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First published in 1882, this clearly written account, accessible to non-specialists, is one of the principal works of the pioneering Celtic scholar Sir John Rhys (1840–1915). The son of a Welsh farmer and lead miner, Rhys went on to become the first professor of Celtic at the University of Oxford, principal of Jesus College, and a fellow of the British Academy. Knighted in 1907, Rhys had by then made significant contributions to the study of Celtic languages, travelling widely and examining many inscriptions at first hand. Here he covers Celtic etymology, ethnology and history in Britain from the time of Julius Caesar to the eleventh-century Scottish kingdoms. His *Lectures on Welsh Philology* (1877) and *Celtic Folklore: Welsh and Manx* (1901) are also reissued in the Cambridge Library Collection. For the study of Celtic language, culture and mythology, the importance of Rhys's research is still acknowledged today.

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# Celtic Britain

JOHN RHYS



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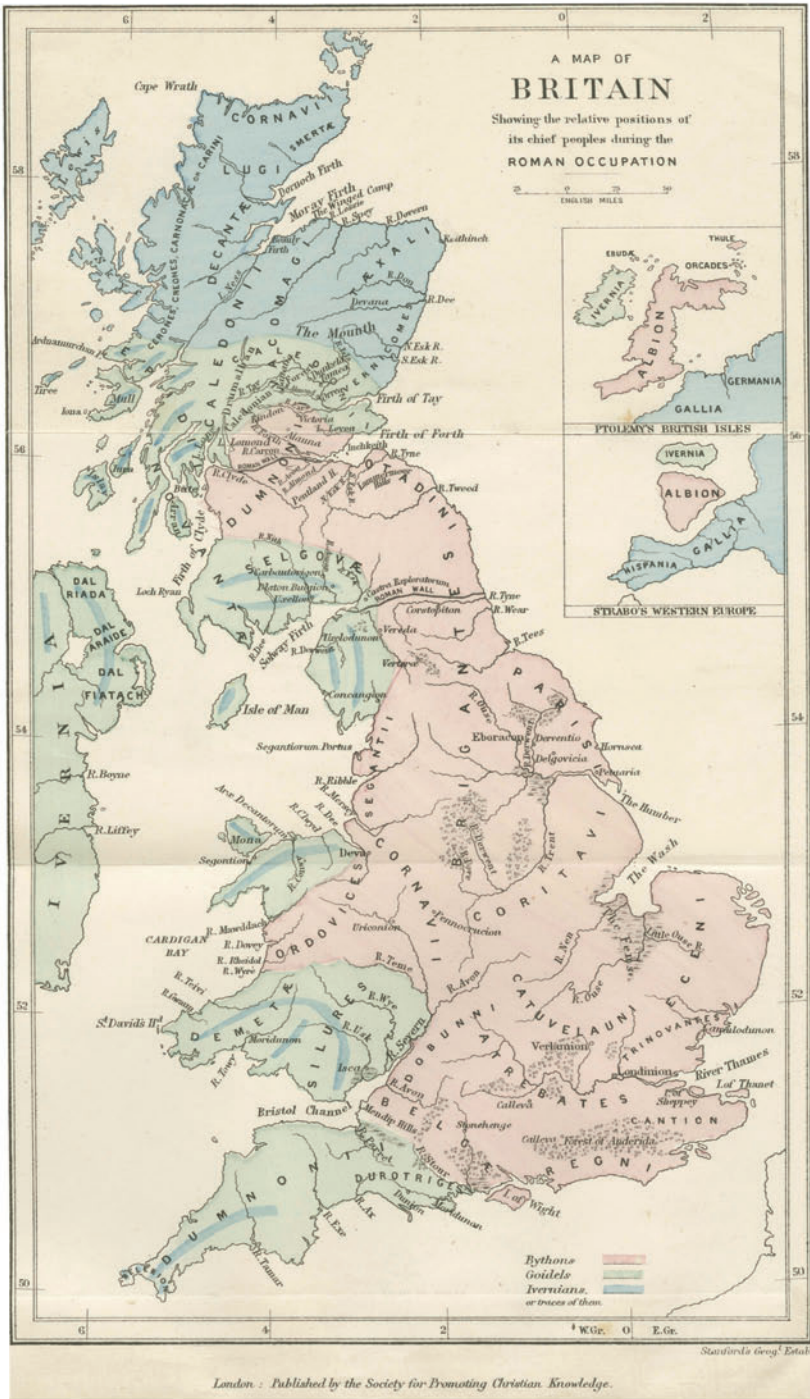
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EARLY BRITAIN.

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CELTIC BRITAIN.

BY  
J. RHYS, M.A.,  
PROFESSOR OF CELTIC IN THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD;  
FELLOW OF JESUS COLLEGE; AND LATE FELLOW OF MERTON COLLEGE.

WITH TWO MAPS, AND WOODCUTS OF COINS.

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## P R E F A C E.



THESE are the days of little books, and when the author was asked to add one to their number, he accepted the invitation with the jaunty simplicity of an inexperienced hand, thinking that it could not give him much trouble to expand or otherwise modify the account given of early Britain in larger works; but closer acquaintance with them soon convinced him of the folly of such a plan—he had to study the subject for himself or leave it alone. In trying to do the former he probably read enough to have enabled him to write a larger work than this; but he would be ashamed to confess how long it has occupied him.

As a student of language, he is well aware that no more severe judgment could be passed on his essay in writing history than, that it should be found to be as bad as the etymologies made by historians are wont to be; but so essential is the study of Celtic

names to the elucidation of the early history of Britain that the risk is thought worth incurring. The difficulty of writing anything intelligible on the subject arises not only from the scarcity of the data handed down by ancient authors, but also in a great measure from the absence of the information necessary to enable one rightly to connect those data with one another. Take, for instance, the allusion by Ammianus Marcellinus to the *Verturiones* as one of the nations of the north of Britain: one cannot be said to be much the wiser for it, until one finds that their memory is perpetuated in the history of Alban in the rule-right name of the Men of *Fortrenn*. Identifications of this kind will, it is hoped, do something to bring the history of early Britain out of the quicksands into which historians' etymologizing has helped to steer it, and to make up for the shortcomings of the work. These will probably be found to be of two kinds: the errors into which any one unaccustomed to writing on historical subjects can hardly avoid falling; and the crudities of certain theories which further research may show to be untenable. For it is unavoidable that much of the reasoning should be of a highly hypothetical nature,

## PREFACE.

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of which the reader will in due time be reminded by the changes rung on such hard-driven words as *appears* and *seems*, as *probably*, *possibly*, and *perhaps*.

There are two or three things which it may be as well to mention here ; the author has accepted and employed the theory advanced by ethnologists, that the early inhabitants of this country were of Iberian origin ; and he hopes to take an early opportunity of writing on the glottological aspect of that question ; also of explaining more in detail why he has changed his opinion as to the classification of the Celtic nations. Then to come to a matter of spelling, it has been attempted throughout to present the early Celtic names in their native form rather than in a Latinized one ; but with regard to the later names he would be greatly surprised to find, that he had succeeded in being consistent, as it is by no means easy to choose from the variety of spellings used at different times, or even in different manuscripts of the same age.

Lastly, he has great pleasure in thanking many kind and learned friends for valuable suggestions and corrections. He would mention them by name but that he is loth to risk the danger of their being in a

manner held sponsors for opinions not theirs. But he wishes to state that, in his treatment of Ptolemy's geography of the British Isles, he has almost everywhere gladly availed himself of the valuable articles of Mr. Gordon M. Hills in the Journal of the British Archæological Association for the years 1878 and 1881, together with hints which Mr. Hills has been kind enough privately to give him.

J. RHYS.

OXFORD,  
*Oct.*, 1882.

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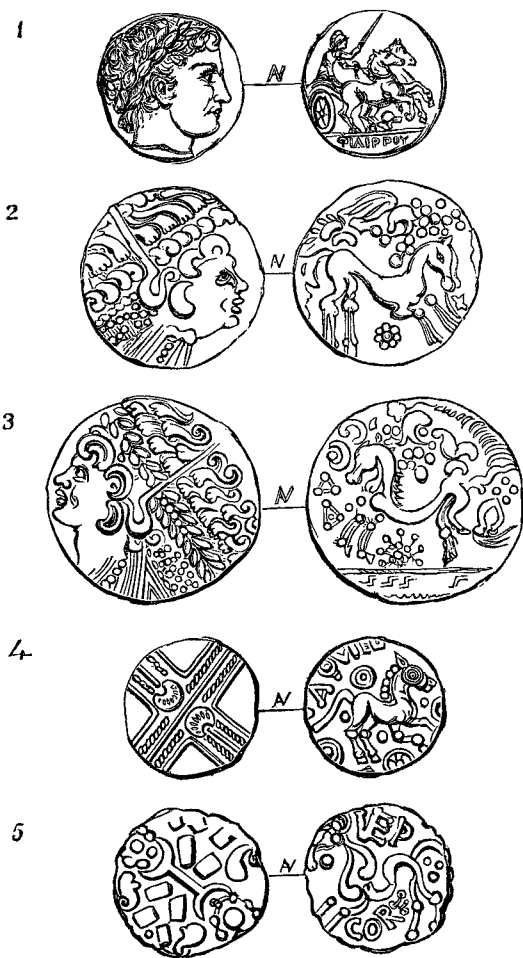
MAPS, &c.

- A coloured map of Britain, showing the relative positions of its chief peoples during the Roman occupation.
  - Ptolemy's "British Isles."
  - Strabo's "Western Europe."
  - Wales in deaneries of the time of Henry VIII.
  - A plate, with engravings of five coins, accompanied by a brief letterpress description of each.
-

## THE COINS.

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- No. 1 represents a gold stater of Philip II. of Macedon, with the wreathed bust of Apollo on the obverse, and a charioteer in a biga on the reverse : underneath is the name of Philip, ΦΙΛΙΠΠΟΥ. Page 19.
- No. 2 is an early British imitation of the stater ; the coin is in Mr. Evans's collection, but the place of finding is unknown. Among other things it will be noticed that it has been attempted to make the charioteer into a winged figure of Victory, and that the two horses have been converted into one horse with eight legs. Page 19.
- No. 3 is also in Mr. Evans's collection, and was found at Leighton Buzzard in 1849. Besides that the faces look the other way, it will be noticed that the place occupied by Philip's name on the original is in this instance devoted to a kind of ornamentation, which at a distance has somewhat the appearance of letters. Page 19.
- No. 4 is a coin of Addedomaros, a part of whose name is to be read ΑΘΘΩD on the reverse. On the obverse the face has disappeared, while the coiffure has developed into a sort of cross. Page 36.
- No. 5 is a coin of the Parisi, and it is to be seen at the York Museum. The obverse is taken up by the coiffure, and has on it no part of the face. The reverse shows a very peculiar horse, and the legend VEP CORF. Page 41.



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