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THE STORY OF THE BRITISH PEOPLE

Chapter I

The First Britons

(Earliest times to 55 B.C.)

ON the walls of the Royal Exchange in London, England, there are many beautiful paintings which illustrate scenes from British history. One of these pictures is reproduced on page 9 of this book. Examine it carefully, for it shows you how the Britons of long ago first became known to the civilized men who then dwelt on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea.

The picture to which I refer represents a scene which probably took place on the southern coast of Britain some two thousand three hundred years ago. It represents a group of swarthy traders spreading out their tempting treasures of purple cloth, glittering trinkets, and gleaming glass to the enraptured gaze of a British man, his wife, son, and daughters. The traders are Phœnicians from the coast of Syria.

The Britons in the picture are not savages, though they can scarcely be called civilized. The man is evidently a hunter. He is a ruddy, blue-eyed, powerful fellow, clad in a robe of bearskin. This he offers to the strangers in exchange for the purple cloth which has fascinated his wife and daughters.