

Beric the Briton : a Story of the Roman Invasion

G. A. Henty



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"It is a fair sight." "It may be a fair sight in a Roman's eyes, Beric, but nought could be fouler to those of a Briton. To me every one of those blocks of brick and stone weighs down and helps to hold in bondage this land of ours; while that temple they have dared to rear to their gods, in celebration of their having conquered Britain, is an insult and a lie. We are not conquered yet, as they will some day know to their cost. We are silent, we wait, but we do not admit that we are conquered." "I agree with you there. We have never fairly tried our strength against them. These wretched divisions have always prevented our making an effort to gather; Cassivelaunus and some of the Kentish tribes alone opposed them at their first landing, and he was betrayed and abandoned by the tribes on the north of the Thames. It has been the same thing ever since. We fight piecemeal; and while the Romans hurl their whole strength against one tribe the others look on with folded hands. Who aided the Trinobantes when the Romans defeated them and established themselves on that hill? No one. They will eat Britain up bit by bit." "Then you like them no better for having lived among them, Beric?" "I like them more, but I fear them more. One cannot be four years among them, as I was, without seeing that in many respects we might copy them with advantage. They are a great people. Compare their splendid mansions and their regular orderly life, their manners and their ways, with our rough huts, and our feasts, ending as often as not with quarrels and brawls. Look at their arts, their power of turning stone into lifelike figures, and above all, the way in which they can transfer their thoughts to white leaves, so that others, many many years hence, can read them and know all that was passing, and what men thought and did in the long bygone. Truly it is marvellous." "You are half Romanized, Beric," his companion said roughly.

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