

4. The earliest known inhabitants of Britain were Celts. These were a people who, in the remote past, had emigrated from Asia into Europe, and at the dawn of history were found occupying the western part of the latter continent. Their descendants still occupy Brittany, Wales, the Highlands of Scotland, and most of Ireland.

5. The writings of Caesar and Tacitus, Roman historians, supply our chief knowledge of ancient Britain. The country abounded in marsh and forest. Skilled husbandry was unknown. The coasts nearest Gaul showed here and there patches of rudely tilled ground, but in the interior corn was not cultivated at all, the natives living on milk and flesh. In the far north, roots and berries, as they grew wild in the woods, were the chief means of subsistence. The ordinary clothing consisted of skins, the limbs being left bare and stained in blue figures with the juice of a plant called *woad*. The Britons were brave and hardy, and displayed considerable skill in war. They fought on foot, on horseback, and in chariots with scythe-armed axles. Although divided into many tribes, they always chose a single leader when danger threatened their common country.

6. The Britons were pagans. Their religion was gloomy and unattractive, and is generally known as *Druidism*. The priests were called *Druids*, from a Celtic word meaning a sage or a magician. The principal ceremonies of religion were performed in the recesses of dark oak forests, and the tree itself was regarded with much veneration. The Druids possessed great power; for in addition to their priestly offices, they were the bards, the teachers, and the judges of the people. They recognized several distinct deities and taught the doctrine of transmigration of souls. Their religious system included human sacrifices. The victims, who were generally criminals or captives, were burned in huge wicker baskets. The circular rows of immense stones which are found in some parts of England are supposed by some to be the remains of Druidical temples. The most famous of these monumental relics is that at Stonehenge on Salisbury Plain.

CHAPTER II.

ROMAN BRITAIN.—55 B.C. to 410 A.D.

1. In the last week of August 55 B.C., Julius Cæsar, the greatest of Roman generals, crossed the Strait of Dover—then called Cæsar's *Fretum Oceani*—with a fleet of eighty ships, and landed on the coast of Kent. Cæsar had just completed the conquest of Gaul, and his invasion of Britain was due, at least partly, to his desire to punish the Britons for having lent aid to the Gauls in