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AN  
ABSTRACT  
OF THE  
HISTORY OF ENGLAND  
From the Invasion of it by JULIUS CÆSAR  
to WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR.

**T**HE most antient account we have of Britain is, that the  
5 island was full of inhabitants, divided into several petty  
kingdoms, as most nations of the world appear to have  
been at first. The bodies of the Britons were painted a sky-  
coloured blue, either as an ornament or else for terror to their  
enemies. In their religion they were Heathens, as all world was  
10 before CHRIST, except the Jews.

The present text is taken from the British Library copy (633.f.15) of *The Works of Jonathan Swift, D. D.*, ed. John Hawkesworth, large 8vo (London: C. Bathurst, *et al.*, 1754-79), XV: Collected and Revised by Deane Swift (London: W. Johnston, 1765), 217-24 (TEERINK AND SCOUTEN **88**). It has been collated with *The Works of Jonathan Swift, Dean of St. Patrick's, Dublin*, 4to (London: W. Johnston, 1755-79), VIII, pt i (1765), 123-27 (TEERINK AND SCOUTEN **87**); *The Works of the Reverend Dr. Jonathan Swift, Dean of St. Patrick's, Dublin*, 8vo (Dublin: George Faulkner, 1765-70), XII (1765), 195-201 (TEERINK AND SCOUTEN **47**); *The Works of Dr. Jonathan Swift, Dean of St. Patrick's, Dublin*, small 8vo (London: W. Johnston, 1766), XVI, 133-39 (TEERINK AND SCOUTEN **91**), and *The Works of Dr. Jonathan Swift, Dean of St. Patrick's, Dublin*, large 8vo (London: W. Bowyer, *et al.*, 1768), XV (1775), 217-24 (TEERINK AND SCOUTEN **89**).

Their priests were called Druids: These lived in hollow trees, and committed not their mysteries to writing, but delivered them down by tradition, whereby they were in time wholly lost.

The Britons had wives in common, so many to a particular  
5 tribe or society, and the children were in Common to that society.

About fifty years before Christ, Julius Cæsar, the first Roman Emperor, having conquered Gaul or France, invaded Britain rather to increase his glory than conquests; for, having overcome the natives in one or two battles, he returned.

10 The next invasion of Britain by the Romans (then masters of most of the known world) was in the reign of the Emperor Claudius; but it was not wholly subdued till that of Nero. It was governed by lieutenants, or deputies, sent from Rome, Ireland is now by deputies from England; and continued thus under the  
15 Romans for about 460 years; till that empire being invaded by the Goths and Vandals, the Romans were forced not only to their own armies, but also to draw from hence the bravest of the Britons, for their assistance against those Barbarians.

The Roman conquests in this island reached no further  
20 northward than to that part of Scotland where Stirling and Glasgow are seated: The region beyond was held not worth the conquering: It was inhabited by a barbarous people, called Caledonians and Picts; who, being a rough fierce nation, daily infested the British borders. Therefore the Emperor Severus built a wall, from Stirling  
25 to Glasgow, to prevent the invasions of the Picts: It commonly called the Picts Wall.

These Picts and Caledonians, or Scots, encouraged by the departure of the Romans, do now cruelly infest and invade the Britons by sea and land: The Britons chuse Vortigern for their  
30 king, who was forced to invite the Saxons (a fierce northern people) to assist him against those Barbarians. The Saxons came over, and beat the Picts in several battles; but, at last, picked up with the Britons themselves; and, after a long war, drive them to the mountains of Wales and Cornwall, and establish themselves in

seven kingdoms in Britain (by them now called England). These seven kingdoms are usually stiled the Saxon Heptarchy.

About this time lived King Arthur (if the whole story not a fable) who was so famous for beating the Saxons in several battles.

5 The Britons received Christianity very early, and, as is reported, from some of the disciples themselves: So that, when the Romans left Britain, the Britons were generally Christians. But the Saxons were Heathens, till Pope Gregory the Great sent over hither Austin the Monk, by whom Ethelbert king of the South-  
10 Saxons, and his subjects, were converted to Christianity; and whole island soon followed the example.

After many various revolutions in this island among the kingdoms of the Saxons, Egbert, descended from the West-Saxon kings, became sole monarch of England.

15 The language in Britain was British (now called Welch) or Latin; but, with the Saxons, English came in (although extremely different from what it is now). The present names of towns, shires, &c. were given by them; and the whole kingdom was called England from the Angles, who were a branch of the Saxons.

20 As soon as the Saxons were settled, the Danes began to trouble and invade them, as they (the Saxons) had before done the Britons.

These Danes came out of Germany, Denmark, and Norway, rough warlike people, little different from the Saxons, to whom they were nigh neighbours.

25 After many invasions from the Danes, Edgar king of England sets forth the first navy. He was entitled King of all Albion (an old name of this island) and was the first absolute monarch. He made peace with the Danes, and allowed them to live in his ominions mixt with the English.

30 In this Prince's time there were five kings in Wales, o all did him homage for their country.

These Danes began first to make their invasions here about the year 800, which they after renewed at several times, and under several leaders, and were as often repulsed. They used to come

with vast numbers of ships, burn and ravage before the as the cities of London, Winchester, &c. Encouraged by success and prey, they often wintered in England, fortifying themselves in the northern parts, from whence they cruelly infested the kings.

5 In process of time they mixed with the English (as was said before) and lived under the Saxon government: But Ethelred, then king of England, weary of the Danish insolence, a conspiracy is formed, and the Danes are massacred in one day all over England.

Four years after, Sweyn, king of Denmark, to revenge the  
10 death of his subjects, invades England; and, after battles fought and much cruelty exercised, he subdues the whole kingdom, rcing Ethelred to fly into Normandy.

Sweyn dying, his son Canutus succeeds in the kingdom; Ethelred returning with an army, Canutus is forced to raw to  
15 Denmark for succour.

Ethelred dies, and his son Edmond Ironside succeeds; but, Canutus returning with fresh forces from Denmark, after several battles, the kingdom is parted between them both. Edmond dying, his sons are sent beyond sea by Canutus, who now is sole king of  
20 England.

Hardicanute, the last Danish king, dying without issue, Edward, son of Ethelred, is chosen king. For his great holiness, he was surnamed the Confessor, and sainted after his death. He was the first of our princes that attempted to cure the king's evil by  
25 touching. He first introduced what is now called the Common Law. In his time began the mode and humour among the English gentry, of using the French tongue and fashions, in compliance with the King, who had been bred up in Normandy.

The Danish government in England lasted but twenty-six years,  
30 under three kings.

Edward the Confessor married the daughter of Earl Godw an English nobleman of great power, but of Danish extraction; but, wanting issue, he appointed Edgar Atheling, grandson to his brother, to succeed him, and Harold, son of Earl Godwin, to be

governor of the young prince. But, upon Edward's death, Harold neglected Edgar Atheling, and usurped the crown for himself.

Edward, while he was in Normandy, met so good reception, that it was said he made a promise to that Duke, that, in case he recovered his kingdom, and died without issue, he would leave it to him. Edward dying, William Duke of Normandy sends to Harold to claim the crown; but Harold, now in possession, resolves to keep it. Upon which Duke William, having prepared a mighty fleet and army, invades England, lands at Hastings, and sets fire to his fleet, to cut off all hope from his men of returning. Harold he sent his messenger, demanding the kingdom and his subjection: But Harold returned him this answer, That, unless he departed his land, he would make him sensible of his just displeasure. So Harold advanced his forces into Sussex, within seven miles of his enemy. The Norman Duke, to save the effusion of blood, sent these offers to Harold; either wholly to resign the kingdom to him, or to try the quarrel with him in single combat. To this Harold did not agree.

Then the battle joined. The Normans had gotten the worst, if it had not been for a stratagem they invented, which got them the day. In this engagement Harold was killed, and William Duke of Normandy became king of England, under the name of William the Conqueror.