who also lived in Verulamium, fled to the house of Alban for shelter.

“My lord,” said this old man, “the soldiers of the emperor seek me to take my life. Hide me, and God will reward you.”

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“What evil have you done?” asked Alban.

“I have done no evil,” replied Amphibalus. “I am a Christian, that is all.”

“Then fear nothing,” said Alban kindly. “I have heard much of the Christians, but nothing that is bad.”

Then Alban took Amphibalus into his house and hid him. He seemed quite safe there, as the soldiers did not think of looking for him in the house of a man who was a heathen.

Alban talked every day with Amphibalus, who told him all the story of Christ. It seemed to Alban very beautiful and wonderful that any one should die to save others. He felt that this religion of love and gentleness was much better than the fierce teaching of the Druids.

For some days Amphibalus lived in peace. But one day while he sat talking with Alban, a frightened servant came to say that soldiers were at the gate. They had found out where Amphibalus was hiding.

“My son,” said the old man trembling, “I must say farewell, for I am about to die.”

“No,” replied Alban, “I will save you yet. Give me your robe.”

Then hastily taking off his own beautiful robe he threw it over the old man’s shoulders, and thrust a purse of gold into his hand. “Go,” he said, “go quickly; my servant will take you by secret ways. I will keep the soldiers from pursuing you. But bless me, father, before you go.”

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Alban knelt, and Amphibalus gently laid his hand upon the bowed head.

“May God the Father reward you, and may the Holy Spirit lead you in the true way of Christ. Farewell, my son.” Then he made the sign of the cross over him, and was gone.

Alban wrapped himself in the robe which Amphibalus had taken off and, drawing the hood over his head, waited.

The soldiers, having at last forced a way into the house, rushed in upon him. Seeing a man in the robe of a priest, they seized and bound him, never doubting that it was Amphibalus the Christian.

Alban was then led before the Roman Governor. There his hands were unbound, and he threw off his long robe. Great was the astonishment of the soldiers when they discovered that their prisoner was not the Christian priest for whom they had been seeking, but the heathen lord, Alban.

The Governor happened to be offering up sacrifices to idols, when Alban was led before him. He was very angry with the soldiers for allowing Amphibalus to escape, and still more angry with Alban for helping him to do so.

“Who are you, and how dare you hide wicked and rebellious people in your house?” he asked. “You must tell me where this Christian is hiding, and offer sacrifices to the gods to show that you are sorry for what you have done.”

“I can do neither of these things,” replied

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Alban.

“Who are you, that you dare to defy me?” demanded the Governor.

“What does it matter to you who I am?” replied Alban.

“I asked for your name,” repeated the Governor in furious anger. “Tell it to me at once.”

“My parents called me Alban,” he then replied.

“Then, Alban, if you would have the gods forgive you, you must offer sacrifices to them, and repent of your wicked words and deeds.”

“I cannot,” replied Alban. “I no longer believe in these old gods. They teach men to be cruel and wicked. I shall never sacrifice to them again. Amphibalus is a good and gentle old man. He has never hurt nor wronged any one, yet these gods tell you to torture and kill him. I will not believe in them any more. I would rather believe in the God of Amphibalus, who teaches people to love one another.”

Then the Governor cried out, “This man is too wicked to live. Take him and put him to death.”

The soldiers led Alban away, and it soon became known all over the town that Alban, who was good and kind and loved by every one, was to be put to death. So a great crowd followed him as he was led across the river and up the grassy slope to the top of a hill. Indeed so many people followed that no one was left in the town, except the wicked

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Governor. Perhaps when he was alone in the terrible silence of the empty streets, he felt sorry for what he had done. But it was too late. Alban had gone to death, and there was not one person remaining in the town whom the Governor could send after him to bring him back.

With tears and sobs the people followed and pressed round Alban. Every one was eager to show his love for him, and to say a last good-bye.

When they came to the little bridge over the river, the crowd was so great that it was impossible for Alban to pass. So the soldiers, impatient and angry, said he must walk through the water. Then, we are told, a wonderful thing happened. The water of the river dried up, and Alban passed over on dry land.

On they went up the hillside. It was a beautiful green, grassy slope where the children used to play in the summer sunshine. Sweet-scented wild-flowers made it gay with their bright colors. Pretty butterflies fluttered about, and the air was full of the hum of bees and the song of birds.

On the top of the hill Alban knelt down, feeling tired and thirsty. Just at that moment there seemed to spring from the ground a clear stream of water which no one had noticed before. Alban bent down, drank from it and felt refreshed.

A tall soldier had been walking beside Alban, carrying a great sword with which to cut off his head. But when he saw how gentle and good Alban

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was and how the people loved him, he began to feel sorry for what he had to do.

As Alban knelt upon the grass the soldier threw down his sword, crying out, "This is a holy man. I cannot kill him."

The captain of the soldiers was very angry at this. "Take up your sword," he said, "and do your duty."

"I cannot," replied the man, "I would rather die."

"Then you shall die," replied the captain. And drawing his own sword, with one blow he cut off Alban's head and with a second the head of the soldier. At the same moment, we are told, the captain lost his sight and remained blind for the rest of his life.

This is the story of how the first martyr in Britain died. He was brave, and wise, and kind and, like Christ, he gave his life for others.

After his death Alban was called St. Alban, and the name of the town in which he had lived was changed from Verulamium to St. Albans. The sorrowing people built a church on the spot where he died and, when it became so old that it fell into ruins, a still more beautiful one was built. That church remains to this day, and people still worship God on the very spot where the first Christian martyr in Britain died.

Although we need not believe the wonderful stories of what happened at St. Alban's death, it is

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interesting to know that there is still a spring called Holywell at St. Albans, and that the hill up which the people followed the saint is still called Holywell Hill.

CHAPTER VIII

VORTIGERN AND KING CONSTANS

DURING nearly all the time that the Romans remained in Britain, the Britons fought with them and rebelled against them. But, strange to say, hardly had the Romans gone away than the Britons wanted them to come back.

While they remained in Britain the Romans took all the strongest and bravest of the Britons for soldiers. They made them go into the Roman army and taught them how to fight like the Romans. When they left Britain they took away all these British soldiers as well as their own. So the poor country was left with very few men who were able to fight. There were no great generals either like Cassivelaunus, Caractacus or Boadicea to lead them. And in those days, when people were almost always fighting and quarrelling, it was very necessary not only to have brave soldiers, but wise generals.

You will remember that the Romans built two walls across Britain, in order to keep back the wild

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people who lived in the north—that is, in the part of the island which we now call Scotland.

As long as the Romans remained in Britain they rebuilt and repaired these walls whenever it was necessary. Soldiers, too, lived in the forts, which were placed at short distances along the walls. These soldiers kept watch so that the Picts and Scots had not much chance of getting into the south part of the island.

But when the Romans went away, there was no one to guard and repair these walls. The Picts and Scots soon found this out. They broke down the walls and overran the whole south country, reaching even as far as London. Fierce and brave as the Britons were, they were no match for the Picts and Scots. Besides, they had very few soldiers left, and no great leader. So in despair they sent a letter to the Roman Emperor, asking for help. This letter was so sad, that it was called “The groans of the Britons.”

“Come and help us,” it said, “for the barbarians drive us into the sea, and the sea drives us back again to the barbarians. So those of us who are not killed in battle are drowned, and soon there will be none of us left at all.”

The Romans, you remember, called the Britons barbarians, and now the Britons in their turn called the Picts and Scots barbarians.

But by this time the Romans had as much as they could do to fight their own battles. They could spare no soldiers to send to Britain, so the Britons

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had to help themselves as best they could.

It was a very sad and miserable time for Britain, till at last a wise king called Constantine began to reign, and he succeeded in driving the Picts and Scots back into their own country.

But one day a wicked Pict killed this wise king, and things became as bad as ever, if not worse. For the people, besides fighting with their enemies, began to quarrel among themselves as to who should be king next.

King Constantine had three sons. The eldest, Constans, was a monk. A monk is a man who takes a vow that he will not marry and have a home of his own. He lives in a big house with other monks, and spends his time in praying, in reading good books, and in helping people who are poor or ill.

Constantine's eldest son was a man like this; his two younger sons, who were called Aurelius Ambrosius and Uther Pendragon, were little boys.

Now some people said, "We cannot have a monk for our king." Others said, "We cannot have little boys." So they quarrelled.

Among the nobles of Britain was a prince called Vortigern. He was very wise, but not very good. He now went to Constans and said to him, "Your father is dead. Your brothers are only little boys. You ought to be king. Be a monk no longer, but trust yourself to me and I will make you king. Only you must promise to take me for your chief adviser."

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It is considered a very wicked thing for a man to break his vows and cease to be a monk, after he has promised to be one for all his life. But perhaps Constans was rather tired of that way of living, for he promised to do everything that Vortigern asked.

Vortigern took Constans away from the monastery, as the house in which monks live is called. They went to London together and Vortigern marched into the king's palace, took the crown, and put it on Constans's head. Then he told the people that Constans was their new king.

The people were not very pleased at having a king chosen for them in this way, but, as Vortigern was such a powerful prince, they were afraid to fight with him. So they let Constans be king.

Now Vortigern really wanted to get the whole of the power for himself. He knew that Constans, having lived all his life in a monastery, could not know much about ruling people. So, although Constans was called king, it was really Vortigern who ruled. First, Vortigern took charge of the king's money. Next, he got all the strong castles into his hands, and filled them with his own soldiers. Then he said to the King, "I hear that the Picts and Scots are coming to fight against us again. We ought to have more soldiers."

King Constans replied, "I leave everything to you. Get more soldiers if you think we need them."

Then Vortigern said, "I think the Picts would be the very best soldiers to get. They will come and

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fight for us, if we pay them well." In those days people did not always fight for their own country. There were many soldiers who would fight for any country and any cause, if only they were paid well.

So Vortigern sent to Scotland for a hundred Picts. When they came he treated them very kindly. He gave them more money and better food and clothes than any of the other soldiers. The Picts thought Vortigern was a very kind master. They soon saw that he really had all the power, and that Constans was only a pretence king.

Now Vortigern wanted these Picts to murder Constans. But he was too cunning to tell them this plainly, so one day he appeared with a sad face and told the Picts that Constans gave him so little money that he could not afford to live in Britain any more, and must go somewhere else.

This made the Picts very angry with Constans. They were so afraid of losing their kind master, that they resolved to kill Constans and make Vortigern king.

That night, while Constans was asleep, they rushed into his room, cut off his head, and carried it to Vortigern.

Vortigern was really delighted that his plan had succeeded so well. But he pretended to be very sad at the death of Constans, and very angry with those who had killed him. He ordered all the Picts to be put into prison, and then had their heads cut off. He did this because he was afraid they might say

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afterwards that he had told them to murder Constans.

When the two little boys, Aurelius Ambrosius and Uther Pendragon, heard what had happened to their brother, King Constans, they were afraid that Vortigern might kill them too. For although Vortigern tried hard to make believe that he had had nothing to do with the murder of Constans, the people felt quite sure that he was really to blame for it. So Aurelius Ambrosius and Uther Pendragon fled away to that part of France called Brittany, where they remained in safety for many years.

CHAPTER IX

THE STORY OF THE COMING OF HENGIST AND HORSA

VORTIGERN now became king, for he was so powerful that none of the other princes dared to oppose him. But the Picts and Scots were very angry when they heard how their friends had been treated. They resolved to avenge them and at once made war on the Britons. They defeated Vortigern in many battles, and killed more than half of his soldiers.

The Britons were in despair. Then Vortigern called all the nobles and princes together in council, to discuss what was best to do.

At this time there were really no very clever men among the nobles of Britain. They were all in great fear of the Picts and Scots, and they had no good counsel to offer. Vortigern therefore was able to do very much as he liked.

“We must have help,” he said, “if we are not to be thoroughly conquered by these wild barbarians from the north. The Romans will not help us. We must ask some one else. Across the sea, called the North Sea, there is a great country called Germany.

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The people who live in this country are Saxons. They are very brave and valiant fighters. Let us send over to Germany and ask the Saxons to come and help us.”

Then all the nobles and princes said, “That is good advice; let it be done.”

So Vortigern sent messengers to Germany with promises of money and land to the Saxons, if they would come to fight against the Picts and Scots. The Saxons were very glad to come, and soon there appeared sailing over the sea three ships, filled with some of their strongest and bravest men. Their captains were two brothers, called Hengist and Horsa. Both these names, in the old Saxon language, mean horse. They were so called because they were strong and brave.

The Saxons landed in Britain in 449 A.D. And little did the Britons think that they had come, not only to help, but to conquer them.

As soon as the strangers landed, Vortigern led them northward to fight the Picts and Scots. There was a terrible battle. Both sides fought with the fiercest bravery, and on both sides many soldiers were killed. But in the end the Saxons had the best of it, and the Picts and Scots were driven back to their own country.

The Britons were greatly delighted, and rewarded the Saxons with money and lands. Then Hengist and Horsa, seeing what a fine country Britain was, resolved never to go away again. They

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resolved rather to stay and conquer it for themselves.

So they first told Vortigern that Aurelius Ambrosius and Uther Pendragon, the brothers of the dead King Constans, were coming to fight against him, and then they advised him to send over to Germany for more soldiers.

Vortigern was very much afraid of the dead king's brothers, so he said, "Send messengers to Germany and ask whom you like to come. I can refuse you nothing, since you have freed us from the Picts and Scots."

Then Hengist said, "You have indeed given us lands and houses, but as we have helped you so much I think you should give me a castle and make me a prince."

"I cannot do that," replied Vortigern. "Only Britons are allowed to be princes in this land. You are strangers and you are heathen. My people would be very angry if I made any one but a Christian a prince."

At that Hengist made a low bow, pretending to be very humble. "Give your servant then just so much land as can be surrounded by a leather thong," he said.

Vortigern thought there could be no harm in doing that, so he said, "Yes, you may have so much." But he did not know what a cunning fellow Hengist was.

As soon as Vortigern had given his consent, Hengist and Horsa killed the largest bullock they

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could find. Then they took its skin and cut it round and round into one long narrow strip of leather. This they stretched out and laid upon the ground in a large circle, enclosing a piece of land big enough upon which to build a fortress.

If you do not quite understand how Hengist and Horsa managed to cut the skin of a bullock into one long strip, get a piece of paper and a pair of scissors. Begin at the edge and cut the paper round and round in circles till you come to the middle. you will then find that you have a string of paper quite long enough to surround a brick castle. If you are not allowed to use scissors, ask some kind person to do it for you.

Vortigern was very angry when he learned how he had been cheated by Hengist and Horsa. But he was beginning to be rather afraid of them, so he said nothing, but allowed them to build their fortress. It was called Thong Castle, and stood not far from Lincoln, at a place now called Caistor.

While this fortress was being built, messengers were sent to Germany for more men. They returned with eighteen ships full of the bravest soldiers they could find. In one of the ships, too, was a very beautiful lady. This was Rowena, Hengist's daughter.

Soon after these soldiers and this beautiful lady arrived, the castle was finished. Then Hengist gave a great feast and asked Vortigern to it.

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ROWENA CAME INTO THE ROOM CARRYING A BEAUTIFUL
GOLDEN CUP

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Vortigern came and admired the castle very much, although he was still rather angry with Hengist for having cheated him about the land.

Towards the end of the feast, Rowena came into the room, carrying a beautiful golden cup in her hands. Vortigern stared at her in surprise. He had never seen any one so pretty before. He thought that she must be a fairy, she was so lovely.

Rowena went up to Vortigern, and kneeling before him held out the cup, speaking in the Saxon language.

Vortigern did not understand. "What does she say?" he asked Hengist.

"She calls you 'Lord, King,' and offers to drink your health. You must say, 'Drinc heil,'" he answered.

Vortigern said "Drinc heil," although he did not know what it meant.

Rowena then drank some of the wine and handed the cup to Vortigern, who drank the rest.

Then Vortigern made Rowena sit beside him. They could not talk to each other because he could only speak British and she could only speak Saxon. But they looked at each other all the more. Vortigern loved Rowena. He loved her so much that he wanted to marry her.

This was just what Hengist had hoped would happen. He knew he would have a great deal of power in Britain when his daughter was queen. But

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at first he pretended to object, and only consented at last as if it were a great favour. He made Vortigern give him the whole of Kent, too, in return for allowing him to marry Rowena.

When the people heard that the King had married a Saxon lady, they were very angry. Vortigern had been married before, and his sons, who were now men, were very angry too. But the Prince of Kent was most angry of all, when he heard that his land had been given to the Saxons.

Hengist, seeing how angry the Britons were, though it would be safer to have more of his own people round him. So he sent over to Germany for men, and almost every day more and more Saxons landed in Britain. And Vortigern loved Rowena so much that he allowed her father Hengist to do anything he liked.

But the Britons did not mean to let their country be conquered a second time, so they rebelled against Vortigern and chose his son Vortimer to be king.

Vortimer was young and brave, and loved his country. Under his leadership the Britons fought so well that they soon drove the Saxons away. Horsa was killed in one of the battles, and soon afterwards Hengist and most of his soldiers took their ships and fled back to Germany. They left their wives and children behind them, however, which looked very much as if they expected to come back again some day.