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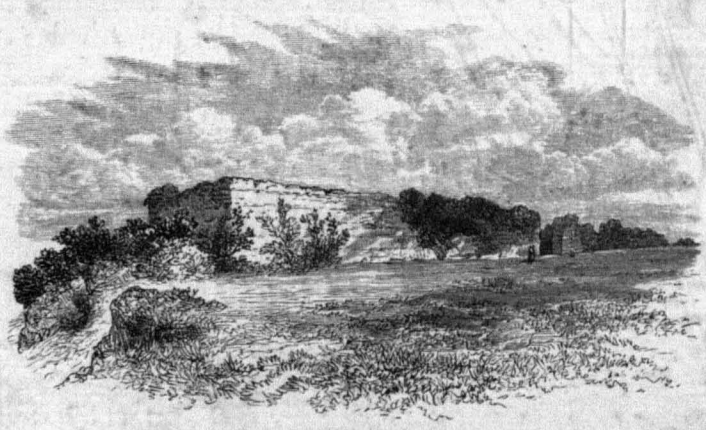
Richborough would be natural enough. But the after-current of events serves to show that the choice of this landing-place was the result of a settled design. Between the Briton and his hireling soldiers there could be little trust. Quarters in Thanet would satisfy the followers of Hengest, who still lay in sight of their fellow-pirates in the Channel, and who felt themselves secured against the treachery which had so often proved fatal to the barbarian by the broad inlet which parted their camp from the mainland. Nor was the choice less satisfactory to the provincial, trembling—and, as the event proved, justly trembling—lest in his zeal against the Pict he had



RICHBOROUGH.

introduced an even fiercer foe into Britain. His dangerous allies were cooped up in a corner of the land, and parted from it by a sea-channel which was guarded by the strongest fortresses of the coast.

The English Attack

The need of such precautions was seen in the disputes which arose as soon as the work for which the mercenaries had been hired was done. The Picts were hardly scattered to the winds in a great battle when danger came from the Jutes themselves. Their numbers probably grew fast as the news of the settlement spread among the pirates in the Channel, and with the increase of their number must have grown the difficulty of supplying rations and pay. The dispute which rose over these questions was at last

closed by Hengest's men with a threat of war. The threat, however, as we have seen, was no easy one to carry out. Right across their path in any attack upon Britain stretched the inlet of sea that parted Thanet from the mainland, a strait which was then traversable only at low water by a long and dangerous ford, and guarded at either mouth by the fortresses of Richborough and Reculver. The channel of the Medway, with the forest of the Weald bending round it from the south, furnished another line of defence in the rear, while strongholds on the sites of our Canterbury and Rochester guarded the road to London ; and all around lay the soldiers placed at the command of the Count of the Saxon Shore, to hold the coast against the barbarian. Great however as these difficulties were, they failed to check the sudden onset of the Jutes. The inlet seems to have been crossed, the coast-road to London seized, before any force could be collected to oppose the English advance ; and it was only when they passed the Swale and looked to their right over the potteries whose refuse still strews the mudbanks of Upchurch, that their march seems to have swerved abruptly to the south. The guarded walls of Rochester probably forced them to turn southwards along the ridge of low hills which forms the eastern boundary of the Medway valley. Their way led them through a district full of memories of a past which had even then faded from the minds of men ; for the hill-slopes which they traversed were the grave-ground of a vanished race, and scattered among the boulders that strewed the ground rose the cromlechs and huge barrows of the dead. One mighty relic survives in the monument now called Kit's Coty House, which had been linked in old days by an avenue of huge stones to a burial-ground near Addington. It was from a steep knoll on which the grey weather-beaten stones of this monument are reared that the view of their first battle-field would break on the English warriors ; and a lane which still leads down from it through peaceful homesteads would guide them across the ford which has left its name in the little village of Aylesford. The Chronicle of the conquering people tells nothing of the rush that may have carried the ford, or of the fight that went struggling up through the village. It only tells that Horsa fell in the moment of victory ; and the flint-heap of Horsted, which has long preserved his name, and was held in after-time

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THE ENGLISH CONQUEST
449 TO 577
Extermination of the Britons

to mark his grave, is thus the earliest of those monuments of English valour of which Westminster is the last and noblest shrine.

The victory of Aylesford did more than give East Kent to the English; it struck the key-note of the whole English conquest of Britain. The massacre which followed the battle indicated at once the merciless nature of the struggle which had begun. While the wealthier Kentish landowners fled in panic over sea, the poorer Britons took refuge in hill and forest till hunger drove them from their lurking-places to be cut down or enslaved by their conquerors.

KIT'S COTY HOUSE.

It was in vain that some sought shelter within the walls of their churches; for the rage of the English seems to have burned fiercest against the clergy. The priests were slain at the altar, the churches fired, the peasants driven by the flames to fling themselves on a ring of pitiless steel. It is a picture such as this which distinguishes the conquest of Britain from that of the other provinces of Rome. The conquest of Gaul by the Frank, or of Italy by the Lombard, proved little more than a forcible settlement of the one or the other among tributary subjects who were destined in a long course of ages to absorb their conquerors. French is the

tongue, not of the Frank, but of the Gaul whom he overcame; and the fair hair of the Lombard is now all but unknown in Lombardy. But the English conquest for a hundred and fifty years was a sheer dispossession and driving back of the people whom the English conquered. In the world-wide struggle between Rome and the German invaders no land was so stubbornly fought for or so hardly won. The conquest of Britain was indeed only partly wrought out after two centuries of bitter warfare. But it was just through the long and merciless nature of the struggle that of all the German conquests this proved the most thorough and complete. So far as the English sword in these earlier days reached, Britain became England, a land, that is, not of Britons, but of Englishmen. It is possible that a few of the vanquished people may have lingered as slaves round the homesteads of their English conquerors, and a few of their household words (if these were not brought in at a later time) mingled oddly with the English tongue. But doubtful exceptions such as these leave the main facts untouched. When the steady progress of English conquest was stayed for a while by civil wars a century and a half after Aylesford, the Briton had disappeared from half of the land which had been his own, and the tongue, the religion, the laws of his English conqueror reigned without a rival from Essex to the Peak of Derbyshire and the mouth of the Severn, and from the British Channel to the Firth of Forth.

Conquest of the Saxon Shore

Aylesford, however, was but the first step in this career of conquest. How stubborn the contest was may be seen from the fact that it took sixty years to complete the conquest of Southern Britain alone. It was twenty years before Kent itself was won. 457
After a second defeat at the passage of the Cray, the Britons "forsook Kent-land and fled with much fear to London;" but the ground was soon won back again, and it was not until 465 that a series of petty conflicts made way for a decisive struggle at Wippedsfleet. Here however the overthrow was so terrible that all hope of saving the bulk of Kent seems to have been abandoned, and it was only on its southern shore that the Britons held their ground. Eight years later the long contest was over, and with the 473
fall of Lymne, whose broken walls look from the slope to which they cling over the great flat of Romney Marsh, the work of the

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THE ENGLISH CONQUEST
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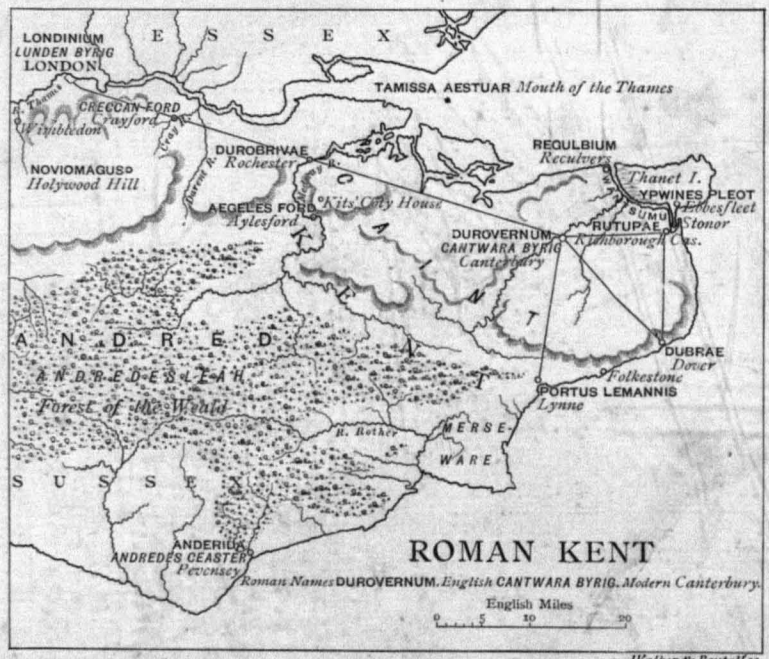
first conqueror was done. But the greed of plunder drew fresh war-bands from the German coast. New invaders, drawn from among the Saxon tribes that lay between the Elbe and the Rhine, were seen in 477, only four years later, pushing slowly along the strip of land which lay westward of Kent between the Weald and the sea. Nowhere has the physical aspect of the country been more utterly changed. The vast sheet of scrub, woodland, and



Walker & Boutall sc.

waste which then bore the name of the Andredsweald stretched for more than a hundred miles from the borders of Kent to the Hampshire Downs, extending northward almost to the Thames, and leaving only a thin strip of coast along its southern edge. This coast was guarded by a great fortress which occupied the spot now called Pevensey, the future landing-place of the Norman Conqueror. The fall of this fortress of Anderida in 491 established the kingdom of the South-Saxons; "Ælle and Cissa," ran the pitiless record of the conquerors, "beset Anderida, and slew all that were therein,

nor was there afterwards one Briton left." Another tribe of Saxons was at the same time conquering on the other side of Kent, to the north of the estuary of the Thames, and had founded the settlement of the East-Saxons, as these warriors came to be called, in the valleys of the Colne and the Stour. To the northward of the Stour, the work of conquest was taken up by the third of the tribes whom we have seen dwelling in their German homeland, whose name was destined to absorb that of Saxon or Jute, and to stamp itself on the land they won. These were the Engle, or Englishmen. Their first descents seem to have fallen on the great district which was cut off from the rest of Britain by the Wash and the Fens and long reaches of forest, the later East Anglia, where the conquerors settled as the North-folk and the South-folk, names still preserved to us in the modern counties. With this settlement the first stage in the conquest was complete. By the close of the fifth century the whole coast of Britain, from the Wash to Southampton Water, was in the hands of the invaders. As yet, however, the enemy had touched little more than the coast ; great masses of woodland or of fen still prisoned the Engle, the Saxon, and the Jute alike within narrow limits. But the sixth century can hardly have been long begun when each of the two peoples who had done the main work of conquest opened a fresh attack on the flanks of the tract they had won. On its northern flank the Engle appeared in the estuaries of the Forth and of the Humber. On its western flank, the Saxons appeared in the Southampton Water.

Conquest of Southern Britain

The true conquest of Southern Britain was reserved for a fresh band of Saxons, a tribe whose older name was that of the Gewissas, but who were to be more widely known as the West-Saxons. Landing westward of the strip of coast which had been won by the war-bands of Ælle, they struggled under Cerdic and Cynric up from Southampton Water in 495 to the great downs where Winchester offered so rich a prize. Five thousand Britons fell in 508
a fight which opened the country to these invaders, and a fresh victory at Charford in 519 set the crown of the West-Saxons on the head of Cerdic. We know little of the incidents of these conquests ; nor do we know why at this juncture they seem to have been suddenly interrupted. But it is certain that a victory of the Britons at Mount Badon in the year 520 checked the progress of

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The English Conquest
449 to 577

the West-Saxons, and was followed by a long pause in their advance; for thirty years the great belt of woodland which then curved round from Dorset to the valley of the Thames seems to have barred the way of the assailants. What finally broke their inaction we cannot tell. We only know that Cynric, whom Cerdic's death left king of the West-Saxons, again took up the

552 work of invasion by a new advance in 552. The capture of the hill-fort of Old Sarum threw open the reaches of the Wiltshire Downs; and pushing northward to a new battle at Barbury Hill, they completed the conquest of the Marlborough Downs. From the bare uplands the invaders turned eastward to the richer valleys

568 of our Berkshire, and after a battle with the Kentish men at Wimbledon, the land south of the Thames which now forms our Surrey was added to their dominions. The road along the Thames was however barred to them, for the district round London seems to have been already won and colonized by the East-Saxons. But a march of their King Cuthwulf made them masters in 571 of the districts which now form Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire; and a few years later they swooped from the Wiltshire uplands on the rich prey that lay along the Severn. Gloucester, Cirencester, and Bath, cities which had leagued under their British kings to resist this onset, became the spoil of a Saxon victory at Deorham in 577, and the line of the great western river lay open to the arms of the

583 conquerors. Under a new king, Ceawlin, the West-Saxons penetrated to the borders of Chester, and Uriconium, a town beside the Wrekin, recently again brought to light, went up in flames. A British poet sings piteously the death-song of Uriconium, "the white town in the valley," the town of white stone gleaming among the green woodland, the hall of its chieftain left "without fire, without light, without songs," the silence broken only by the eagle's scream, "the eagle who has swallowed fresh drink, heart's blood of Kyndylan the fair." The raid, however, was repulsed, and the blow proved fatal to the power of Wessex. Though the West-Saxons were destined in the end to win the overlordship over every English people, their time had not come yet, and the leadership of the English race was to fall, for nearly a century to come, to the tribe of invaders whose fortunes we have now to follow.


BRITAIN
and the
ENGLISH CONQUEST
English Miles
0 10 20 30 40 50
British names ..... Deifyr
Roman names ..... VECTIS
English names ..... Wiute
Modern names ..... Bedford
Forests shewn thus
Marshes .. ..
Heath .. ..
Mountainous country is indicated by a ruled tint thus
Firth of Forth
Bebban Burh
Bamborough
ROMAN WALL
R. Tyne
R. Esk
R. Tees
R. Humber
Lindisware
Lindsey
LINDUM
North English
West English
Mercians
Middle English
East English
The Wash
The Thames
Lly Penzwern
Wihtgara Burh
VECTIS
Wight
Walker & Boutall sc.

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THE ENGLISH CONQUEST
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Conquest of Mid-Britain and the North

Rivers were the natural inlets by which the northern pirates everywhere made their way into the heart of Europe. In Britain the fortress of London barred their way along the Thames from its mouth, and drove them, as we have seen, to an advance along the southern coast and over the downs of Wiltshire, before reaching its upper waters. But the rivers which united in the estuary of the Humber led like open highways into the heart of Britain, and it was by this inlet that the great mass of the invaders penetrated into the interior of the island. Like the invaders of East Anglia, they were of the English tribe from Sleswick. As the storm fell in the opening of the sixth century on the Wolds of Lincolnshire that stretch southward from the Humber, the conquerors who settled in the deserted country were known as the "Lindiswara," or "dwellers about Lindum." A part of the warriors who had entered the Humber, turned southward by the forest of Elmet which covered the district around Leeds, followed the course of the Trent. Those who occupied the wooded country between the Trent and the Humber took from their position the name of Southumbrians. A second division, advancing along the curve of the former river and creeping down the line of its tributary, the Soar, till they
c. 550 reached Leicester, became known as the Middle-English. The marshes of the Fen country were settled by tribes known as the Gyrwas. The head waters of the Trent were the seat of those invaders who penetrated furthest to the west, and camped round Lichfield and Repton. This country became the borderland between Englishmen and Britons, and the settlers bore the name of "Mercians," men, that is, of the March or border. We know hardly anything of this conquest of Mid-Britain, and little more of the conquest of the north. Under the Romans, political power had centred in the vast district between the Humber and the Forth. York had been the capital of Britain and the seat of the Roman prefect; and the bulk of the garrison maintained in the island lay cantoned along the Roman wall. Signs of wealth and prosperity appeared everywhere; cities rose beneath the shelter of the Roman camps; villas of British landowners studded the vale of the Ouse and the far-off uplands of the Tweed, where the shepherd trusted for security against Pictish marauders to the terror of the Roman name. This district was assailed at once from the north and from

the south. A part of the invading force which entered the Humber marched over the Yorkshire wolds to found a kingdom, which was known as that of the Deiri, in the fens of Holderness and on the chalk downs eastward of York. But they were soon drawn onwards, and after a struggle of which we know nothing, York, like its neighbour cities, lay a desolate ruin, while the conquerors spread northward, slaying and burning along the valley of the Ouse. Meanwhile the pirates had appeared in the Forth, and won their way along the Tweed; Ida and the men of fifty keels which followed him reared the capital of the northernmost kingdom of the English, that of Bernicia, on the rock of Bamborough, and won their way slowly along the coast against a stubborn resistance which formed the theme of British songs. The strife between the kingdoms of Deira and Bernicia for supremacy in the North was closed by their being united under king Æthelric of Bernicia; and from this union was formed a new kingdom, the kingdom of Northumbria.

500–520

588

It was this century of conquest by the English race which really made Britain England. In our anxiety to know more of our fathers, we listen to the monotonous plaint of Gildas, the one writer whom Britain has left us, with a strange disappointment. Gildas had seen the invasion of the pirate hosts, and it is to him we owe our knowledge of the conquest of Kent. But we look in vain to his book for any account of the life or settlement of the English conquerors. Across the border of the new England that was growing up along the southern shores of Britain, Gildas gives us but a glimpse—doubtless he had but a glimpse himself—of forsaken walls, of shrines polluted by heathen impiety. His silence and his ignorance mark the character of the struggle. No British neck had as yet bowed before the English invader, no British pen was to record his conquest. A century after their landing the English are still known to their British foes only as "barbarians," "wolves," "dogs," "whelps from the kennel of barbarism," "hateful to God and man." Their victories seemed victories of the powers of evil, chastisements of a divine justice for national sin. Their ravage, terrible as it had been, was held to be almost at an end: in another century—so ran old prophecies—their last hold on the land would be shaken off. But of submission to, or even of intercourse

Gildas
c. 516–570

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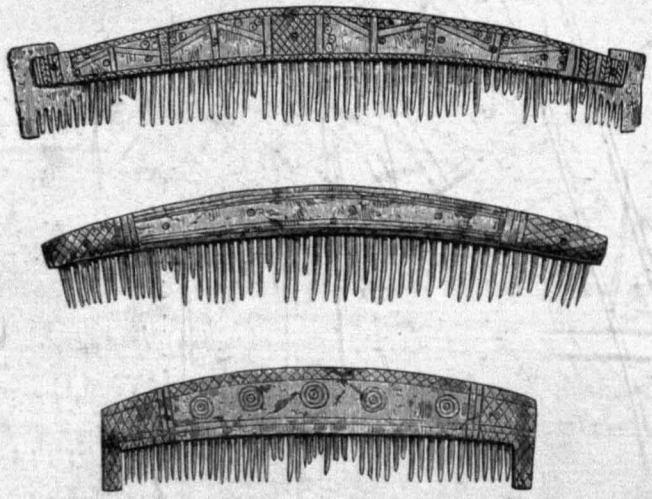
449 to 577
The English Settlement

with the strangers there is not a word. Gildas tells us nothing of their fortunes, or of their leaders.

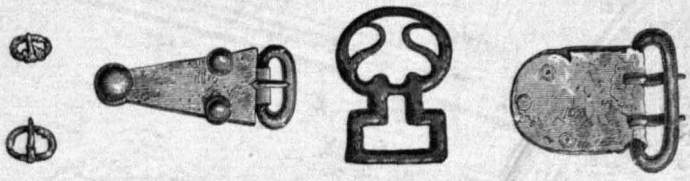
In spite of his silence, however, we may still know something of the way in which the new English society grew up in the conquered country, for the driving back of the Briton was but the prelude to the settlement of his conqueror. What strikes us at once in the new England is, that it was the one purely German nation that rose upon the wreck of Rome. In other lands, in Spain, or Gaul, or Italy, though they were equally conquered by German peoples,



OLD ENGLISH COMBS.
Akerman, "Pagan Saxondom."

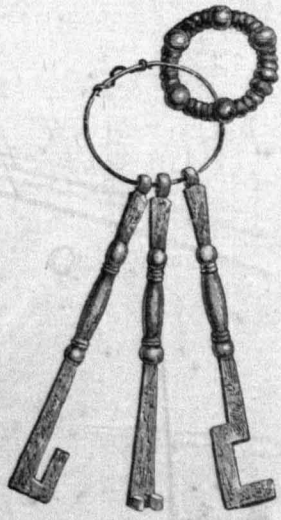
religion, social life, administrative order, still remained Roman. In Britain alone Rome died into a vague tradition of the past. The whole organization of government and society disappeared with the people who used it. The villas, the mosaics, the coins which we dig up in our fields are no relics of our English fathers, but of a Roman world which our fathers' sword swept utterly away. Its law, its literature, its manners, its faith, went with it. The new England was a heathen country. The religion of Woden and Thunder triumphed over the religion of Christ. Alone among the German assailants of Rome the English rejected the faith of the Empire they helped to overthrow. Elsewhere the Christian

priesthood served as mediators between the barbarian and the conquered, but in the conquered part of Britain Christianity wholly disappeared. River and homestead and boundary, the very days of the week, bore the names of the new gods who displaced Christ. But if England seemed for the



OLD ENGLISH BUCKLES.
British Museum and Dover Museum.

moment a waste from which all the civilization of the world had fled away, it contained within itself the germs of a nobler life than that which had been destroyed. The base of the new English society was the freeman whom we have seen tilling, judging, or sacrificing for himself in his far-off fatherland by the Northern Sea. However roughly he dealt while the struggle went on with the material civilization of Britain, it was impossible that such a man could be a mere destroyer. War was no sooner over than the warrior settled down into a farmer, and the home of the peasant churl rose beside the heap of goblin-haunted stones that marked the site of the villa he had burnt. Little knots of kinsfolk drew together in "tun" and "ham" beside the Thames and the Trent as they had settled beside the Elbe or the Weser, not as kinsfolk only, but as dwellers in the same plot, knit together by their common holding within the same bounds. Each little village-commonwealth lived the same life in Britain as its farmers had lived at home. Each had its moot hill or sacred tree as a centre, its "mark" as a



OLD ENGLISH KEYS.
Akerman, "Pagan Saxondom."

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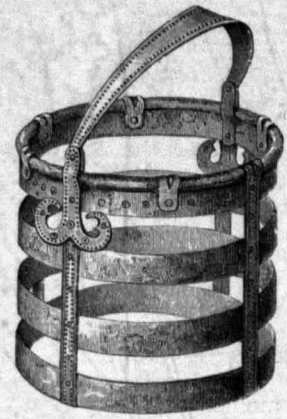
449 to 577

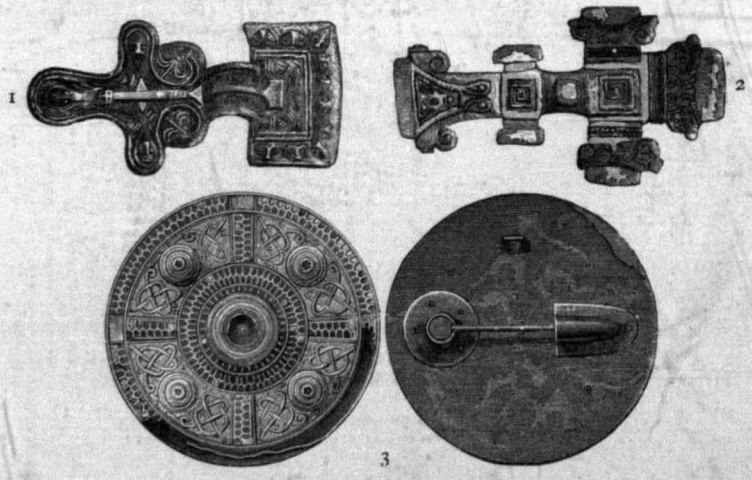
border; each judged by witness of the kinsfolk and made laws in the assembly of its freemen, and chose the leaders for its own governance, and the men who were to follow headman or ealdorman to hundred-court or war.



PLATINGS OF AN OLD ENGLISH BUCKET.
Akerman, "Pagan Saxondom."

England and the Conquest

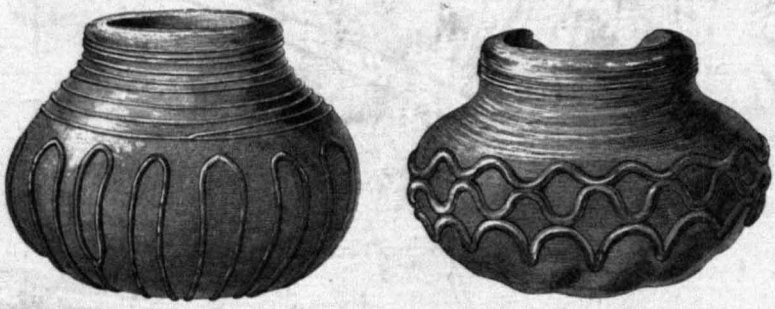
In more ways than one, indeed, the primitive organization of English society was affected by its transfer to the soil of Britain. Conquest begat the King. It is probable that the English had hitherto known nothing of kings in their own fatherland, where each tribe lived under the rule of its own customary Ealdorman. But in a war such as that which they waged against the Britons it was necessary to find a common leader whom the various tribes engaged in conquests such as those of Kent or Wessex might follow; and such a leader soon rose into a higher position than that



OLD ENGLISH FIBULÆ.
1. *Akerman, "Pagan Saxondom."* 2. *Collection of the Society of Antiquaries.* 3. *British Museum.*

of a temporary chief. The sons of Hengest became kings in Kent; those of Ælle in Sussex; the West-Saxons chose Cerdic for their

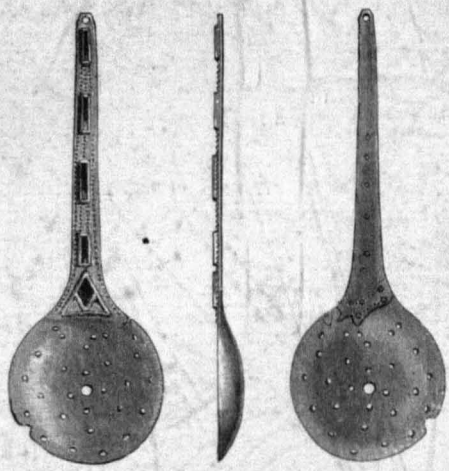
king. Such a choice at once drew the various villages and tribes of each community closer together than of old, while the new ruler surrounded himself with a chosen war-band of companions, servants, or "thegns" as they were called, who were rewarded for their service by gifts from the public land. Their distinction rested, not on hereditary rank, but on service done to the King, and they at last became a nobility which superseded the "eorls" of the original English constitution. And as war begat the King and the military noble, so it all but begat the slave. There had always been a slave class, a class of the unfree, among the English as among all German peoples; but the numbers of this class, if unaffected by the conquest



OLD ENGLISH GLASS VESSELS.
Akerman, "Pagan Saxondom."

of Britain, were swelled by the wars which soon sprang up among the English conquerors. No rank saved the prisoner taken in battle from the doom of slavery, and slavery itself was often welcomed as saving the prisoner from death. We see this in the story of a noble warrior who had fallen wounded in a fight between two English tribes, and was carried as a bond-slave to the house of a thegn hard by. He declared himself a peasant, but his master penetrated the disguise. "You deserve death," he said, "since all my brothers and kinsfolk fell in the fight;" but for his oath's sake he spared his life and sold him to a Frisian at London, probably a merchant such as those who were carrying English captives at that time to the market-place of Rome. But war was not the only cause of the increase of this slave class. The numbers of the "unfree" were swelled by debt and crime. Famine drove men to "bend their heads in the

evil days for meat;" the debtor unable to discharge his debt flung on the ground the freeman's sword and spear, took up the labourer's mattock, and placed his head as a slave within a master's hands. The criminal whose kinsfolk would not make up his fine became a crime-serf of the plaintiff or the king. Sometimes a father, pressed by need, sold children and wife into bondage. The slave became part of the live-stock of the estate, to be willed away at death with horse or ox whose pedigree was kept as carefully as his own. His children were bondsmen like himself; even the freeman's children by a slave-mother inherited the mother's taint. "Mine is the calf that is born of my cow," ran the English proverb. The cabins of the unfree clustered round the home of the rich landowner as they had clustered round the villa of the Roman gentleman; ploughman, shepherd, goatherd, swineherd, oxherd and cowherd, dairymaid, barnman, sower, hayward and woodward, were often slaves. It was not such a slavery as that we have known in modern times, for stripes and bonds were rare; if the slave were slain, it was by an angry blow, not by the lash. But his lord could slay him if he would; it was but a chattel the less. The slave had no place in the justice-court, no kinsman to claim vengeance for his wrong. If a stranger slew him, his lord claimed the damages; if guilty of wrong-doing, "his skin paid for him" under the lash. If he fled he might be chased like a strayed beast, and flogged to death for his crime, or burned to death if the slave were a woman.



OLD ENGLISH SPOON.
Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

OLD ENGLISH FORK.
Akerman, "Pagan Saxondom."

Section III.—The Northumbrian Kingdom, 588—685

[*Authorities.*—Bæda's "Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum" is the one primary authority for this period. I have spoken fully of it and its writer in the text. The meagre regnal and episcopal annals of the West-Saxons have been brought by numerous insertions from Bæda to the shape in which they at present appear in the "English Chronicle." The Poem of Cædmon has been published by Mr. Thorpe, and copious summaries of it are given by Sharon Turner ("Hist. of Anglo-Saxons," vol. iii. cap. 3) and Mr. Morley ("English Writers," vol. i.). The life of Wilfrid by Eddi, and those of Cuthbert by Bæda and an earlier contemporary biographer, which are appended to Mr. Stevenson's edition of the "Historia Ecclesiastica," throw great light on the religious condition of the North. For Guthlac of Crowland, see the "Acta Sanctorum" for April xi. For Theodore, and the English Church which he organized, see Kemble ("Saxons in England," vol. ii. cap. 8—10), and above all the invaluable remarks of Dr. Stubbs in his "Constitutional History."]

Æthel-berht

The conquest of the bulk of Britain was now complete. Eastward of a line which may be roughly drawn along the moorlands of Northumberland and Yorkshire, through Derbyshire and skirting the Forest of Arden, to the mouth of the Severn, and thence by Mendip to the sea, the island had passed into English hands. From this time the character of the English conquest of Britain was wholly changed. The older wars of extermination came to an end, and as the invasion pushed westward in later times the Britons were no longer wholly driven from the soil, but mingled with their conquerors. A far more important change was that which was seen in the attitude of the English conquerors from this time towards each other. Freed to a great extent from the common pressure of the war against the Britons, their energies turned to combats with one another, to a long struggle for overlordship which was to end in bringing about a real national unity. The West-Saxons, beaten back from their advance along the Severn valley, and overthrown in a terrible defeat at Faddiley, were torn by internal dissensions, even 584
while they were battling for life against the Britons. Strife between the two rival kingdoms of Bernicia and Deira in the north absorbed the power of the Engle in that quarter, till in 588 the strength of Deira suddenly broke down, and the Bernician king, Æthelric, gathered the two peoples into a realm which was to form the later kingdom of Northumbria. Amid the confusion of north and south

SEC. III

THE NORTH-UMBRIAN KINGDOM 588 TO 685

the primacy among the conquerors was seized by Kent, where the kingdom of the Jutes rose suddenly into greatness under a king

called Æthelberht, who before 597 established his supremacy over the Saxons of Middlesex and Essex, as well as over the English

of East Anglia and of Mercia as far north as the Humber and the Trent.

SEC. III
THE NORTHUMBRIAN KINGDOM
588 TO 685

The overlordship of Æthelberht was marked by a renewal of that intercourse of Britain with the Continent which had been broken off by the conquests of the English. His marriage with Bertha, the daughter of the Frankish King Charibert of Paris, created a fresh tie between Kent and Gaul. But the union had far more important results than those of which Æthelberht may have dreamed. Bertha, like her Frankish kinsfolk, was a Christian. A Christian bishop accompanied her from Gaul to Canterbury, the royal city of the kingdom of Kent; and a ruined Christian church, the church of St. Martin, was given them for their worship. The marriage of Bertha was an opportunity which was at once seized by the bishop who at this time occupied the Roman See, and who is justly known as Gregory the Great. A memorable story tells us how, when but a young Roman deacon, Gregory had noted the white bodies, the fair faces, the golden hair of some youths who stood bound in the market place of Rome. "From what country do these slaves come?" he asked the traders who brought them. "They are English, Angles!" the slave-dealers answered. The deacon's pity veiled itself in poetic humour. "Not Angles but Angels," he said, "with faces so angel-like! From what country come they?" "They come," said the merchants, "from Deira." "De ira!" was the untranslateable reply; "aye, plucked from God's ire, and called to Christ's mercy! And what is the name of their king?" "Ælla," they told him; and Gregory seized on the words as of good omen. "Alleluia shall be sung in Ælla's land!" he cried, and passed on, musing how the angel faces should be brought to sing it. Only three or four years had gone by, when the deacon had become Bishop of Rome, and Bertha's marriage gave him the opening he sought. After cautious negotiations with the rulers of Gaul, he sent a Roman abbot, Augustine, at the head of a band of monks, to preach the gospel to the English people. The missionaries landed in 597 on the very spot where Hengest had landed more than a century before in the Isle of Thanet; and the king received them sitting in the open air on the chalk-down above Minster, where the eye nowadays catches miles away over the marshes the dim tower of Canterbury. He listened to the long sermon as the interpreters

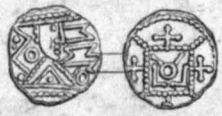
Landing of Augustine
c. 589

S. LUKE, FROM THE GOSPEL-BOOK OF S. AUGUSTINE.
Now at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.

whom Augustine had brought with him from Gaul translated it. "Your words are fair," Æthelberht replied at last with English good sense, "but they are new and of doubtful meaning;" for himself, he said, he refused to forsake the gods of his fathers, but he promised shelter and protection to the strangers. The band of monks entered Canterbury bearing before them a silver cross with a picture of Christ, and singing in concert the strains of the litany of their church. "Turn from this city, Lord," they sang, "Thine anger and wrath, and turn it from Thy holy house, for we have sinned." And then in strange contrast came the jubilant cry of the older Hebrew worship, the cry which Gregory had wrested in prophetic earnestness from the name of the Yorkshire king in the Roman market-place, "Alleluia!"

Reunion of England and the Western World

It is strange that the spot which witnessed the landing of Hengest should be yet better known as the landing-place of Augustine. But the second landing at Ebbsfleet was in no small



SCEATTA, RUNIC TYPE.

SCEATTAS, ROMAN TYPE.

measure the reversal and undoing of the first. "Strangers from Rome" was the title with which the missionaries first fronted the English king. The march of the monks as they chanted their solemn litany was, in one sense, the return of the Roman legions who had retired at the trumpet-call of Alaric. It was to the tongue and the thought not of Gregory only but of such men as his own Jutish fathers had slaughtered and driven over sea that Æthelberht listened in the preaching of Augustine. Canterbury, the earliest royal city of the new England, became the centre of Latin influence. The Roman tongue became again one of the tongues of Britain, the language of its worship, its correspondence, its literature. But more than the tongue of Rome returned with

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Augustine. Practically his landing renewed the union with the western world which the landing of Hengest had all but destroyed. The new England was admitted into the older commonwealth of nations. The civilization, arts, letters, which had fled before the sword of the English conquest, returned with the Christian faith. The fabric of the Roman law indeed never took root in England, but it is impossible not to recognize the result of the influence of the Roman missionaries in the fact that the codes of customary English law began to be put into writing soon after their arrival.

Fall of Kent

As yet these great results were still distant; a year passed before Æthelberht yielded, and though after his conversion thousands of the Kentish men crowded to baptism, it was years before he ventured to urge the under-kings of Essex and East
604 Anglia to receive the creed of their overlord. This effort of Æthelberht however only heralded a revolution which broke the power of Kent for ever. The tribes of Mid-Britain revolted against his supremacy, and gathered under the overlordship of Rædwald of
607 East Anglia. The revolution clearly marked the change which had passed over Britain. Instead of a chaos of isolated peoples, the conquerors were now in fact gathered into three great groups. The Engle kingdom of the north reached from the Humber to the Forth. The southern kingdom of the West-Saxons stretched from Watling Street to the Channel. And between these was roughly sketched out the great kingdom of Mid-Britain, which, however its limits might vary, retained a substantial identity from the time of Æthelberht till the final fall of the Mercian kings. For the next two hundred years the history of England lies in the struggle of Northumbrian, Mercian, and West-Saxon kings to establish their supremacy over the general mass of Englishmen, and unite them in a single England.

Æthelfrith 593–617

In this struggle the lead was at once taken by Northumbria, which was rising into a power that set all rivalry at defiance. Under Æthelfrith, who had followed Æthelric in 593, the work of conquest went on rapidly. In 603 the forces of the northern Britons were annihilated in a great battle at Dægsastan, and the rule of Northumbria was established from the Humber to the Forth. Along the west of Britain there stretched the unconquered kingdoms of Strathclyde and Cumbria, which extended from the

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river Clyde to the Dee, and the smaller British states which occupied what we now call Wales. Chester formed the link between these two bodies; and it was Chester that Æthelfrith chose in 613 for his next point of attack. Some miles from the city two thousand monks were gathered in the monastery of Bangor, and after imploring in a three days' fast the help of Heaven for their country, a crowd of these ascetics followed the British army to the field. Æthelfrith watched the wild gestures and outstretched arms of the strange company as it stood apart, intent upon prayer, and took the monks for enchanters. "Bear they arms or no," said the king, "they war against us when they cry against us to their God," and in the surprise and rout which followed the monks were the first to fall. 613

The British kingdoms were now utterly parted from one another. By their victory at Deorham the West-Saxons had cut off the Britons of Devon and Cornwall from the general body of their race. By his victory at Chester Æthelfrith broke this body again into two several parts, by parting the Britons of Wales from those of Cumbria and Strathclyde. From this time the warfare of Briton and Englishman died down into a warfare of separate English kingdoms against separate British kingdoms, of Northumbria against Cumbria and Strathclyde, of Mercia against modern Wales, of Wessex against the tract of British country from Mendip to the Land's End. Nor was the victory of Chester of less importance to England itself. With it Æthelfrith was at once drawn to new dreams of ambition as he looked across his southern border, where Rædwald of East Anglia was drawing the peoples of Mid-Britain under his overlordship.

Eadwine 617–633

The inevitable struggle between East Anglia and Northumbria seemed for a time averted by the sudden death of Æthelfrith. Marching in 617 against Rædwald, who had sheltered Eadwine, an exile from the Northumbrian kingdom, he perished in a defeat at the river Idle. Eadwine mounted the Northumbrian throne on the fall of his enemy, and carried on the work of government with an energy as ceaseless as that of Æthelfrith himself. His victories over Pict and Briton were followed by the winning of lordship over the English of Mid-Britain; Kent was bound to him in close political alliance; and the English conquerors of the south, the

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people of the West-Saxons, alone remained independent. But revolt and slaughter had fatally broken the power of the West-Saxons

626 when the Northumbrians attacked them. A story preserved by Bæda tells something of the fierceness of the struggle which ended

in the subjection of the south to the overlordship of Northumbria. Eadwine gave audience in an Easter court which he held in a king's town near the river Derwent to Eumer, an envoy of Wessex, who brought a message from its king. In the midst of the conference the envoy started to his feet, drew a dagger from his robe, and rushed madly on the Northumbrian sovereign. Lilla, one of the king's war-band, threw himself between Eadwine and his assassin ; but so furious was the stroke that even through Lilla's body the dagger still reached its aim. The king however recovered

OLD ENGLISH GLASS VESSELS.
Akerman, "Pagan Saxondom."

from his wound to march on the West-Saxons ; he slew and subdued all who had conspired against him, and returned victorious to his own country. The greatness of Northumbria now reached its height. Within his own dominions Eadwine displayed a genius for civil government which shows how completely the mere age of conquest had passed away. With him began the English proverb so often applied to after kings, "A woman with her babe might walk scatheless from sea to sea in Eadwine's day." Peaceful communication revived along the deserted highways ; the springs by the roadside were marked with stakes, and a cup of brass set beside each for the traveller's refreshment. Some faint traditions of the

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Roman past may have flung their glory round this new "Empire of the English;" some of its majesty had at any rate come back with its long-lost peace. A royal standard of purple and gold floated before Eadwine as he rode through the villages; a feather-tuft attached to a spear, the Roman tufa, preceded him as he walked through the streets. The Northumbrian king was in fact supreme over Britain as no king of English blood had been before. Northward his frontier reached the Forth, and was guarded by a city which bore his name, Edinburgh, Eadwine's burgh, the city of Eadwine. Westward, he was master of Chester, and the fleet he equipped there subdued the isles of Anglesey and Man. South of the Humber he was owned as overlord by the whole English race, save Kent; and even Kent was bound to him by his marriage with its king's sister.

OLD ENGLISH BRONZE PATERA.
Akerman, "Pagan Saxondom."

Conversion of Northumbria

With the Kentish queen came Paulinus, one of Augustine's followers, whose tall stooping form, slender, aquiline nose, and black hair falling round a thin worn face, were long remembered in the north; and the Wise Men of Northumbria gathered to deliberate on the new faith to which Paulinus and his queen soon converted Eadwine. To finer minds its charm lay in the light it threw on the darkness which encompassed men's lives, the darkness of the future as of the past. "So seems the life of man, O king," burst forth an aged Ealdorman, "as a sparrow's flight through the hall when you are sitting at meat in winter-tide, with the warm fire lighted on the hearth, but the icy rain-storm without. The sparrow flies in at one door and tarries for a moment in the light and heat of the hearth-fire, and then flying forth from the other vanishes into the wintry darkness whence it came. So tarries for a moment the life of man in our sight, but what is before it, what after it, we know not. If this new teaching tells us aught certainly of these, let us follow it." Coarser argument told on the crowd. "None of

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your people, Eadwine, have worshipped the gods more busily than I," said Coifi the priest, "yet there are many more favoured and more fortunate. Were these gods good for anything they would help their worshippers." Then leaping on horseback, he hurled his spear into the sacred temple at Godmanham, and with the rest of the Witan embraced the religion of the king.

The Heathen Struggle

But the faith of Woden and Thunder was not to fall without a struggle. Even in Kent a reaction against the new creed began with the death of Æthelberht. Rædwald of East Anglia resolved to serve Christ and the older gods together; and a pagan and Christian altar fronted one another in the same royal temple. The young kings of the East-Saxons burst into the church where Mellitus, the Bishop of London, was administering the Eucharist to the people, crying, "Give us that white bread you gave to our father Saba," and on the bishop's refusal drove him from their realm. The tide of reaction was checked for a time by Eadwine's conversion, until Mercia sprang into a sudden greatness as the champion of the heathen gods. Under Eadwine Mercia had submitted to the lordship of Northumbria; but its king, Penda, saw in the rally of the old religion a chance of winning back its independence. Penda had not only united under his own rule the Mercians of the Upper Trent, the Middle-English of Leicester, the Southumbrians, and the Lindiswaras, but he had even been strong enough to tear from the West-Saxons their possessions along the Severn. So thoroughly indeed was the union of these provinces effected, that though some were detached for a time after Penda's death, the name of Mercia from this moment must be generally taken as covering the whole of them. Alone, however, he was as yet no match for Northumbria. But the old severance between the English people and the Britons was fast dying down, and Penda boldly broke through the barrier which parted the two races, and 633
allied himself with the Welsh king, Cadwallon, in an attack on Eadwine. The armies met in 633 at Hatfield, and in the fight which followed Eadwine was defeated and slain. The victory was turned to profit by the ambition of Penda, while Northumbria was torn with the strife which followed Eadwine's fall. To complete his dominion over Mid-Britain, Penda marched against East Anglia. The East Engle had returned to heathendom from the oddly

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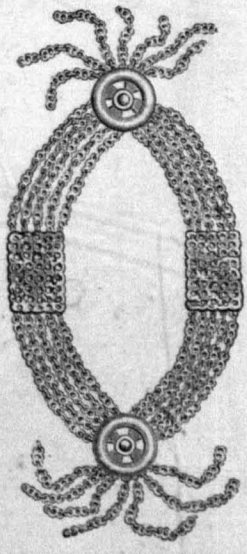
mingled religion of their first Christian king, Rædwald; but the new faith was brought back by the present king, Sigeberht. Before

the threat of Penda's attack Sigeberht left his throne for a monastery, but his people dragged him again from his cell on the

news of Penda's invasion in 634, in faith that his presence would bring them the favour of Heaven. The monk-king was set in the forefront of the battle, but he would bear no weapon save a wand, and his fall was followed by the rout of his army and the submission of his kingdom. Meanwhile Cadwallon remained harrying in the heart of Deira, and made himself master even of York. But the triumph of the Britons was as brief as it was strange. Oswald, a second son of Æthelfrith, placed himself at the head of his race, and a small Northumbrian force gathered in 635 under their new king near the Roman Wall. Oswald set up a cross of wood as his standard, holding it with his own hands till the hollow in which it was fixed was filled in by his soldiers; then throwing himself on his knees, he cried to his host to pray to the living God. Cadwallon, the last great hero of the British race, fell fighting on the "Heaven's Field," as after times called the field of battle, and for seven years the power of Oswald equalled that of Æthelfrith and Eadwine.

635

OLD ENGLISH GOLD CROSS.
British Museum.



FRAGMENT OF A SUIT OF BRONZE RING-MAIL.
Irish.
Museum of Royal Irish Academy.

It was not the Church of Paulinus which nerved Oswald to this struggle for the Cross. Paulinus had fled from Northumbria at Eadwine's fall; and the Roman Church in Kent shrank into inactivity before the heathen reaction. Its place in the conversion of England was taken by missionaries from Ireland. To understand, however, the true meaning of the change, we must remember that before the landing of the English in Britain, the Christian Church comprised every

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The Irish Church

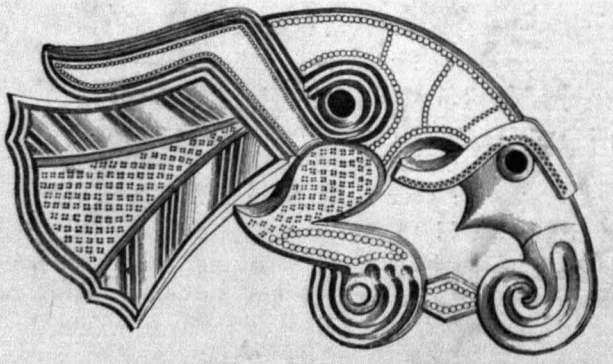
country, save Germany, in Western Europe, as far as Ireland itself. The conquest of Britain by the pagan English thrust a

NIELLO PENDANT HOOK.
Irish.

BRONZE DISC.
Irish.

Museum of Royal Irish Academy.

wedge of heathendom into the heart of this great communion and broke it into two unequal parts. On the one side lay Italy, Spain, and Gaul, whose Churches owned obedience to the See



ORNAMENT OF GILDED BRONZE, FOUND IN GOTLAND.
Shewing connexion between Scandinavian and Irish art.
Montelius, "Civilization of Sweden."

of Rome, on the other the Church of Ireland. But the condition of the two portions of Western Christendom was very different. While the vigour of Christianity in Italy and Gaul and

Spain was exhausted in a bare struggle for life, Ireland, which remained unscourged by invaders, drew from its conversion an energy such as it has never known since. Christianity had been received there with a burst of popular enthusiasm, and letters and arts sprang up rapidly in its train. The science and Biblical knowledge which fled from the Continent took refuge in famous schools which made Durrow and Armagh the universities of the West. The new Christian life soon beat too strongly to brook confinement within the bounds of Ireland itself. Patrick, the first missionary of the island, had not been half a century dead when Irish Christianity flung itself with a fiery zeal into battle with the

PLATE OF GILDED BRONZE, FOUND IN GOTLAND.
Shewing connexion between Scandinavian and Irish art.
Montelius, "*Civilization of Sweden.*"

mass of heathenism which was rolling in upon the Christian world. Irish missionaries laboured among the Picts of the Highlands and among the Frisians of the northern seas. An Irish missionary, Columban, founded monasteries in Burgundy and the Apennines. The canton of St. Gall still commemorates in its name another Irish missionary before whom the spirits of flood and fell fled wailing over the waters of the Lake of Constance. For a time it seemed as if the course of the world's history was to be changed, as if the older Celtic race that Roman and German had swept before them had turned to the moral conquest of their conquerors, as if Celtic and not Latin Christianity was to mould the destinies of the Churches of the West.

Oswald 634-642

On a low island of barren gneiss-rock off the west coast of Scotland an Irish refugee, Columba, had raised the famous monastery of Iona. Oswald in youth found refuge within its walls, and on his accession to the throne of Northumbria he called for missionaries from among its monks. The first despatched in answer to his call

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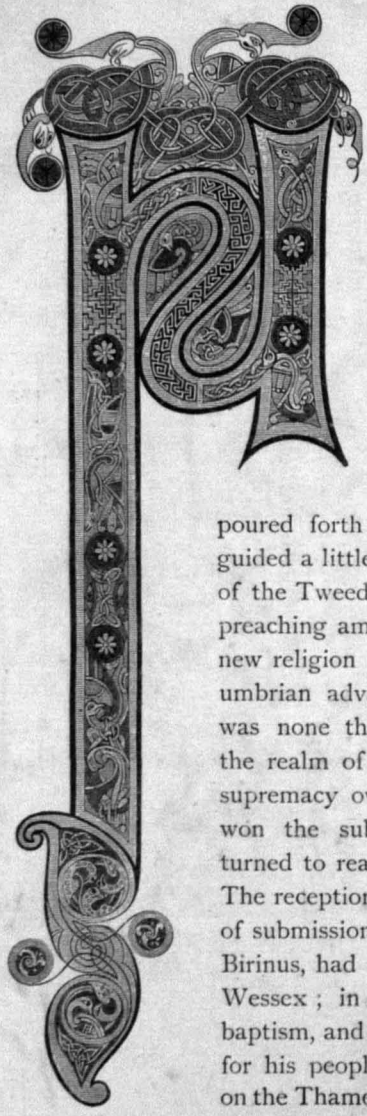
obtained little success. He declared on his return that among a people so stubborn and barbarous success was impossible. "Was it their stubbornness or your severity?" asked Aidan, a brother sitting by; "did you forget God's word to give them the milk first and then the meat?" All eyes turned on the speaker as fittest to undertake the abandoned mission, and Aidan sailing at their bidding fixed his bishop's stool or see in the island-peninsula of Lindisfarne. Thence, from a monastery which gave to the spot its after name of Holy Island, preachers poured forth over the heathen realms. Boisil guided a little troop of missionaries to the valley of the Tweed. Aidan himself wandered on foot preaching among the peasants of Bernicia. The new religion served as a prelude to the Northumbrian advance. If Oswald was a saint, he was none the less resolved to build up again the realm of Eadwine. Having extended his supremacy over the Britons of Strathclyde and won the submission of the Lindiswaras, he turned to reassert his supremacy over Wessex. The reception of the new faith became the mark of submission to his overlordship. A preacher, Birinus, had already penetrated from Gaul into Wessex; in Oswald's presence its king received baptism, and established with his assent a see for his people in the royal city of Dorchester on the Thames. Oswald ruled as wide a realm as his predecessor; but for after times the memory of his greatness was lost in the legends of his piety. A new conception of kingship began to



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"Book of Kells," Irish MS., seventh century.
M. Stokes, "Early Christian Art in Ireland."

blend itself with that of the warlike glory of Æthelfrith or the wise administration of Eadwine. The moral power which was to

reach its height in Ælfred first dawns in the story of Oswald. In his own court the king acted as interpreter to the Irish missionaries

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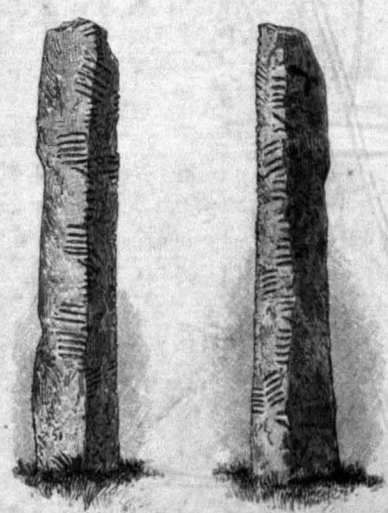
in their efforts to convert his thegns. "By reason of his constant habit of praying or giving thanks to the Lord he was wont wherever he sat to hold his hands upturned on his knees." As he feasted with Bishop Aidan by his side, the thegn, or noble of his war-band, whom he had set to give alms to the poor at his gate, told him of a multitude that still waited fasting without. The king at once bade the untasted meat before him be carried to the poor and his silver dish be divided piecemeal among them. Aidan seized the royal hand and blessed it. "May this hand," he cried, "never grow old."

Penda 626-655

Prisoned, however, as it was by the conversion of Wessex to the central districts of England, heathendom fought desperately for life. Penda was still its rallying-point; but if his long reign was one continuous battle with the new religion, it was in fact rather a struggle against the supremacy of Northumbria than against the supremacy of the Cross. East Anglia became at last the field of contest between the two powers. In 642 Oswald marched to deliver it from Penda; but in a battle called the battle of the Maserfeld he was overthrown and slain. His body was mutilated and his limbs set on stakes by the brutal conqueror; but legend told that when all else of Oswald had perished, the "white hand" that Aidan had blessed still remained white and uncorrupted. For a few years after his victory at the Maserfeld Penda stood supreme in Britain. Wessex owned his overlordship as it had owned that of Oswald, and its king threw off the Christian faith and married Penda's sister. Even Deira seems to have bowed to him, and Bernicia alone refused to yield. Year by year Penda carried his ravages over the



IRISH OGHAM STONE.
Museum of Royal Irish Academy.

north ; once he reached even the royal city, the impregnable rock-fortress of Bamborough. Despairing of success in an assault, he pulled down the cottages around, and, piling their wood against its walls, fired the mass in a fair wind that drove the flames on the town. "See, Lord, what ill Penda is doing," cried Aidan from his hermit cell in the islet of Farne, as he saw the smoke drifting over the city ; and a change of wind—so ran the legend of Northumbria's agony—drove back at the words the flames on those who kindled them. But in spite of Penda's victories, the faith which he had so often struck down revived everywhere around him. Burnt and harried as it was, Bernicia still clung to the Cross. The East-Saxons again became Christian. Penda's own son, whom he had set over the Middle-English, received baptism and teachers from Lindisfarne. The missionaries of the new faith appeared fearlessly among the Mercians themselves, and Penda gave no hindrance. Heathen to the last, he stood by unheeding if any were willing to hear ; hating and scorning with a certain grand sincerity of nature "those whom he saw not doing the works of the faith they had received." But the track of Northumbrian missionaries along the eastern coast marked the growth of Northumbrian overlordship, and the old man roused himself for a last stroke at his foes. On the death of Oswald Oswiu had been called to fill his throne, and in 655 he met the pagan host near the river Winwæd. It was in vain that the Northumbrians had sought to avert Penda's attack by offers of ornaments and costly gifts. "Since the pagans will not take our gifts," Oswiu cried at last, "let us offer them to One that will ;" and he vowed that if successful he would dedicate his daughter to God and endow twelve monasteries in his realm. Victory at last declared for the faith of Christ. The river over which the Mercians fled was swollen with a great rain ; it swept away the fragments of the heathen host, Penda himself was slain, and the cause of the older gods was lost for ever.

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COIN OF PEADA, RULER OF THE MIDDLE ANGLES, 652–655.

The terrible struggle was followed by a season of peace. For four years after the battle of Winwæd Mercia was subject to Oswiu's

Oswiu 642–670

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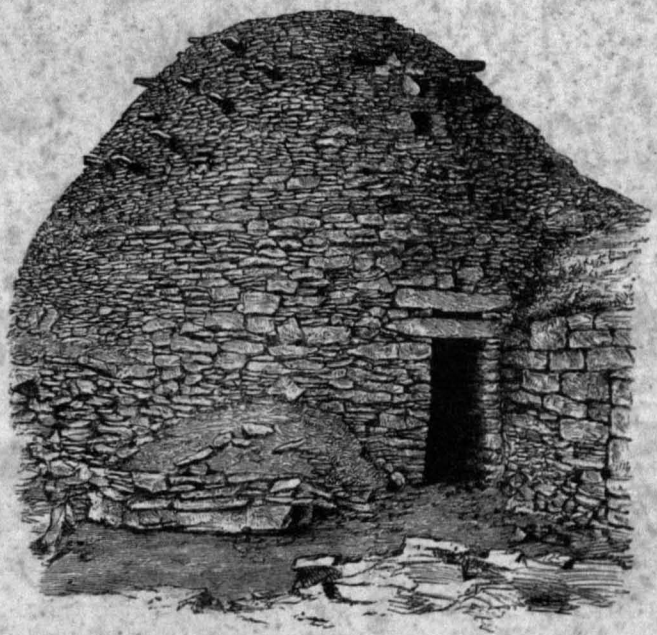
overlordship. But in 659 a general rising of the people threw off the Northumbrian yoke. The heathendom of Mercia however was dead with Penda. "Being thus freed," Bæda tells us, "the Mercians with their king rejoiced to serve the true King, Christ." Its three provinces, the earlier Mercia, the Middle-English, and the Lindiswaras, were united in the bishopric of Ceadda, the St. Chad to whom the Mercian see of Lichfield still looks as its founder.



MONASTIC CELL, SKELLIG MICHAEL.
Anderson, "Scotland in Early Christian Times."

Ceadda was a monk of Lindisfarne, so simple and lowly in temper that he travelled on foot on his long mission journeys, till Archbishop Theodore in later days with his own hands lifted him on horseback. The poetry of Christian enthusiasm breaks out in his death-legend, as it tells us how voices of singers singing sweetly descended from Heaven to the little cell beside St. Mary's Church where the bishop lay dying. Then "the same song ascended from the roof again, and returned heavenward by the way that it came." It was

the soul of his brother, the missionary Cedd, come with a choir of angels to solace the last hours of Ceadda. In Northumbria the work of his fellow missionaries has almost been lost in the glory of Cuthbert. No story better lights up for us the new religious life of the time than the story of this apostle of the Lowlands. It carries us at its outset into the northernmost part of Northumbria, the country of the Teviot and the Tweed. Born on the Southern edge of the Lammermoor, Cuthbert found shelter at eight years old in a widow's house in the little village of Wrangholm. Already in youth there was a poetic sensibility beneath the robust frame of the boy which caught even in the chance word of a game a call to higher things. Later on, a traveller coming in his white mantle over the hillside and stopping his horse to tend Cuthbert's

ORATORY AT GALLARUS, CO. KERRY.
Stokes, "Early Christian Art in Ireland."

injured knee seemed to him an angel. The boy's shepherd life carried him to the bleak upland, still famous as a sheep-walk, though the scant herbage scarce veils the whinstone rock, and there meteors plunging into the night became to him a company of angelic spirits, carrying the soul of Bishop Aidan heavenward.

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Slowly Cuthbert's longings settled into a resolute will towards a religious life, and he made his way at last to a group of log-shanties

in the midst of an untilled solitude where a few Irish monks from Lindisfarne had settled in the mission-station of Melrose. To-day

the land is a land of poetry and romance. Cheviot and Lammermoor, Ettrick and Teviotdale, Yarrow and Annan-water, are musical with old ballads and border minstrelsy. Agriculture has chosen its valleys for her favourite seat, and drainage and steam-power have turned sedgy marshes into farm and meadow. But to see the Lowlands as they were in Cuthbert's day we must sweep meadow and farm away again, and replace them by vast solitudes, dotted here and there with clusters of wooden hovels, and crossed by boggy tracks over which travellers rode spear in hand and eye kept cautiously about them. The Northumbrian peasantry among whom he journeyed were for the most part Christians only in name. With Teutonic indifference they had yielded to their thegns in nominally accepting the new Christianity, as these had yielded to the king. But they retained their old superstitions side by side with the new worship; plague or mishap drove them back to a reliance on their heathen charms and amulets; and if trouble befell the Christian preachers who came settling among them they took it as proof of the wrath of the older gods. When some log-rafts which were floating down the Tyne for the construction of an abbey at its mouth drifted with the monks who were at work on them out to sea, the rustic bystanders shouted, "Let nobody pray for them; let nobody pity these men, who have taken away from us our old worship; and how their new-fangled customs are to be kept nobody knows." On foot, on horseback, Cuthbert wandered among listeners such as these, choosing above all the remoter mountain villages from whose roughness and poverty other teachers turned aside. Unlike his Irish comrades, he needed no interpreter as he passed from village to village; the frugal, long-headed Northumbrians listened

BELL OF CUMASCACH MAC AILLELLO, STEWARD OF ARMAGH, END OF NINTH CENTURY.
Stokes, "Early Christian Art in Ireland."

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willingly to one who was himself a peasant of the Lowlands, and who had caught the rough Northumbrian burr along the banks of the Tweed. His patience, his humorous good sense, the sweetness of his look, told for him, and not less the stout vigorous frame which fitted the peasant-preacher for the hard life he had chosen. "Never did man die of hunger who served God faithfully," he would say, when nightfall found them supperless in the waste. "Look at the eagle overhead! God can feed us through him if He will"—and once at least he owed his meal to a fish that the scared bird let fall. A snow-storm drove his boat on the coast of Fife. "The snow closes the road along the shore," mourned his comrades; "the storm bars our way over sea." "There is still the way of Heaven that lies open," said Cuthbert.

Cædmon

While missionaries were thus labouring among its peasantry, Northumbria saw the rise of a number of monasteries, not bound indeed by the strict ties of the Benedictine rule, but gathered on the loose Celtic model of the family or the clan round some noble and wealthy person who sought devotional retirement. The most notable and wealthy of these houses was that of Streoneshealh, where Hild, a woman of royal race, reared her abbey on the summit of the dark cliffs of Whitby, looking out over the Northern Sea. Her counsel was sought even by nobles and kings; and the double monastery over which she ruled became a seminary of bishops and priests. The sainted John of Beverley was among her

Before 680

scholars. But the name which really throws glory over Whitby is the name of a lay-brother from whose lips flowed the first great English song. Though well advanced in years, Cædmon had learnt nothing of the art of verse, the alliterative jingle so common among his fellows, "wherefore being sometimes at feasts, when all agreed for glee's sake to sing in turn, he no sooner saw the harp come towards him than he rose from the board and turned homewards. Once when he had done thus, and gone from the feast to the stable where he had that night charge of the cattle, there appeared to him in his sleep One who said, greeting him by name, 'Sing, Cædmon, some song to Me.' 'I cannot sing,' he answered; 'for this cause left I the feast and came hither.' He who talked with him answered, 'However that be, you shall sing to Me.' 'What shall I sing?' rejoined Cædmon. 'The beginning of created

things,' replied He. In the morning the cowherd stood before Hild and told his dream. Abbess and brethren alike concluded 'that heavenly grace had been conferred on him by the Lord.' They translated for Cædmon a passage in Holy Writ, 'bidding him, if he could, put the same into verse.' The next morning he gave it them composed in excellent verse, whereon the abbess, understanding the divine grace in the man, bade him quit the secular habit and take on him the monastic life." Piece by piece the sacred story was thus thrown into Cædmon's poem. "He sang of the creation of the world, of the origin of man, and of all the history of Israel; of their departure from Egypt and entering into the Promised Land; of the incarnation, passion, and resurrection of Christ, and of His ascension; of the terror of future judgment, the horror of hell-pangs, and the joys of heaven."

English Song

To men of that day this sudden burst of song seemed a thing necessarily divine. "Others after him strove to compose religious poems, but none could vie with him, for he learned the art of poetry not from men nor of men, but from God." It was not indeed that any change had been wrought by Cædmon in the outer form of English song. The collection of poems which is connected with his name has come down to us in a later West-Saxon version, and though modern criticism is still in doubt as to their authorship, they are certainly the work of various hands. The verse, whether of Cædmon or of other singers, is accented and alliterative, without conscious art or development or the delight that springs from reflection, a verse swift and direct, but leaving behind it a sense of strength rather than of beauty, obscured too by harsh metaphors and involved construction. But it is eminently the verse of warriors, the brief passionate expression of brief passionate emotions. Image after image, phrase after phrase, in these early poems, start out vivid, harsh, and emphatic. The very metre is rough with a sort of self-violence and repression; the verses fall like sword-strokes in the thick of battle. The love of natural description, the background of melancholy which gives its pathos to English verse, the poet only shared with earlier singers. But the faith of Christ brought in, as we have seen, new realms of fancy. The legends of the heavenly light, Bæda's story of "The Sparrow," show the side of English temperament to which

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Christianity appealed—its sense of the vague, vast mystery of the world and of man, its dreamy revolt against the narrow bounds of experience and life. It was this new poetic world which combined with the old in the so-called epic of Cædmon. In its various poems the vagueness and daring of the Teutonic imagination pass beyond the limits of the Hebrew story to a "swart hell without light and full of flame," swept only at dawn by the icy east wind, on whose floor lie bound the apostate angels. The human energy of the German race, its sense of the might of individual manhood, transformed in English verse the Hebrew Tempter into a rebel Satan, disdainful of vassalage to God. "I may be a God as He," Satan cries amidst his torments. "Evil it seems to me to cringe to Him for any good." Even in this terrible outburst of the fallen spirit we catch the new pathetic note which the northern melancholy was to give to our poetry. "This is to me the chief of sorrow, that Adam, wrought of earth, should hold my strong seat —should dwell in joy while we endure this torment. Oh, that for one winter hour I had power with my hands, then with this host would I—but around me lie the iron bonds, and this chain galls me." On the other hand the enthusiasm for the Christian God, faith in whom had been bought so dearly by years of desperate struggle, breaks out in long rolls of sonorous epithets of praise and adoration. The temper of the poets brings them near to the earlier fire and passion of the Hebrew, as the events of their time brought them near to the old Bible history with its fights and wanderings. "The wolves sing their dread evensong; the fowls of war, greedy of battle, dewy-feathered, scream around the host of Pharaoh," as wolf howled and eagle screamed round the host of Penda. Everywhere we mark the new grandeur, depth, and fervour of tone which the German race was to give to the religion of the East.

Synod of Whitby

But even before Cædmon had begun to sing, the Christian Church of Northumbria was torn in two by a strife whose issue was decided in the same abbey of Whitby where Cædmon dwelt. The labours of Aidan, the victories of Oswald and Oswiu, seemed to have annexed England to the Irish Church. The monks of Lindisfarne, or of the new religious houses whose foundation followed that of Lindisfarne, looked for their ecclesiastical tradition, not

to Rome but to Ireland; and quoted for their guidance the instructions, not of Gregory, but of Columba. Whatever claims of supremacy over the whole English Church might be pressed by the see of Canterbury, the real metropolitan of the Church as it existed in the north of England was the Abbot of Iona. But Oswiu's queen brought with her from Kent the loyalty of the Kentish Church to the Roman See, and a Roman party at once formed about her. Her efforts were seconded by those of two young thegns whose love of Rome mounted to a passionate fanaticism. The life of Wilfrid of York was a series of flights to Rome and returns to England, of wonderful successes in pleading the right of Rome to the obedience of the Church of Northumbria, and of as wonderful defeats. Benedict Biscop worked towards the same end in a quieter fashion, coming backwards and forwards across the sea with books and relics and cunning masons and painters to rear a great church and monastery at Wearmouth, whose brethren owned obedience to the Roman See. In 652 they first set out for a visit to the imperial city; and the elder, Benedict Biscop, soon returned to preach ceaselessly against the Irish usages. He was followed by Wilfrid, whose energy soon brought the quarrel to a head. The strife between the two parties rose so high at last that Oswiu was prevailed upon to summon in 664 a great council at Whitby, where the future ecclesiastical allegiance of England should be decided. The points actually contested were trivial enough. Colman, Aidan's successor at Holy Island, pleaded for the Irish fashion of the tonsure, and for the Irish time of keeping Easter; Wilfrid pleaded for the Roman. The one disputant appealed to the authority of Columba, the other to that of St. Peter. "You own," cried the king at last to Colman, "that Christ gave to Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven—has He given such power to Columba?" The bishop could but answer "No." "Then will I rather obey the porter of Heaven," said Oswiu, "lest when I reach its gates he who has the keys in his keeping turn his

OLD ENGLISH CLASPS.
Akerman, "Pagan Saxondom."

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back on me, and there be none to open." The importance of Oswiu's judgment was never doubted at Lindisfarne, where Colman, followed by the whole of the Irish-born brethren and thirty of their English fellows, forsook the see of Aidan and sailed away to Iona. Trivial in fact as were the actual points of difference which severed the Roman Church from the Irish, the question to which communion Northumbria should belong was

OLD ENGLISH NECKLACES.
British Museum.

of immense moment to the after fortunes of England. Had the Church of Aidan finally won, the later ecclesiastical history of England would probably have resembled that of Ireland. Devoid of that power of organization which was the strength of the Roman Church, the Celtic Church in its own Irish home took the clan system of the country as the basis of Church government. Tribal quarrels and ecclesiastical controversies became inextricably confounded; and the clergy, robbed of all really spiritual influence, contributed no element save that of disorder to the

state. Hundreds of wandering bishops, a vast religious authority wielded by hereditary chieftains, the dissociation of piety from morality, the absence of those larger and more humanizing influences which contact with a wider world alone can give, this is the picture which the Irish Church of later times presents to us. It was from such a chaos as this that England was saved by the victory of Rome in the Synod of Whitby.

Theodore 669–690

The Church of England, as we know it to-day, is the work, so far as its outer form is concerned, of a Greek monk, Theodore of Tarsus, whom Rome, after her victory at Whitby, despatched in 669 as Archbishop of Canterbury, to secure England to her sway. Theodore's work was determined in its main outlines by the previous history of the English people. The conquest of the Continent had been wrought either by races such as the Goths, who were already Christian, or by heathens like the Franks, who bowed to the Christian faith of the nations they conquered. To this oneness of religion between the German invaders of the Empire and their Roman subjects was owing the preservation of all that survived of the Roman world. The Church everywhere remained untouched. The Christian bishop became the defender of the conquered Italian or Gaul against his Gothic and Lombard conqueror, the mediator between the German and his subjects, the one bulwark against barbaric violence and oppression. To the barbarian on the other hand he was the representative of all that was venerable in the past, the living record of law, of letters, and of art. But in Britain priesthood and people had been exterminated together. When Theodore came to organize the Church of England, the very memory of the older Christian Church which existed in Roman Britain had passed away. The first Christian missionaries, strangers in a heathen land, attached themselves necessarily to the courts of the kings, who were their first converts, and whose conversion was generally followed by that of their people. The English bishops were thus at first royal chaplains, and their diocese was naturally nothing but the kingdom. The kingdom of Kent became the diocese of Canterbury, and the kingdom of Northumbria the diocese of York. In this way too realms which are all but forgotten are commemorated in the limits of existing sees. That of Rochester represented till of late an obscure kingdom of

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West Kent, and the frontier of the original kingdom of Mercia might be recovered by following the map of the ancient bishopric of Lichfield. Theodore's first work was to order the dioceses; his second was to add many new sees to the old ones, and to group all of them round the one centre of Canterbury. All ties between England and the Irish Church were roughly broken. Lindisfarne sank into obscurity with the flight of Colman and his monks. The new prelates, gathered in synod after synod, acknowledged the authority of their one primate. The organization of the episcopate was followed during the next hundred years by the development of the parish system. The loose system of the mission-station, the monastery from which priest and bishop went forth on journey after journey to preach and baptize, as Aidan went forth from Lindisfarne or Cuthbert from Melrose, naturally disappeared as the land became Christian. The missionaries became settled clergy. The holding of the English noble or landowner became the parish, and his chaplain the parish priest, as the king's chaplain had become the bishop, and the kingdom his diocese. A source of permanent endowment for the clergy was found at a later time in the revival of the Jewish system of tithes, and in the annual gift to Church purposes of a tenth of the produce of the soil; while discipline within the Church itself was provided for by an elaborate code of sin and penance, in which the principle of compensation which lay at the root of Teutonic legislation crept into the relations between God and the soul.

Mercia under Wulfhere

In his work of organization, in his increase of bishoprics, in his arrangement of dioceses, and the way in which he grouped them round the see of Canterbury, in his national synods and ecclesiastical canons, Theodore was unconsciously doing a political work. The old divisions of kingdoms and tribes about him, divisions which had sprung for the most part from mere accidents of the conquest, were fast breaking down. The smaller states were by this time practically absorbed by the three larger ones, and of these three Mercia and Wessex had for a time bowed to the overlordship of Northumbria. The tendency to national unity which was to characterize the new England had thus already declared itself; but the policy of Theodore clothed with a sacred form and surrounded with divine sanctions a unity which as yet rested on no

basis but the sword. The single throne of the one primate at Canterbury accustomed men's minds to the thought of a single throne for their one temporal overlord at York, or, as in later days, at Lichfield or at Winchester. The regular subordination of priest to bishop, of bishop to primate, in the administration of the Church, supplied a mould on which the civil organization of the state quietly shaped itself. Above all, the councils gathered by Theodore were the first of all national gatherings for general legislation. It was at a much later time that the Wise Men of Wessex, or Northumbria, or Mercia, learned to come together in the Witenagemot of all England. It was the ecclesiastical synods which by their example led the way to our national parliament, as it was the canons enacted in such synods which led the way to a national system of law. But if the movement towards national unity was furthered by the centralizing tendencies of the Church, it was as yet hindered by the upgrowth of a great rival power to contest the supremacy with Northumbria. Mercia, as we have seen, had recovered from the absolute subjection in which it was left after Penda's fall by shaking off the supremacy of Oswiu and by choosing Wulfhere for its king. Wulfhere was a vigorous and active ruler, and the peaceful reign of Oswiu left him free to build up again during the sixteen years of his rule the power which had been lost at Penda's death. Penda's realm in Central Britain was quickly restored, and Wulfhere's dominion extended even over the Severn and embraced the lower valley of the Wye. He had even more than his father's success. After a great victory in 661 over the West-Saxons, his ravages were carried into the heart of Wessex, and the valley of the Thames opened to his army. To the eastward, the East-Saxons and London came to own his supremacy ; while southward he pushed across the river over Surrey. In the same year, 661, Sussex, perhaps in dread of the West-Saxons, found protection in accepting Wulfhere's overlordship, and its king was rewarded by a gift of two outlying settlements of the Jutes, the Isle of Wight and the lands of the Meon-wara along the Southampton Water, which we must suppose had been reduced by Mercian arms. The Mercian supremacy which thus reached from the Humber to the Channel and stretched westward to the Wye was the main political fact in Britain when Theodore landed on its shores. In fact, with the death of Oswiu in 670 all

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Progress of Mercia

effort was finally abandoned by Northumbria to crush the rival states in Central or Southern Britain.

The industrial progress of the Mercian kingdom went hand in hand with its military advance. The forests of its western border, the marshes of its eastern coast, were being cleared and drained by monastic colonies, whose success shows the hold which Christianity had now gained over its people. Heathenism indeed still held its own in the western woodlands; we may perhaps see Woden-worshipping miners at Alcester in the dæmons of the legend of Bishop Ecgwine of Worcester, who drowned the preacher's voice with the din of their hammers. But in spite of their hammers Ecgwine's preaching left one lasting mark behind it. The bishop heard how a swineherd, coming out from the forest depths on a sunny glade, saw forms which were possibly those of the Three Fair Women of the old German mythology, seated round a mystic bush, and singing their unearthly song. In his fancy the fair women transformed themselves into a vision of the Mother of Christ; and the silent glade soon became the site of an abbey dedicated to her, and of a town which sprang up under its shelter—the Evesham which was to be hallowed in after time by the fall of Earl Simon of Leicester. Wilder even than the western woodland was the desolate fen-country on the eastern border of the kingdom, stretching from the "Holland," the sunk, hollow land of Lincolnshire, to the channel of the Ouse, a wilderness of shallow waters and reedy islets wrapped in its own dark mist-veil and tenanted only by flocks of screaming wild-fowl. Here through the liberality of King Wulfhere rose the abbey of Medeshamstead, our later Peterborough. On its northern border a hermit, Botulf, founded a little house which as ages went by became our Botulf's town or Boston. The Abbey of Ely was founded in the same wild fen-country by the Lady Æthelthryth, the wife of King Ecgfrith, who in the year 670 succeeded Oswiu on the throne of Northumbria. Here, too, Guthlac, a youth of the royal race of Mercia, sought a refuge from the world in the solitude of Crowland, and so great was the reverence he won, that only two years had passed since his death when the stately abbey of Crowland rose over his tomb. Earth was brought in boats to form a site; the buildings rested on oaken piles driven into the marsh a stone church replaced the hermit's cell, and the toil of the new

brotherhood changed the pools around them into fertile meadow-land.

But while Mercia was building up its dominion in Mid-Britain, Northumbria was far from having sunk from its old

The Fall of Northumbria

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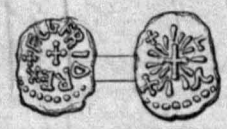
renown either in government or war. Ecgfrith had succeeded his father Oswiu in 670, and made no effort to reverse his policy, or attempt to build up again a supremacy over the states of southern Britain. His ambition turned rather to conquests over the Briton than to victories over his fellow Englishmen. The war between Briton and Englishman, which had languished since the battle of Chester, had been revived some twenty years before by an advance of the West-Saxons to the south-west. Unable to save the possessions of Wessex in the Severn valley and on the Cotswolds from the grasp of Penda, the West-Saxon king, Cenwealh, seized the moment when Mercia was absorbed in the last struggle of Penda against



COIN OF ECGFRITH.

655 Northumbria to seek for compensation in an attack on his Welsh neighbours. A victory at Bradford on the Avon enabled him to overrun the country north of Mendip which had till then been held by the Britons; and a second campaign in 658, which ended in a victory on the skirts of the great forest that covered Somerset to the east, settled the West-Saxons as conquerors round the sources of the Parret. It may have been the example of the West-Saxons which spurred Ecgfrith to enlarge the bounds of his kingdom by a series of attacks upon his British neighbours in the west. His armies chased the Britons from southern Cumbria and made the districts of Carlisle, the Lake country, and our Lancashire English ground. His success in this quarter was quickly followed by fresh gain in the north, where he pushed his conquests over the Scots beyond Clydesdale, and subdued the Picts

OGHAM STONE AT NEWTON, ABERDEENSHIRE.
Anderson, "Scotland in Early Christian Times."

over the Firth of Forth, so that their territory on the northern bank of the Forth was from this time reckoned as Northumbrian ground. The monastery of Abercorn on the shore of the Firth of Forth, in which a few years later a Northumbrian bishop, Trumwine, fixed the seat of a new bishopric, was a sign of the subjection of the Picts to the Northumbrian overlordship. Even when recalled from the wars to his southern border by an attack of Wulfhere's in 675, the vigorous and warlike Ecgfrith proved a different foe from the West-Saxon or the Jute, and the defeat of the king of Mercia was so complete that he was glad to purchase peace by giving up to his conqueror the province of the Lindiswaras or Lincolnshire. A large part of the conquered country of the Lake district was bestowed upon the see of Lindisfarne, which was at this time filled by one whom we have seen before labouring as the Apostle of the Lowlands. After years of mission labour at Melrose, Cuthbert had quitted it for Holy Island, and preached among the moors of Northumberland as he had preached beside the banks of the Tweed. He remained there through the great secession which followed on the Synod of Whitby, and became prior of the dwindled company of brethren, now torn with endless disputes, against which his patience and good humour struggled in vain. Worn out at last he fled to a little island of basaltic rock, one of a group not far from Ida's fortress of Bamborough, strewn for the most part with kelp and seaweed, the home of the gull and the seal. In the midst of it rose his hut of rough stones and turf, dug deep into the rock and roofed with logs and straw.

670–675

The reverence for his sanctity dragged Cuthbert back in old age to fill the vacant see of Lindisfarne. He entered Carlisle, which the king had bestowed upon the bishopric, at a moment when all Northumbria was waiting for news of a fresh campaign of Ecgfrith's against the Britons in the north. The power of Northumbria was already however fatally shaken. In the south, Mercia had in 679 renewed the attempt which had been checked by Wulfhere's defeat. His successor, the Mercian king Æthelred, again seized the province of the Lindiswaras, and the war he thus began with Northumbria was only ended by a peace negotiated through Archbishop Theodore, which left him master of Middle England. Old troubles too revived on Ecgfrith's northern frontier,

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where a rising of the Picts forced him once more to cross the Firth of Forth, and march in the year 685 into their land. A sense of coming ill weighed on Northumbria, and its dread was quickened

DAVID AND HIS CHOIR.
Anglo-Irish; Early Eighth Century.
MS. Cott. Vesp. A. i.

by a memory of the curses which had been pronounced by the bishops of Ireland on the king, when his navy, setting out a year before from the newly-conquered western coast, swept the Irish

shores in a raid which seemed like sacrilege to those who loved the home of Aidan and Columba. As Cuthbert bent over a Roman fountain which still stood unharmed amongst the ruins of Carlisle, the anxious bystanders thought they caught words of ill-omen falling from the old man's lips. "Perhaps," he seemed to murmur, "at this very hour the peril of the fight is over and done." "Watch and pray," he said, when they questioned him on the morrow; "watch and pray." In a few days more a solitary fugitive escaped from the slaughter told that the Picts had turned desperately to bay as the English army entered Fife; and that Ecgfrith and 685 the flower of his nobles lay, a ghastly ring of corpses, on the far-off moorland of Nectansmere.

Death of Cuthbert

To Cuthbert the tidings were tidings of death. His bishopric was soon laid aside, and two months after his return to his island-hermitage the old man lay dying, murmuring to the last words of concord and peace. A signal of his death had been agreed upon, and one of those who stood by ran with a candle in each hand to a place whence the light might be seen by a monk who was looking out from the watchtower of Lindisfarne. As the tiny gleam flashed over the dark reach of sea, and the watchman hurried with his news into the church, the brethren of Holy Island were singing, as it chanced, the words of the Psalmist: "Thou hast cast us out and scattered us abroad; Thou hast also been displeased; Thou hast shown thy people heavy things; Thou hast given us a drink of deadly wine." The chant was the dirge, not of Cuthbert only, but of his Church and his people. Over both hung the gloom of a seeming failure. Strangers who knew not Iona and Columba entered into the heritage of Aidan and Cuthbert. As the Roman communion folded England again beneath her wing, men forgot that a Church which passed utterly away had battled with Rome for the spiritual headship of Western Christendom, and that throughout the great struggle with the heathen reaction of Mid-Britain the new religion had its centre not at Canterbury, but at Lindisfarne. Nor were men long to remember that from the days of Æthelfrith to the days of Ecgfrith English politics had found their centre at York. But forgotten or no, Northumbria had done its work. By its missionaries and by its sword it had won England from heathendom to the Christian Church. It had given her a new poetic

Sec. IV
The Three Kingdoms
685 to 828

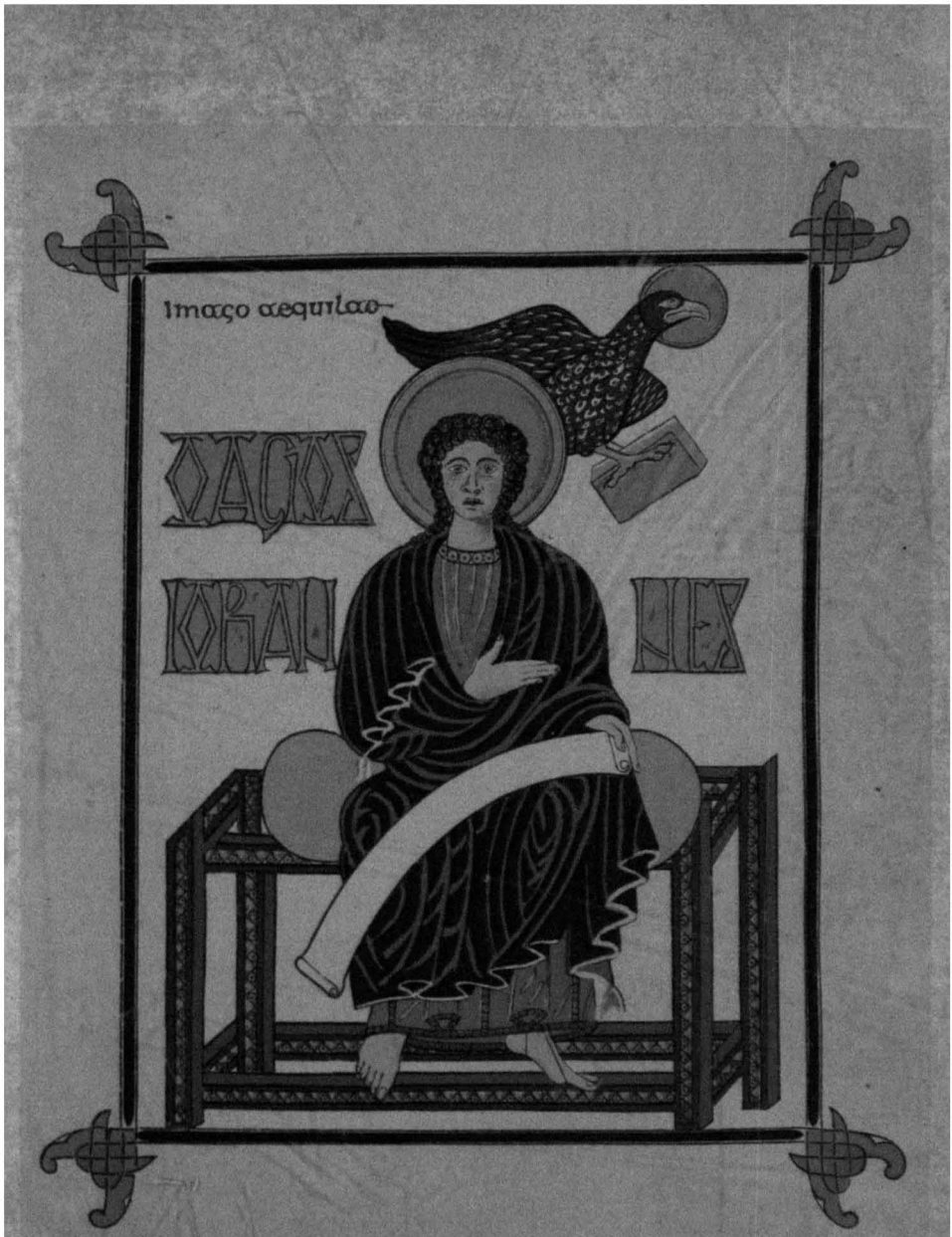
literature. Its monasteries were already the seat of whatever intellectual life the country possessed. Above all it had first gathered together into a loose political unity the various tribes of the English people, and by standing at their head for half a century had accustomed them to a national life, out of which England as we have it now, was to spring.

Section IV.—The Three Kingdoms, 685—828.

[*Authorities.*—A few incidents of Mercian history are preserved among the meagre annals of Wessex, which form, during this period, "The English Chronicle." But for the most part we are thrown upon later writers, especially Henry of Huntingdon and William of Malmesbury, both authors of the twelfth century, but having access to older materials now lost. The letters of Boniface and those of Alcuin, which form the most valuable contemporary materials for this period, are given by Dr. Giles in his "Patres Ecclesiæ Anglicanæ." They have also been carefully edited by Jaffé in his series of "Monumenta Germanica."]

Ine of Wessex
688–726

The supremacy of Northumbria over the English people had fallen for ever with the death of Oswiu, and its power over the tribes of the north was as completely broken by the death of Ecgfrith and the defeat of Nectansmere. To the north, the flight of Bishop Trumwine from Abercorn announced the revolt of the Picts from her rule. In the south, Mercia proved a formidable rival under Æthelred, who had succeeded Wulfhere in 675. Already his kingdom reached from the Humber to the Channel; and Æthelred in the first years of his reign had finally reduced Kent beneath his overlordship. All hope of national union seemed indeed at an end, for the revival of the West-Saxon power at this moment completed the parting of the land into three states of nearly equal power out of which it seemed impossible that unity could come. Since their overthrow at Faddiley, a hundred years before, the West-Saxons had been weakened by anarchy and civil war, and had been at the mercy alike of the rival English states and of the Britons. We have seen however that in 652 a revival of power had enabled them to drive back the Britons to the Parret. A second interval of order in 682 strengthened King Centwine again to take up war with the Britons, and push his frontier as far as the Quantocks,



S. JOHN THE EVANGELIST

From the Lindisfarne Gospel-book MS. Cott. Nero D. IV

A.D. 720

A third rally of the West-Saxons in 685 under Ceadwalla enabled them to turn on their English enemies and conquer Sussex. Ine, the greatest of their early kings, whose reign covered the long period from 688 to 726, carried on during the whole of it the war for supremacy. Eastward, he forced Kent, Essex and London to own his rule. On the west he pushed his way southward round the marshes of the Parret to a more fertile territory, and guarded the frontier of his new conquests by a fortress on the banks of the Tone, which has grown into the present Taunton. The West-Saxons thus became masters of the whole district which now bears the name of Somerset, the land of the Somersætas, where the Tor rose like an island out of a waste of flood-drowned fen that stretched westward to the Channel. At the base of this hill Ine established on the site of an older British foundation his famous monastery of Glastonbury. The little hamlet in which it stood took its English name from one of the English families, the Glæstings, who chose the spot for their settlement; but it had long been a religious shrine of the Britons, and the tradition that a second Patrick rested there drew thither the wandering scholars of Ireland. The first inhabitants of Ine's abbey found, as they alleged, "an ancient church, built by no art of man;" and beside this relic of its older Welsh owners, Ine founded his own abbey-church of stone. The spiritual charge of his conquests he committed to his kinsman Ealdhelm, the most famous scholar of his day, who became the first bishop of the new see of Sherborne, which the king formed out of the districts west of Selwood and the Frome, to meet the needs of the new parts of his kingdom. Ine's code, the earliest collection of West-Saxon laws which remains to us, shows a wise solicitude to provide for the civil as well as the ecclesiastical needs of the mixed population over which he now ruled. His repulse of the Mercians, when they at last attacked Wessex, proved how well he could provide for its defence. Æthelred's reign of thirty years was one of almost unbroken peace, and his activity mainly showed itself in the planting and endowment of monasteries, which gradually changed the face of the realm. Ceolred however, who in 709 became king of Mercia, took up the strife with Wessex for the overlordship of the south, and in 715 he marched into the very heart of Wessex; but he was repulsed in a bloody encounter at

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