

THE LEADING FACTS OF ENGLISH HISTORY

SECTION I

"This fortress built by Nature for herself
Against infection and the hand of war;
This happy breed of men, this little world,
This precious stone set in the silver sea,
Which serves it in the office of a wall,
Or as a moat defensive to a house,
Against the envy of less happier lands;
This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England."

SHAKESPEARE, *Richard II.*

BRITAIN BEFORE WRITTEN HISTORY BEGINS

THE COUNTRY

✓ 1. **Britain once a Part of the Continent.** — The island of Great Britain has not always had its present form. Though separated from Europe now by the English Channel and the North Sea, yet there is abundant geological evidence that it was once a part of the continent.

2. **Proofs.** — The chalk cliffs of Dover are really a continuation of the chalk of Calais, on the coast of France. The strait dividing them, which is nowhere more than thirty fathoms deep,¹ is simply the result of a slight and comparatively recent

¹ The width of the Strait of Dover at its narrowest point is twenty-one miles. The bottom is a continuous ridge of chalk. If St. Paul's Cathedral were placed in the strait, midway between England and France, more than half of the building would be above the surface of the water.