

the Thames, found themselves on the edge of the Cotswold plateau, looking down upon the rich and long settled plains of the Severn. Descending from these heights, they fought in 577 the decisive battle of Deorham, which had the effect of giving them possession of the Severn valley, and thus of isolating the Britons of Devon and Cornwall from the rest of their kinsmen. Driven thus into the south-west corner of England upon ancient Devonian and granitic rocks, poorer in soil, but rich in wealth of tin and copper, these Britons maintained their individuality for many centuries. Though they have now gradually been fused into the surrounding English-speaking people, it was only about the middle of last century that they ceased to use their ancient Celtic tongue.

Still more important was the advance of the Angles on the north side of Wales. The older Palæozoic rocks of the principality form a mass of high grounds which, flanked with a belt of coal-bearing strata, descend into the plains of Cheshire. Younger formations of soft red Triassic marl and sandstone stretch northward to the base of the Carboniferous and Silurian hills of north Lancashire. This strip of level and fertile ground, bounded on the eastern side by high desert moors and impenetrable forests, connected the Britons of Wales with those of the Cumbrian uplands, and, for nearly 200 years after the Romans had left Britain, was subject to no foreign invasion, save perhaps occasional piratical descents from the Irish coasts. But at last, in the year 607, the Angles, who had overspread the whole region from the Firth of Forth to the south of Suffolk, crossed the fastnesses of the Pennine Chain and burst upon the inhabitants of the plains of the Dee. A great battle was fought at Chester in which the Britons were routed. The Angles obtained permanent possession of these lowlands, and thus