



CHAPTER I ENGLAND BEFORE THE CONQUEST

BEFORE telling the story of England¹ from the Conquest to the Charter, I would like to sketch in a few words the history of Britain from the earliest time till Harold fell on the heights of Senlac.

Nearly two thousand years ago there lived in Britain a wild and barbarous people, who when they were not hunting animals for food were fighting one another. The dawn of civilisation had not yet broken on this little island, bounded by the triumphant sea, although it was high noon in other parts of Europe. Italy and Greece were then the centres of light and learning, though the glory of Greece was beginning to decline before its rival. The Romans were becoming the most powerful people in the world, conquering nation after nation. Fifty-five years before the birth of Christ, in the time of Julius Caesar, they turned their attention to Britain. They had heard from merchants and traders that this was the tin-producing land. Caesar

¹ See "The Dawn of British History" and "The Birth of England."