

**BLACKWOODS' EDUCATIONAL
SERIES. FIRST HISTORICAL
READER, STANDARD IV. BRITAIN
AND ENGLAND, FROM BEFORE
CHRIST TO 1154 A.D.**

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From before Christ to 1154 A.D. by Anonymous

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Blackwoods' Educational Series

EDITED BY
PROFESSOR MEIKLEJOHN

FIRST
HISTORICAL READER

STANDARD IV.

BRITAIN AND ENGLAND

From before Christ to 1154 A.D.



LONDON AND EDINBURGH
WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
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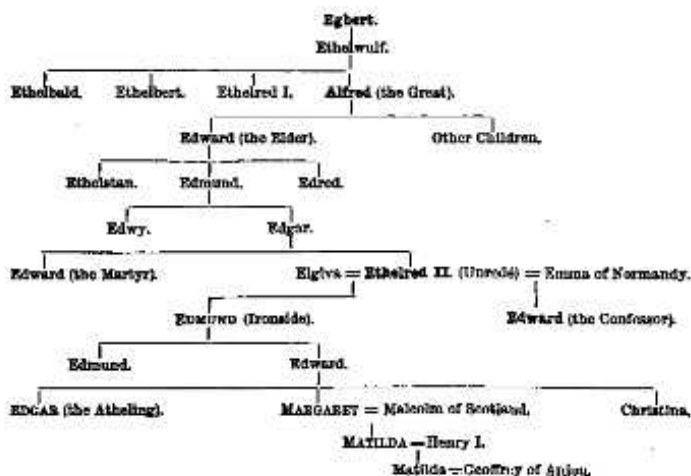
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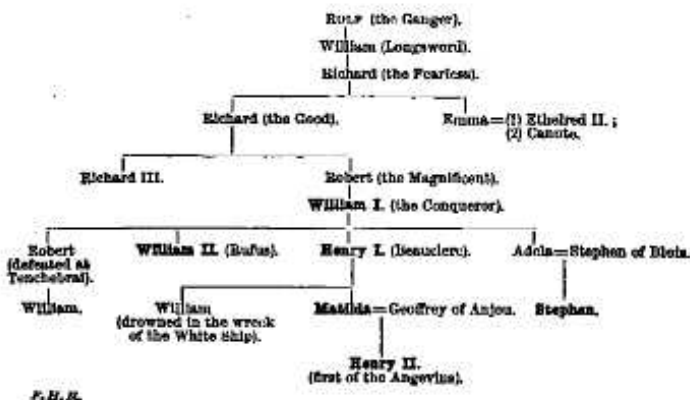
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**GENEALOGICAL TABLE OF ENGLISH KINGS,
FROM EGBERT TO MATILDA.**



**GENEALOGICAL TABLE OF THE DUKES OF
NORMANDY TO 1154.**



FIRST

HISTORICAL READER.



I.—BRITAIN AND THE BRITONS.—I.

Time: about 80 years before Christ.

1. **Great Britain.**—This country in which we live was not always called England. Many hundred years ago it was called Britain, and the people who lived in it were called Britons. It is now sometimes called **Great Britain**, to mark it off from another Britain, in France, which is called *Brittany*, and the natives of which are called *Bretons*. Traders or merchants from the far East—men who came from the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea—spoke of this island as one of the “Tin Islands,” because they were in the habit of getting tin and copper from Cornwall, and from some of the islands not far from its coast.

2. **The People.**—The Britons were a savage race, and—except on the southern shores of this island—had very few arts, and knew little of people who lived in other countries. In winter they dressed themselves in the

skins of sheep and deer, or wore cloth with a check pattern; in summer they went about with their chests and shoulders bare. When they were going to war, they painted hideous faces and figures on their chests, with a blue paint which they got from a plant called woad,



Early Britons.

in order to strike fear into the hearts of their enemies. As in the case of many other savage races, the women did the work, while the men amused themselves with hunting, or excited themselves with fighting. The women dug the ground, sowed and reaped the scanty crops; and they also spun and dyed the wool, and wove the cloth out

of which the men's loose plaid trousers were made. The chiefs wore gold collars and gold bracelets, which were bought in the sunny land across the sea,—the land within sight of the south and east of this island. That land was, in the time of the Britons, called Gaul. It is now called France.

3. Their Houses.—The Britons lived in huts half buried in the ground, without windows or chimneys. The walls of the huts were formed of rods tied together at the top; and the outside, in shape like a sugar-loaf, was covered with turf and plastered with mud. A cluster of these huts formed a village. Outside the village a paling or stockade was raised, and outside of the paling a ditch was dug. These defended it against the attacks of enemies and wild beasts, of which there were great numbers.

4. The Country.—Great Britain was about two thousand years ago almost one vast dense forest, with here and there wide swamps, broad pools, and dreary marshes. There were openings or glades in many places, and in these openings the Britons planted their villages. Bears, boars, and wolves roamed through the woods, and now and then attacked the Britons; herds of wild deer might be seen glancing with arched necks and graceful antlers through a sunlit glade; while on the banks of the streams, the beaver built his odd dwelling of clay and sticks.

5. Work and Business.—Most of the Britons, especially those in the north, were half savages. But in the south there was a class of Britons who traded with Gaul, and who had some little knowledge of the arts of life. The northern Briton, for many hundreds of years, grew no corn, but lived chiefly on milk and flesh. The milk came from his herds of cattle; the flesh he got by hunting. The southern Britons lived in snug and warm houses; traded

in tin, or in pearls which they got from the oyster; and wore dresses of fine thick cloth. The Gauls had taught them to till the soil, to grow corn, and to rear cattle. The richer among these Britons walked about in long coats, with gold-headed sticks in their hands, and thought themselves very grand indeed.

6. War.—The Britons, like many other savage and half-savage races, were very fond of war, and the different little tribes were almost always fighting with each other. Their weapons were bows and arrows, spears, and clubs. The chief fighters carried also great broadswords made of bronze or copper, and brass-tipped spears. Some fought on foot, others on horseback, and others in chariots. The wheels of their chariots were armed with scythes, which jutted out, and sweeping round and round as they drove, cut off the legs and feet of their enemies; and the chariots were drawn by the fierce, swift, and hardy ponies of the island.

sav'-age, wild and ignorant.
 ex-cit'-ed, heated and made eager.
 stock-ade', a set of stakes fixed in the ground to protect a place.

plaid, a kind of long blanket made of wool.
 dense, very thick.

Brittany, a rugged and mountainous country in the west of France. The language spoken there is very like Welsh, Gaelic, and Erse (or Irish).

Mediterranean means in the middle of the land, and this sea was so called because it was in the middle of all the land known in the world at the time of the Romans.

2.—BRITAIN AND THE BRITONS.—II.

Time: about 60 years before Christ.

1. Their Religion.—The Britons were pagans or heathens in religion. They worshipped the sun, the moon,