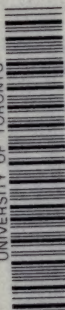


UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



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A HISTORY OF
ENGLAND
FROM THE
PREY AND MIDDLE AGES
TO 1485





A HISTORY OF ENGLAND

EARLY AND MIDDLE AGES

TO 1485

A HISTORY OF ENGLAND

BY

C. E. ROBINSON

IN FOUR VOLUMES

- I. EARLY AND MIDDLE AGES (TO 1485)
- II. THE TUDORS AND THE STUARTS (1485-1688)
- III. 1689-1815
- IV. 1815-1920

A
HISTORY OF ENGLAND

EARLY AND MIDDLE AGES
TO 1485

BY

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ASSISTANT MASTER AT WINCHESTER COLLEGE

WITH TWENTY MAPS AND DIAGRAMS

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PREFACE

THIS book pursues three aims which are, or should be, the aims of every History book, great or small : First, to stir interest and appreciation ; for without that all study of the past is dead and labour lost ; Second, to provide material for some real understanding of historic issues ; for without the inquiry into origins and motives such study can leave no permanent mark upon the mind ; Third (and for beginners this is not the least important of the three), to print upon the memory a clear and decisive picture of the major facts.

For this last purpose it is, as I think, essential that the facts themselves should be few and simple. Selection is not easy, but to suppress the host of minor characters and irrelevant side-issues seems on the whole a wiser course than to blur the picture or produce confusion in the mind ; and, if I have erred in omitting too much, it is to avoid the commoner fault of omitting too little. As a further aid to memory, the main facts of every chapter are set down in summarised form at the end of the book. It would not be amiss if these summaries were got, so far as possible, by heart. By strict memorisation only can a firm foundation be laid. Too often progress flags for want of it ; and a course of history leaves but a vague and inaccurate impression after the lapse of six months' time.

But, if it is valuable to learn the main facts by heart, much more is it valuable to understand them. The memory of them will gain rather than lose by ample illustration and discussion. Here, therefore, there is no excuse for economy of detail; and what space has been gained by the suppression of smaller issues may usefully be given to a more generous treatment of the large. Detail is of two sorts, or rather may serve a double purpose. It supplies the means to a completer judgment, discovers the springs of human character and action, reveals the concrete beginnings from which great historical movements have been born. But, besides this, there is another gain. Detail clothes the dry bones of fact with the warm substance of reality. It will make even the dull tale live; and the trifling gossip of a Froissart or a Pepys stirs in us an interest, which the vague generalisations of a text-book fail to move. Such details will not confuse the main impressions, but rather strengthen them; and so, wherever an episode seems worth mentioning at all, I have tried within the limits of my space to tell it properly.

From this it follows that, though some of the chapters are of middling length, much of their matter will make easy reading. As will be seen, they cover approximately a dozen pages each. Each is intended to form an allowance suited to an hour's work of preparation; and each forms in some real sense a separate and connected whole. Nothing perhaps is more destructive of a learner's interest and appreciation than to break off his reading in the middle of a chapter, or to take it up again at some purely artificial and arbitrary date.

Each of the four Parts is to be composed of, roughly, twenty chapters, or portions, of this length. It should therefore be possible (though in the case of this First Part it may not be equally desirable) to treat each Part as matter for one term's work. The summaries above-mentioned should certainly do something to reduce the irksome necessity for taking "notes"; and, in this way, should make it possible to cover wider ground.

The Maps and Diagrams have been designed upon the same principle of selection as the matter of the text. All superfluous names have been suppressed, and only those places given which are strictly relevant to the contents of the chapter. They should, therefore, be as closely observed and "memorised" with almost as much care as the very facts themselves.

Finally, I should wish to say a word of acknowledgment and gratitude to the kindly criticism and suggestion which I have received from Mr. A. T. P. Williams, Historical Tutor and Second Master of Winchester College. This book makes no pretence at putting forward theories that are novel or original; but, thanks to Mr. Williams' aid, I hope that it will contain none at least which are now disproven or inaccurate.



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A HISTORY OF ENGLAND

CHAPTER I

THE ROMAN CONQUEST

CONSIDER how the world stood three thousand years ago, one thousand years, that is, before the birth of Christ. Egypt was already an old country—old as her pyramids—having grown civilised and powerful under a long line of Pharaohs. King David ruled in Jerusalem; and Agamemnon (so the poets say) in Greece. Rome as yet was not; but the gods were just then beginning to cast a thoughtful eye upon her seven hills. And Germany, Austria, France, Spain, what of them? History is silent. These countries had neither Kings nor Pharaohs: even their very names did not exist. For, truth to tell, Europe north of the Alps and Balkans was still in a strange, unsettled state. Its plains and forest-clearings were then the scene of comings and goings so frequent and continuous that permanent boundaries were scarcely recognised, cities a thing unknown. Tribes wandering, like the Israelites on Sinai, came with their flocks and herds, their wives and children, and settled for a space wherever ground was vacant or where the old inhabitants were too few or feeble to resist their coming; but sooner or later, after a long sojourn or a short, they would depart as they had come. Trekking gipsy-like with wagons or caravans, marching by day, camping by night, and fighting whatever enemy they might encounter on their

path, they would check at neither mountain range nor forest nor broad river in the search for a new home in the unknown lands beyond. By what impulse these tribes were urged upon their restless travel we cannot altogether tell. Sometimes, no doubt, crops failed or pastures were exhausted; sometimes they followed the rumour of richer lands elsewhere; sometimes, too, the approach of still more formidable wanderers drove them unwillingly to flight. More often still, perhaps, they would grow tired of a too familiar valley or the tame routine of a too peaceful life; and the spirit of adventure, the Wanderlust, would come strongly over them, driving them forth again. One thing is certain: when they moved, their movement was almost invariably one way. They came from the east; and from the east others were pressing on their tracks. So the tide flowed westwards, over the German forests and across the Rhine—until it brought some to a permanent anchorage on the fertile fields of France, carried some northward to the marshes of the Rhine-mouth, or southward over the Alpine passes into the Lombard plain; while others yet again (whether the first comers or the most adventurous of them all) still followed the setting sun, until upon the very shores of the Atlantic they were checked and came to a stand.

Yet not altogether to a stand; for, where a ship may swim, a man will go, and it was in our own lands across the Channel that many of the wanderers found their final home. Some thousand years or more before Christ, the first wave of these invaders reached our shores. Centuries passed; and fresh tribes followed in their wake (at the very time, as some think, when their fellow hordes were descending from the Appenines to the sack of Rome, and when only the vigilance of the sacred geese availed to save the Capitol in 390 B.C.). To these newcomers a large portion of this island—from its south-east coastline deep up into the Midlands—fell a prey. The name they bore was Brythons, or the Painted Folk; and from them the Romans gave the island its first and

oldest name, Britannia. Once again, shortly before the Roman occupation, another wave of immigrants settled upon the Hampshire coast. But it was the last: Rome had conquered Gaul; and her legions began to garrison the frontier of the Rhine. So the flood was stemmed. Four centuries later it was again to rise beyond control, burst the dam which held it back, and plunge the whole of Western Europe, and even imperial Rome herself, under the ruin of its destructive tide.

It is not easy to picture Britain in those early days before the Romans came, but Roman writers have told us something; scholars and archæologists have filled the gaps. The men who came in this way to Britain were in some sort kinsmen of those whom they left settled upon Gaul. Both were of the stock which we call Celts. The true Celt is tall and fair. If you should meet a Scot with red hair and light blue eyes, you may know that he still carries Celtic blood in his veins. The Britons then for the most part were such tall, fair men: but not all. When they reached the island, they had found there men of a different race, black-haired, swarthy, and squat. This stock has not yet quite died out; and if in Wales among the mountains you should discover a native dark as no Englishman is ever dark, then you may shrewdly guess where his ancestry began. With this short dark race of old inhabitants, the fair newcomers mixed and intermarried; so the two types blended, and the pure Celt became rarer in Britain than in Gaul. What language these folk talked, we know well enough. It is talked still (though time, no doubt, has changed its form) in many parts of Wales, and till yesterday among the fisher-folk of Cornwall. Gaelic and Irish, too, are offshoots of the Celtic tongue, and in Brittany French peasants still use a speech much like it; which shows that in this point equally Gauls and Britons were not far apart. In character they were the same, an excitable, impulsive race, furious fighters, when the mood for battle was upon them, but falling easily, when the mood passed,

into idleness or despair. Their resistance when once broken died quickly down; but when the first legions of Rome came over, they fought them with that reckless élan which still marks the French soldiers of to-day.

It must not be imagined that the Britons were utter savages like the Maori or Hottentot. They knew, and practised in Cornwall, the art of working tin ore out of rocks; they had gold and silver coins of their own. They traded in tin and other merchandise with Phœnicians, Greeks, Romans, and such-like adventurers from overseas. But, though a convenient harbour such as London gathered round its quay a tiny settlement of huts, the Britons had no proper towns. They lived in simple hut dwellings, dotted among the forests in small groups, tilling the land not unskilfully and breeding herds of shorthorn cattle. Different districts were held by different tribes and each tribe had its chief; and, as often as not, each tribe was at war with its neighbour. When serious danger threatened, the tribesmen would foregather in some central fastness. This lay usually deep in a forest, or high upon some down. On many a hill top to this day may be seen the crude circular embankments that protected it. Like most early peoples, the Britons were very superstitious and lived in terror of their Druid priests. Stone-circles formed their temples; and there were many such up and down the country. The most important and central was at Stonehenge on the Wiltshire plains. Many tracks led to it from north and west and east and south; and you may still trace them winding deviously along the summit of the downs. How the huge stones were brought from a distance and set up in their double ring, or how the massive lintels were raised into their place, we do not know; nor can we tell precisely what ritual was there enacted. The god whom the Britons worshipped was undoubtedly the sun; and his chief festival was fixed for midsummer day at dawn. Druids decked in long white robes stood

ranged about the altar waiting for the moment when the sun's rays should top the low horizon and, passing between a pair of upright pillars, strike the central slab on which the victim lay. At that moment the victim died—a human victim in all likelihood. For the Druids were cruel folk; and in Gaul, at any rate, it was their practice, even in Caesar's time, to place live men in a monstrous wicker cage and then set the whole edifice on fire. Like "medicine men" of the Southern Seas, these priests sat firmly on the necks of the poor deluded people; they hated all progress and enlightenment, fearing for their own power; and for the same reason they hated the Romans too. Frequently they tried to stir up revolt in Gaul; and not least among the motives which led to the second invasion and final conquest of these shores, was the resolve once and for all to see this sinister and rebellious influence rooted out.

To the Romans Britain seemed a far away mysterious country, much more remote from them than India is from us. To their poets it was Ultima Thule—the other end of nowhere, and they even believed that winter here was one long continuous night, and other fables of the sort. Nevertheless, as Rome began to cast her net of empire wider, Britain came presently within its reach. Once Carthage had been beaten, Rome's territories had grown apace. Spain had fallen to her first; then Greece, North Africa, Asia Minor, and the Syrian Coast. In four years of swift campaigning, Julius Caesar had overrun the length and breadth of Gaul. It was Britain's turn next; and in 54 B.C., after a brief reconnaissance of the previous year, Caesar landed in the neighbourhood of Deal an army over 15,000 strong. With such forces he may, perhaps, have intended the conquest of the island; he certainly wanted to explore it; but his more immediate object was to teach a lesson to the British princes who had been sending help to Gaul. Chief among these was Caswallon, a name which the Romans after their fashion translated to Cassivellaunus. He ruled a wide district

just north of the Thames, and to him in their peril the rest entrusted chief command. For the moment they were thoroughly scared and stopped fighting one another. Nevertheless, when Caesar reached the coast, there was not a Briton on the cliffs. He pushed up into Mid Kent, and here on the River Stour he found their armies gathered. He easily dispersed them; but meanwhile a disaster had happened to his transports. A storm had caught them at their moorings and broken them on the coast. A halt was called; and when the damage was repaired, Caesar marched his army forward to the Thames. Here, at the ford of Brentford, he found the Britons strongly posted on the northern bank, and ensconced behind sunken rows of sharpened stakes. The legions, however, were fine infantry and as much superior to the undisciplined natives as English regiments to Zulus. Undaunted they dashed into the water shoulder deep, and driving the enemy back, entered Caswallon's territory. Caswallon himself fled to his fastness in the woods. But Caesar had not the time to waste on guerilla warfare; and when an offer of submission came, he was content to leave the island, imposing a nominal tribute and taking hostages for good behaviour. Once back on the mainland, his hands were full enough with a succession of revolts in Gaul, and civil war with Pompey nearer home. For the time being Britain was left alone. Neither Augustus nor Tiberius, the first two Emperors, had time or men to spare from other frontiers; the third, Caligula, was mad; and the glory of adding this island to the Roman rule remained for the Emperor—fourth of the House of Caesar—Claudius.

Claudius was no general, but merely a vain and somewhat foolish man. So when in A.D. 43 (nearly a century from Caesar's time) he came in person to see the launching of the new campaign, he played in it no leading part. Unwilling presumably to risk his precious person too long in these outlandish climes, he stayed but a brief fortnight, then hastening home to celebrate his triumph,

left to his officers the long and tiresome task of reducing the savage peoples of this unknown inhospitable land. It was a task calling for Roman pluck and Roman perseverance to accomplish. Britain was not good campaigning ground. Even the southern districts from Kent through Hampshire, as far as the Dorset downs, were then covered by wide belts of beech forest: and the further north you might go, the wilder grew the country, and the roads degenerated into mere moor-land tracks. The Britons themselves were not an enemy to be despised; and in the last resort they would always take to their native hills. Nor were they ill armed: even on their first crossing out of Gaul they had brought with them the science of fusing tin and copper into bronze; and the advantage of bronze weapons had doubtless helped them much in defeating the earlier inhabitants armed only with their rude implements of stone. But since that day the Britons had further acquired the use of iron: and like the hosts of Sisera, their chief warriors entered battle in formidable chariots, from the wheels of which long scythe-blades protruded upon either hand. They would even run nimbly out along the shaft-poles or fight hanging from their horses' necks. To increase the terror of their charge they dyed themselves bright blue with woad. Yet, woad and chariots notwithstanding, the Romans made rapid progress in the south. Aulus Plautius, the Emperor's veteran commander, soon drove the enemy back beyond the Thames, and in a decisive battle, under the Emperor's eyes, broke their resistance on the Essex plain. The tribes of East Anglia, Kent, Sussex and the Midlands yielded and made terms. But though Claudius might hold his triumph through the streets of Rome, the conquest was but half complete. Caractacus, the British chief who sat on Caswallon's throne, had escaped from the battlefield and taken refuge among the Welsh mountains. Under his leadership the Welsh tribesmen set Plautius at defiance, and it was left for his successors to carry the Roman arms to the Irish sea.

The Romans were expert soldiers, and very systematically did they set about their work. Three military bases were planted on the borderland of Wales : first at Wroxeter (or in Latin Uriconium) on the upper Severn ; then at Caerlon (Isca) at the Usk mouth in Southern Wales ; and finally at Chester (Deva) in the north. Military roads were built to link these up ; and at length after long campaigning, Caractacus was successfully laid by the heels. He was sent in chains to Rome, where he lived out his life, an exiled patriot. The reduction of the Welsh, however, still hung fire : it was not until the year A.D. 60, that Suetonius Paulinus determined to strike at the centre of resistance, Mona or Anglesey, the traditional home of the Druid priests. Starting from Chester with a fleet of barges built upon the Dee, he forced a landing on the island, butchered the priests on their own altar stones, and cut down their sacred groves. But this work was scarcely finished when terrible news reached him from East Anglia. Here a recent decree, displacing the local prince, had driven the natives to despair. Boadicea, queen of the Iceni, had even been scourged for offering resistance. She had answered by raising the standard of revolt, and the whole country was aflame. There were in the south-east of England three Roman towns of some importance — London (Londinium), Colchester (Camulodunum), and St. Albans (Verulamium) ; all three fell into the insurgent's hands : and the Roman settlers were massacred, men and women alike, with horrible tortures. It was said that 70,000 persons perished. For Paulinus the situation was critical in the extreme : cut off from his base, in the midst of a desperate and revengeful people, he must have felt much as our soldiers in India felt when the Mutiny began. Swift action was his only hope. He reached London marching day and night ; found he could not hold it, and began to fall back towards Chester. On the way he was attacked by Boadicea's men. The queen herself took personal command : " tall and forbidding,

keen of eye and harsh of voice, with a golden chain about her neck, and the red hair flowing to her hips," she appeared to give her eager troops the last harangue. But, for all her eloquence, the day was lost, and she herself took poison to escape a harder fate. The suppression of her revolt marks a turning point in the story of the British occupation. Though severe measures were needed to recall the natives to their senses, these measures were effectual. It is as though the Britons had staked their last throw, and having lost acknowledged their defeat. Even the Welsh tribes agreed to some temporary peace. Britain was won. Another province had been added to the empire which embraced within itself the whole of the civilised world; and though for future governors of Britain there were many risings to crush and work enough to do, they needed not henceforward to question the real security of their power.



CHAPTER II

ROMAN AND BARBARIAN

ROME was something better than a greedy conqueror or a harsh mistress. In her own world she played a part much the same as we have played in India for a hundred years. Rome played hers for four hundred. Wherever she conquered, she went on to civilise: and what she had civilised, she had still (like us) to hold, checking upon her frontiers the still chafing tide of restless barbarian enemies. So upon the men sent out to govern her outlying provinces there fell thus a two-fold duty. The ideal governor needed to be both soldier and civilian at one time; and it was fortunate for Britain that shortly after Boadicea's great revolt such a governor came out from Rome. In A.D. 78 Cnaeus Julius Agricola was appointed to the island. Of his work we have a detailed record written by his son-in-law, the historian Tacitus. This is for us no trifling gain; for in more ways than one Agricola laid the foundations on which his successors built.

When Agricola arrived in Britain, it was plainly his business to decide where the northern frontier line should run. Sooner or later there was bound to be trouble from the north. The Roman province, as he found it, stopped short at the Humber and the Dee. Beyond these rivers the dales of Yorkshire and the northern fells were occupied by the Brigantes, a wild tribe which had hitherto been left practically alone. Agricola had large ideas: he soon overran the Brigantes' country; but not content with this, he crossed the Lowland border, pushed

up to the Forth and Clyde; sent a fleet cruising round the Orkneys; and even defeated the "Caledonians" in pitched battle beyond the Firth of Tay. When, however, on the morrow of the fight, he saw the smoke of burning villages clouding the horizon, and knew that the natives were taking to the heather, he must have realised what it would cost to subdue such a people in such a country. In any case, he led his army back; and from this time onward the narrow isthmus between the River Tyne and Solway Firth became the accepted frontier to the north. Besides its narrowness (the span is 73 miles as the crow flies), this line, if strongly held, had one great advantage; standing midway between the untamed tribes of the north and the half-tamed, but still unruly Brigantes to the south, it might serve to keep the two from combining against Rome. This double purpose was still kept in mind when in A.D. 120 the Emperor Hadrian visited Britain and began the building of the Great North Wall. This famous defensive work faces both ways. Towards Scotland a deep trench and a high wall shut out the northern enemy. The wall, at first no more than a rude pile of turfs, but later rebuilt more solidly in stone, is in many places standing yet. It is a formidable barrier. Every four miles there is a camp or barrack for a thousand men; at every mile a guard house, and at each quarter of a mile a tower. Behind the wall ran a road linking the camps; and south of the road, facing the Brigantes, is again a ditch bordered by two mounds. As the Brigantes quieted down, the southern defences fell into disuse; and upon their site a regular town sprang up—a thin, straggling town, as Kipling has described it, 80 miles long measured from sea to sea. Here were taverns, shops, temples and places of amusement, and much else to make life tolerable for the luckless garrison thus exiled at the world's very end; for here thousands of men and officers, drafted generally from foreign legions, spent weary years keeping their unbroken watch or sallying forth to fling back the Picts or Painted

Men (as the northerners were called) when these came against them over the heather. Once, indeed, shortly after Hadrian's time, an attempt was made to shift the frontier further north; and a wall was constructed between the Forth and Clyde. It was soon abandoned, and the frontier which Agricola and Hadrian had chosen remained the barrier line until the evil day came and there remained no legion on the wall to hold it.

But no Roman governor spent all his thought upon the frontier or all his time upon the Wall. He had the peaceful natives of the south to think of as well as of the Picts. And here, too, Agricola paved the way for his successors. He started schools and brought schoolmasters over from abroad to teach the little Britons Latin. He enticed their fathers out of their forests and marshes by building them brand-new towns with temples, market squares and colonnades. He taught them to adopt Roman habits and even the Roman dress. But nothing did more perhaps to civilise the island than the roads which Agricola and others built. Without proper means of communication no country can thrive; and nowadays, when a new colony is to be "opened up," surveyors are sent out to plan a railway. The road was the Roman's railway; and not in one respect, at least, so unlike a railway either. For a Roman road plunged across country straight as a die, turning neither to right hand nor to left for hill or valley or river. It is a puzzle why such hilly travelling should have been preferred; and some would have it that Roman chariots had fixed axle-trees, and that for this reason twists and corners had to be avoided. But whatever the cause, their roads, with all their faults, were good roads, so solidly and deeply laid that even in Tudor times, after thirteen centuries of use, they were still the main arteries of traffic. Many remain to this day. From London as centre, three chief roads ran out, leading to the big military bases. Due north ran the first to Lincoln and on to York: this was Ermine Street; north-west the



second, Watling Street, to Wroxeter and Chester; westwards, but somewhat south of the Thames valley, the third ran through Silchester and Gloucester to Isca in the south of Wales: this had no name. And across the base of this triangle there went a fourth, the Fosse Way, from Exeter to Bath where gouty Romans took the waters, and from Bath diagonally through the Midlands up to Lincoln. Besides these there was a network of lesser roads; and with such a service trade could flow easily in and out of Britain; and along with trade came new ways of life and new ideas. Not least among them Christianity itself, brought in by missionaries before the province was a century old. And, when many years later in 324, the Faith was proclaimed the official religion of the Empire, Britain shared it with the rest. This act was due to Constantine the Great, himself a Briton's son. Thus in a small measure was Britain able to repay the debt of gratitude she owed to Rome.

Not all the civilisation in the world can make white men out of yellow men or black; and it would have needed nothing short of a miracle to turn Ancient Britons into Romans. Still Rome did her best. After three centuries of Roman rule Britain had been taught many of her virtues, and not a few of her vices. The island had undoubtedly progressed. The natives had in part abandoned breeches and taken to the toga, just as modern niggers do the opposite (how strange a thing is progress!). Many of them talked Latin; the more vulgar, as archaeologists can tell us, even scrawled it on the walls; one workman finishing a brick scratched "satis" across it, as a coolie with a word or two of slang might write "fed up". Then too they enjoyed the full advantages of Roman trade; and, just as India buys trinkets from Birmingham and cloth from Manchester, so they imported from overseas quantities of cheap, but shoddy ware, far uglier than the products of their own native art. Their towns were fine pretentious places, as the remains dug up at Silchester disclose; so were the

“villas” or country-houses in which well-to-do Britons lived. These houses, like those unearthed at Pompeii from beneath the ashes of Vesuvius, had fresco paintings on the walls, and fine pavements patterned with small bright coloured stones. They even had bathrooms fitted with elaborate contrivances of subterranean heating. Some say Rome was ruined by hot baths. But more than all this they enjoyed the decency and order and good discipline of Roman life. They got full justice, though strict, in the Roman courts, far better than the doubtful justice of their own old tribal laws. The Druids too were gone: weeds and mosses grew on the stone-circles; even the Roman temple had become a Christian church. But, for all that, the days of Britain’s peace were numbered, and a cloud already loomed on the horizon. As early as 286 the raids of the Saxon pirates had begun; and ruin was coming, more slow indeed than the disaster which was Pompeii’s end, but which was yet to blot out Rome’s work in Britain more utterly than all the ashes of Vesuvius.

For Rome was drifting towards her fall. Already she was herself a “house divided”. Shortly after Constantine the Empire split into two halves; one being ruled from Constantinople, the city which he had refounded and renamed; the other from Italy. Upstart emperors fought and intrigued for power. Yet at this very moment the menace of the barbarian hordes upon her frontiers was yearly growing greater. The call for men elsewhere than Britain was urgent. Legions were summoned for defence or “borrowed” by ambitious claimants to the throne. Little by little the island garrison dwindled. In 407 the last legion left. Britain was defenceless, and at the time when Alaric with his Visigoths was sweeping over Italy, and the Franks had crossed the Rhine, she too fell a prey to other enemies. The eagles gathered quickly round the carcass. Out of the Highlands came the Picts; from northern Ireland (which was then their home) the Scots; and, most dreaded of them, over the

seas from the German coasts came a swelling flow of Saxon pirates. Britain made what fight she could; but, though in the arts of peace she had been well schooled by Rome, one lesson had been neglected—the necessary art of war. And now it was too late.

Elsewhere, as here, Rome's power perished, but not her work. On the Continent, her influence outlived her. The Franks and Visigoths were wise in their generation. Already long since they had known Rome: living on the borders of her Empire, and trading with her merchants, they had learnt to admire her culture, while they despised her waning strength. So, when their hour of conquest came, they stayed their hand. Of Roman customs, of Roman laws, and even of Roman speech, much was suffered to remain. Alaric adopted the civil laws of Italy; Constantine's methods of government were taken as a model by Charlemagne, the great Emperor of the Franks; Latin, as spoken by the Gauls, became the Frankish tongue which we call French. And so, in one way or another, the tradition of Roman ways and Latin speech—much changed indeed, but Roman still—was preserved among her conquerors. From them the Normans took it, when centuries later they settled down in France: and thus with William's conquest that tradition came back to this island once more; but it came to a country where it had been completely lost. The Saxons had blotted it out utterly. They had destroyed all traces of the Roman occupation as if it had never been.

Think of the great Roman cities so famous in their day. Silchester, Uriconium, Corstopitum, upon the Wall—what are they now? Bare acres. Except London and York, no city seems to have been spared; though many, at what date we do not know, were re-inhabited. Nor were the Britons simply subdued and left as slaves. Prisoners were seldom taken by the Saxons, and they were swept out of their comfortable homes, pushed away into the wilds of Wales or Cornwall, or driven to a precarious refuge in the Fens. With them went the old

arts and culture, the old ideas of law and justice, the old security of settled government. All the things that Rome had stood for vanished; and not least among them Christianity itself. England for nearly two hundred years was a pagan country. The twilight of the Dark Ages settled over it; and kings reigned here who could neither write nor read—who had never even heard the name of Christ.

This second conquest of Britain was not like the Roman conquest, an affair of swift campaigns and systematic generalship. It was a slow piece-meal penetration, costing many long and painful years to conquerors as well as to conquered. Those of the marauders who lived nearest, might perhaps have made shorter work of it, had they had a mind. But booty was all they asked; and once the haul was complete, the Picts returned again to their northern homes; and the Scots went back (for the time at least) to Ireland. It was only the Saxons who came to settle; and for them it was no such easy matter to discover the weak points in the island's defences, to transport their hosts, to summon reinforcements, and still less to bring over wives and families to their new homes. For the North German coasts, from which they came, were 300 miles distant; navigation was not easy, and in winter-time the seas are rough. So, in fact, it was a great while before these German tribes could call Britain their own. From the time of their first permanent settlement down to the time when their final victory drove the last Britons into the hills of Wales, it was a century and a half. Speaking in round numbers, the process of these occupations lasted from A.D. 450 to A.D. 600.

They began with the south-eastern coasts, and this, when we come to think of it, was natural. The Britons of the south were feeble and less capable of resistance; they had known peace too long. Their lands were better tilled and the plunder richer. The landings, too, up the Thames, in the Solent, and elsewhere, were more accessible than in the stormy north. So we find that

the first comers landed in the Thames estuary at the Island of Thanet, and settled down in Kent. These were Jutes from Jutland—of German stock like the rest. They came under Hengist and Horsa as hired allies to a British king; but seeing the richness of the country, they stayed to conquer those whom they had come to help. (A.D. 449). After Kent, Sussex, where, as its name shows, Saxons settled. Next, other Saxons, pushing up Southampton Water, overran the country from Hampshire towards the west and called it Wessex. At the same time as the conquest of the south was being completed, the move against the east coast began. East Saxons occupied Essex; Angles occupied East Anglia, settling in two parties called the Northfolk and the Southfolk. The less inviting land, north of Humber, alone remained of the seaboard: this was seized by other Angles in A.D. 550 just 100 years from the first arrival of Hengist and Horsa. They called it Northumbria. Thus, starting from Kent, the conquest crept along the south coast westwards; then, starting from Essex, it had crept up the east coast north. Finally, the Angles, still unsatisfied, pushed up the Trent valley into the interior; and there in the Midlands founded the kingdom which they called Mercia. But as yet they had not reached the Western Sea; and meanwhile the resistance of the Britons seems to have stiffened. They were fighting now with their backs against the wall; and they made their last stand in two famous battles. At Deorham in Gloucestershire they were finally defeated in the south, and falling back into Wales they were cut off from their comrades of Devon and Cornwall (A.D. 577). A second defeat at Chester (613) had a similar effect; and with that British resistance was at an end: their tribes lost touch. Unity had never been a strong point with the Britons, and even when the enemy was at the gate they had squabbled. Unity was impossible now; and the scattered remnants of these Celtic peoples, while they succeeded in maintaining themselves in the Welsh hills, were incapable of winning back what they

had lost. Yet even so it was to be long years before they were brought under the rule of England. They have remained always in some sense a people apart; and even to this day the character of the Welsh recalls their British ancestry. In their love of song, their passionate, changeful and poetic temperament, we can still discern the nature of the Celt.

Legend has it that in the south-west the last stand of the Christian Britons against their pagan conquerors was made by King Arthur and the Knights of his Round Table. Mediæval writers such as Malory, who wrote the "Morte d' Arthur," have embroidered on that legend, making of this Arthur a prince of chivalry and a champion of all ill-used, distressful folk. Tennyson retold the story in verse in his "Idylls of the King". It is a beautiful story, but it has no real place in history. Knights in armour who spent their days in jousting and doing noble deeds, cannot have existed in the sixth century A.D. Yet the legend has this much truth in it that it depicts a struggle between the forces of Christianity and heathendom. The victory of the Saxons has altered the whole course of English history; and there is a deeper meaning than appears in the words of the dying Arthur, spoken as the ship of the three queens bore him to his rest in the island valley of Avilion:—

"The old order changeth, yielding place to new."



CHAPTER III

THE ANGLO-SAXON KINGDOMS

THE Angles, Jutes and Saxons were, so to speak, the backwoodsmen of Europe. They had lived too distantly from Rome to feel her culture, as the tribes of the Rhineland border did. In their far-away homes on the wild flats of the North German coast, they fell under no spell of hers. They were just what a rough life in a rude climate had made them: tough, self-reliant, brave, and of a dogged perseverance, very different from the excitable valour of the Celt. The only trades they understood were how to farm and how to fight; and they governed themselves by the light of a hard experience won among the forest marshes, on lonely islands or in scattered creeks. There is small wonder that their coming to this island opened a new chapter in its history.

That they were Germans, their language testifies—the language which we ourselves inherit from them. English is, of course, a mongrel speech: a large part of it came to us from the Norman French—that is from Latin. But its oldest words and the words which we use most often perhaps in our daily talk, are Anglo-Saxon words—and the Germans use them too in theirs. The man whom they call “König” we call “King”; “day” with us is “Tag” with them; “father” and “Vater” are not two words, but one. In short, both languages are at root the same; and though time has changed a vowel here, or softened a guttural there, an intelligent German would read the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle without a crib. So the

Anglo-Saxons—let us make no mistake about the point—were Germans; and we must needs believe that what Caesar and Tacitus and the old legends tell us about other German tribes, was largely true also of them.

They were a fierce, adventurous people; cruel to their own kin: for cowardice in war was punished with a barbarous death by drowning; cruel to their enemies; for often, like the Israelites at Jericho, they would vow every captive to the sword. They were great hunters with hawk or dog. They loved dicing and deep drinking, and not least among the pleasures of Valhalla, whither dead Saxon warriors were supposed to go, was the prospect of an everlasting and unlimited carouse. Their religion was heathenish and gloomy, albeit in its wild way, romantic and even beautiful. It told them of witches and evil spirits haunting the forests; of wild storm maidens and of kindly but misshapen dwarfs. What is most strange is this: that whereas most nations, like the Greeks, gave beauty to the gods they trusted, these northerners did not. Their chief divinity was the one-eyed Odin, with Frig his wife and Thor the Thunderer his son,¹ and there was many a legend, telling of the deeds of Odin's family, how Thor with his hammer did battle against wicked giants, and how Balder the invulnerable was slain—to the great sorrow of the gods—by the crafty Loki with a dart of mistletoe. Dark and savage certainly was the creed they owned; and dark, savage lives these Anglo-Saxons led; yet one virtue redeemed much—the treatment of their women-kind. Woman was to them almost a sacred thing; and this in a world where women had seldom received much respect. The Greeks despised them, giving them no liberty, and often killing a female child at birth. Even the early Romans kept their wives and daughters in the background.

¹ From the names of the Anglo-Saxon gods most of our week-days take their titles: Tuesday is the day of Ti or Tig; Wednesday the day of Woden (another form of Odin); Thursday is Thor's day; and Friday the day of Frig, Odin's wife.

But the Anglo-Saxons honoured them both in public and in home. In short, it was from these grim barbarians, rather than from the civilised nations of the south, that there sprang that noble idea of chivalry and reverence for the weak which has always been the peculiar virtue of the English race.

Among the Anglo-Saxons the family was everything. The very word "home" (for which some nations, like the French, have no true equivalent) is theirs. So blood-relations clung together; and in theory at least all the members of a tribe were kinsmen, just as in a Scottish clan. When such a tribe, needing a head, chose for itself a chief, they would proclaim him "head of the kindred," or in their own language, "king". To this king they would swear allegiance; and henceforward all must serve him when the kindred goes to war; till his lands for him if he requires it; and when the tribe collects for the assembly, or "mote," as it was called, they acknowledge the king as natural president. But, it must be remembered, they, the mote, chose him, and not he them. He is their president and not their master: it lies properly with them to settle the guilt of a criminal, or decide a policy—not with the king. More and more, no doubt, as time goes on, they will tend to leave in his hands the business of keeping order, punishing offences, and enforcing fines. Yet the king is still, in theory at least, the people's servant; and though at death he may nominate his own successor, it rests with them to accept or refuse that nominee as king; sometimes (as in Edward the Confessor's case) the dying king's nominee was not accepted. All this was something new in England, when the Saxons came; and, if it is not democracy, yet it is perhaps the germ out of which democracy has grown.

At times it is very tempting to regret the passing away of Rome. There is something grand and solid about that gigantic system whereby half the world was governed as one realm. But, if any thing is certain, it is this, that unless the power of the Roman had perished, and the

Saxon stepped into his place, England could never have become England. For see the difference between the old order and the new. Under the Roman Empire all power and authority resided in one man, the Emperor. All roads, as the proverb says, lead back to Rome; and every official in like manner was the Emperor's servant: to him the provincial governor referred all questions on which he stood in doubt; by him all appointments were conferred, and by a stroke of his pen cancelled; even the criminal who appealed unto Caesar—"unto Caesar he must go". By the Emperor's rule and justice his subjects were defended against the tyranny or wrong-doing of their neighbours; but in accepting the advantages of his government, they had forfeited the liberty of governing themselves. The Anglo-Saxon idea was different. It had its faults and dangers, it is true. Kings gathered great power into their hands, and often abused it greatly. But deep down somewhere in men's minds the new idea still remained firmly rooted—the idea that the king is the people's appointed minister and not simply their master. The English love of liberty—the belief in a man's right to order his own life and have his say about the way in which he shall be governed—all this we owe, in part at least, to the sturdy independent spirit of these early Anglo-Saxon tribesmen.

Nevertheless, in times of war, discipline must be strict and the authority of a commander strong. So, naturally enough, in the years when the Anglo-Saxons were fighting their way up into the heart of England, the power of their kings increased. Furthermore, as the new lands fell to the invaders and were parcelled out among the members of the tribes, large shares would often go to the more noble, the king's favourite warriors it might be, or those who were reckoned to be the leaders of the tribe. They were known as Eorls, and they became very powerful in their turn. For them the lesser men, or Ceorls, had often to work; and on their advice the king was wont to order his government, summoning them to his council

of Wise Men, or (in the Anglo-Saxon) Witenagemot. So the common folk among the kindred became gradually of less account, and the general mote fell into disuse.

Scores of such tribes, as time wore on, established themselves under their several kings upon our coasts and inland districts. At first the kingdoms were but isolated realms: generally they acted quite apart, and not seldom there was fighting between tribe and tribe. Gradually, however, some king more powerful than his neighbours, would gain the upper hand, and bringing the weaker kings under his own allegiance, would establish a wide control. Three main kingdoms in this way arose in England. There was Northumbria in the north, Mercia in the midlands, and Wessex in the south. Between these three in their turn a contest for the supremacy began; so that for two hundred years it was uncertain which should be the head, or how England was to become once again a single and united country. It remained for Wessex to achieve this unity; but it was Northumbria which made the first attempt.

The battle of Chester had scarcely been fought and the last of the Britons driven back on Wales, when there arose on the throne of Northumbria the greatest of her kings. Edwin (*c.* 620) carried the arms of the northern kingdom into every quarter of Britain: he beat back the Picts across the Lowlands and founded Edwin's Burgh on the rock where it now stands; he captured, and gave the Angles' name to the island of Anglesey; then, turning south, he brought Mercia, East Anglia, and even Wessex under his sovereignty; and in virtue of his conquests took the proud title of Bretwalda, the "wielder," or overlord of Britain.

Mercia, however, was not beaten yet. Penda, its heathen king, scornful of the shallow zeal of the Northumbrian Christians (for Edwin had been converted to the Faith), renewed the battle: Edwin himself was killed and his kingdom overrun. There followed a hard-fought struggle; and it was not till the old King Penda died,

and his son forsook his father's gods for the new faith, that Mercia forged ahead. Then indeed the Midland kingdom went from strength to strength. Northumbria was humbled and in 726 even the power of Wessex was temporarily broken. Thus, just one century from Edwin's time, the Mercian monarch became Bretwalda with as good a right as his. For many years the house of Penda flourished: King Offa (he who built on the Welsh frontier the great dyke which bears his name) was the most brilliant of the line; and even Charlemagne, the great Emperor of the Franks in Gaul, treated him as an equal.

But on Offa's death the star of Mercia began to decline, and the star of Wessex rose. From Charlemagne's court, where he had been in exile, Egbert came home to Winchester and there was crowned. He was not idle long, and very soon restored Wessex to her place. It was in 825 (just another hundred years from the time when Mercia's supremacy began) that Egbert fought and defeated her at Ellandun. Bretwalda in his turn, Egbert gave a unity to Britain which was to last far longer than the rule of the two rival kingdoms. Winchester became the country's capital, and so remained until the Norman Conquest; and it was there (if we may trust the story) that Egbert first gave to the country thus united the name of Angle-land or England. So just as from the time when the last Romans left it took two centuries to complete the Anglo-Saxon conquest of the island, so it had taken two centuries again to give to its government a permanent and settled shape, and to find a common name to mark its unity.¹

Yet, strange as it may seem of so uncivilised a people, this political unity could scarcely have been accomplished

¹ Egbert was not, of course, King of England in the same sense that William I or Henry VIII were so. He did not attempt to displace the local kings of Mercia, East Anglia or Kent: these continued to rule their own countries, but only as vassals to Egbert. The extent of the power which he, as Bretwalda, exerted over them, depended largely on his personal character and on theirs.

without a religious unity to back it. England could not so easily have become one nation, unless it had previously become one Church. For, superstitious as the men of those days were, they cared much for their religion. The Britons had fought their pagan invaders with twice the bitterness they would have felt for a Christian foe. And when in their turn the Anglo-Saxons were converted, we can at once mark the influence upon their lives. Religion became a key to policy. One king would make common cause with another, because they both were Christians, or for the same reason, having defeated him in battle, would temper his victory with unexpected mercy. So it meant much to Egbert (and still more to Alfred later on) that England was a Christian country when he began to rule. Its conversion was in this wise.

When the Britons were driven from their lands, Christianity, as we have seen, went out like a lost star. A spark, it is true, still lingered with the hunted remnant among the hills of Wales; but, though these sent out missionaries westward, and though St. Patrick's genius won over Ireland to the Faith, yet they made no effort to convert their heathen conquerors. The Saxons were considered beyond the pale: Christianity was too good for such as them. But Rome thought otherwise. Though no longer the head of a European empire, she was still the head of a European Church; and shortly before the time when Edwin succeeded to the Northumbrian crown, she turned her attention to this benighted corner of the continent. The Pope Gregory had seen (in days when he was still a humble priest) certain English children in the slave-market at Rome. And noting with kindly clerical humour the "angelic" look on their handsome Angle features ("non Angli," he said, "sed Angeli"), he vowed to win their country for the Church. As Pope, he made good his vow. In A.D. 597 he sent Augustine and forty others to preach the Gospel to England.

The task of these missionaries was less difficult, perhaps, than might appear. The Anglo-Saxons were already growing tired of Odin and the old pagan faith. It taught little that might help them in the struggle of this life, and of the life to come still less. The horror and mystery of death weighed heavily on their heathen minds; and a creed which could remove all doubts came like a dawn out of the night. Story tells how one Anglo-Saxon monarch (it was Edwin of Northumbria himself) welcomed the comforting promise of the Resurrection. Much in doubt, he had called a council of his chiefs, and when others had spoken, one old chieftain addressed this parable to the king: "It will often happen that when supper is set in the hall at winter-time, there comes a sparrow through the door, escaping the cold and storm outside. For a brief space the bird has pleasure in the warmth and the glow of the firelight; then, passing out again into the darkness, it is gone. Such truly is man's life: a brief space of light and happiness; darkness before and darkness after. None is certain whence man comes or whither goes—except these preachers with their strange new story. Therefore let us follow them." And with that the King was won: to such arguments as these the priests of Odin had no answer.

So, when Augustine and his forty friends landed in Kent upon the Isle of Thanet, they were well enough received. Aethelbert, the King of Kent, had lately married a Christian wife from France, and was not unwilling to lend an ear to their message. In long procession, chanting litanies and carrying aloft "a great silver cross and the image of the Saviour painted on a board," they approached Aethelbert's capital, where they were welcomed and allowed to settle. In due course the King was converted; and the most part of his people followed the King's lead. At Canterbury, on the same site where the Cathedral stands to-day, the first Christian church was raised. A few years later a fresh missionary

from Rome converted Wessex. It remained only for the Gospel to penetrate the north; and one Paulinus was sent out from Canterbury to the Northumbrian court of Edwin. He came at an apt moment; Edwin had but newly married a Christian princess from Kent, and events favoured Paulinus' mission. On the very same day that his queen bore him a daughter, Edwin himself had a miraculous escape from an assassin, one of his courtiers throwing his own body between the King and the blow of the poisoned knife. With pardonable superstition, Edwin put both blessings down to the potency of Christian prayers; and at length, after discussion with his chiefs, he was himself baptized; the high-priest took horse to York and there with his own hand broke down the heathen images and altars; and the people, like those of Aethelbert, somewhat tamely following suit, Paulinus baptized them by thousands at the time. But lukewarm pagans are apt to make lukewarm Christians; and when the heathen armies of the Mercian Penda overran their country, their new zeal vanished as rapidly as it had grown. Even Paulinus fled. The permanent conversion of Northumbria was not to come about through Canterbury from Rome, but from a different source. The Church which the banished Britons had carried into Ireland, had still an important role to play. The Celtic Christians, great missionaries though they were, felt, as we have seen, no call to carry the Gospel to the heathen Saxons; they turned, as was natural, to the heathen Celts. Off Mull, midway upon the western coast of Scotland, there lies a little island called Iona. This desolate rock had been chosen by the Irish Saint Columba as a good centre for preaching to the tribes of the Scottish mainland. A church had been built and a monastery flourished. Now, when in due course Northumbria recovered from the Mercian inroads, and when word came to Iona asking for a teacher who should win back the people to the Christian faith, the Celts did not hang back. Old scruples were at once

forgotten, and one of the monks, Aidan by name, went over. Like Columba, Aidan too took up his quarters on an island; and from Lindisfarne, or Holy Isle, as it was called, the second conversion of the Northumbrians was achieved. The Mercians, when King Penda died, threw in their lot with them.

Thus, where Rome had failed, the Church of the Ancient Britons had succeeded. The North was their conquest, as the South was Rome's. But unhappily the two Churches had long since drifted apart; and, as Churches are wont to be, they were sharply divided upon points of detail. The priests of the north shaved their heads one way, the priests of the south in another; then, too, there was a difference about the Calendar, and Lindisfarne was keeping Easter Day when Canterbury had only reached Palm Sunday. Mere trifles it may seem, but the fact is that the two Churches were mortally jealous of each other. The quarrel was at once so sharp and so absurd that Oswy, the Northumbrian king, summoned a conference. It met at Whitby on the Yorkshire coast (A.D. 664), and after much debate, the words of Christ himself were quoted (not for the first time nor yet the last) in Rome's support: "Thou art Peter and on this Rock will I build My Church . . . and to thee will I give the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven". St. Peter is reputed to have been Rome's first bishop, and Oswy shrewdly remarked that if Peter were doorkeeper in Heaven, he would be an ill enemy to make, and there-with decided in Rome's favour. So the northern Church yielded to the south; and England became spiritually dependent upon Rome. It was well the quarrel ended so: small good could have come at this date by cutting off the English Church from the rest of Europe; still less by leaving it divided within itself. Once the breach was healed, good order and harmony soon followed. Theodore, a Greek monk from Tarsus, St. Paul's birth-place, was appointed Archbishop by the Pope. He soon reorganised the Church, defined the Bishops' sees, allotted

parishes to the priests;¹ and even succeeded (such was his power) in causing rival kings to patch up their feuds. Unity meant strength to kings and countries no less than Churches; and the days were coming when unity was to be sorely needed. England had once again (and for the last time) to face a heathen enemy—the Danes. Egbert himself could barely hold them in check and even Alfred came too late to save the North. Yet the nearness of their peril drew Englishmen together, and under the very stress of combat with a common enemy they became more closely knit in one allegiance to both King and Church alike.

¹ These early Christian priests took the place of the old pagan priests, often as mere appendages of some local magnate. It would be an error to suppose that any elaborate parish system was thus early put in force.

CHAPTER IV

ALFRED AND THE DANES

THE long peninsula of Denmark and the rugged Scandinavian coasts which face it across the Skager Rack, had long been the home of a people who, in many ways, bore close resemblance to the Anglo-Saxons, their old neighbours. Danes or Vikings they called themselves; but to their enemies they were often simply the Norsemen, Northmen, men out of the North. That name became a terror to Western Europe, and through two centuries the litany of prayer went up: "From the fury of the Northmen, Good Lord deliver us".

Originally it was Charlemagne's fault. When the great Emperor of the Franks, pushing his kingdom from France across the Rhine, and from the Rhine to the North German coast, came into collision with this people, he awoke a hornet's nest. Threatened by land, they took to their natural element, the sea; and, once they had tasted the pleasures of foreign conquest and adventure, nothing would quiet them down. For two centuries they were the scourge of every seaboard country. No land was safe. Sometimes it was the French coast, where their settlers grew into a nation and became the Normans of history. Sometimes they passed Gibraltar, raided Italy, built castles in Sicily, and penetrated the Sea of Marmora itself. They even ventured, sailing by way of Iceland, to the unknown continent of the Western ocean. But their most natural, as also their nearest, prey was England; and bitterly did England suffer from them.

Having come to plunder, they stayed (as the Anglo-Saxons themselves had stayed) to settle, and as years passed, so the menace grew. In Charlemagne's time, when Offa was on the throne, we find them sacking Lindisfarne and putting the monks to flight. By Egbert's reign they are harrying the Dorset coast. Aethelwulf follows Egbert; and now they are pouring over, no longer in scattered bands, but in one great united host. Four sons of Aethelwulf tried each in turn to check them and failed. Then Alfred, their young brother, aged twenty-three, took up the struggle. He came none too soon. England was falling to pieces; such unity as Egbert had given it was fast vanishing. Already Northumbria had fallen. The Danes possessed the north. East Anglia was overrun and Edmund, its Christian king, cruelly murdered. Tied to a tree, he had been shot through with arrows, a death which won him the title of saint and martyr and (in later years) the monastery of Edmunsbury to mark his grave. But meanwhile the Danes had passed onward: in A.D. 871, the first year of Alfred's reign, they were fighting south of the Thames, and it looked as though nothing could save Wessex—least of all a boy of twenty-three.

But Alfred was no ordinary man. He had large ideas, cool courage, tireless energy, and, above all, he possessed the secret of command. If a thing had to be done, he did it himself. Was it an enemy to be attacked, there was Alfred, "charging uphill like a wild boar" against the shield-wall. Was it a book to be translated from the Latin, he would work upon it with his own hands, sitting late into the night. There was no false modesty about him: and he thought it no shame even for a king to watch the baking of an old wife's cakes. That is the sort of leader that men will follow anywhere. But besides being a great warrior, Alfred was much else: a student learned in books; a keen hunter and sportsman; a lover of music and the arts; not least, a firm friend and genial host, taking always particular delight in the

prayers ; and, what is more, he conned it. Among his closest friends were priests and bishops ; yet they learnt perhaps no less from him than he from them ; and, when his chance came, he did much to make Christianity more real in England. But his first years were rough years, and for such work he could spare but little thought. The Danes were pressing Wessex hard ; and, in the dark days that were coming, it needed all his faith to keep his own heart high and his followers from despair. His country was singularly ill-prepared to meet the blow : at almost every point of warfare the Saxons were outfought. No fleet existed, and the Danes were free to make a landing where they chose. They came coasting in undecked long-boats, single masted, carrying a big square sail and rowed by a crew some hundred and fifty strong. Pushing up some creek it was their habit to build a stockade to guard their ships, then scour the countryside till they had collected horses enough to mount their men. With these (though their actual fighting was always done on foot) they would then sweep down upon some inland town, plunder it and burn it. The towns could seldom hold out till succour came, for they had no walls ; and, even when the army gathered, the odds were still against the Saxons. Mere numbers availed them little. For the Danes usually stood on the defensive ; and the Saxon peasant, armed only with shield and spear, went down like chaff before the Norseman clad in mail shirt and stout steel helmet and wielding his terrible two-handed axe. None but the King's own bodyguard was able to meet him upon equal terms ; and these were far too few to play a decisive part. All this not even Alfred could remedy in a day, but throughout his reign he worked hard and continuously to reorganise his country's forces ; and before he died he left her far stronger than she had ever been before.

First, he built a fleet of ships larger and stronger than those of the Danes, capable of meeting them before they reached the shore. Secondly, he gave to many towns

their first permanent defences; not indeed walls of stone, but strong palisades of timber-baulks. Last and not least, he made of the army a far more formidable force. That army consisted, as we have said, of two separate parts. On the one hand there was the King's body-guard, drawn from the nobility or leading men called *Thegns*, to whom the King had granted lands, and who were bound to do him military service in return. Their weakness lay in the fewness of their number, and this Alfred remedied by drafting in among them the braver and more prosperous farmers of the middle class. The bulk of the host, however, was the militia of raw peasant folk, which in Anglo-Saxon was called the *Fyrd*. In their case the trouble was this. The peasant could not be in two places at one time: he might fight the King's battles, or he might till the land, but he could not do both; and it was therefore difficult for a King to keep the *Fyrd* in the field for many weeks together. Accordingly, Alfred divided the peasantry into two equal parts: one half, when war broke out, was to gather to the King, the other half remaining at the plough; then, at a convenient interval, their places were exchanged; the first half returning to their farms, while the other half came out to fight. But such reforms took time, and, long before a fraction of them was completed, the storm had burst: the Danes had thrown their full strength on Wessex, and Wessex was fighting for her life.

In the campaigns which followed, two points stand out—the extraordinary rapidity of the Danish blows and the black treachery of the Danish conduct. The enemy never neglected the opportunity of springing a surprise; and they never scrupled to break a promise. In the first year of his reign Alfred, much against his will, was compelled to buy them off: a breathing space was thus obtained—the Danes retired into the north. Four years later, however, they returned to the attack: they started from their base at Cambridge, marching by dead of night, swept down through a peaceful and unsuspecting Wessex,

and seized Wareham on the Dorset coast. When Alfred collected his forces to blockade them there, they talked of peace and then in the night broke truce and were off to Exeter. Alfred followed and once more they promised peace. Next year (A.D. 878), without warning and in the depth of winter, they were out again: they broke into Wiltshire, fortified a camp at Chippenham, and began to harry the countryside in all directions. Wessex was in a panic: at such a season no levy could be quickly raised. Many nobles fled; and the King with his immediate followers was obliged to retire into Somerset. His case seemed desperate indeed; but Alfred was not beaten. On an island in the Athelney marshes he gathered his forces to him; and, when spring was full, he marched north against the Danish camp. The Danes moved out to meet him; and at Ethandun (now Edington), just south of Chippenham, they were defeated in a great battle and driven back on their stronghold. After two weeks' siege they surrendered upon terms. As a pledge of good faith, Guthrum, their leader, was baptized a Christian (Alfred would take no less), and a solemn promise was given to leave Wessex unmolested. This time the promise was kept.

Ethandun marked a turning point in Alfred's fortunes. By this single blow one half of England was recovered. The north and east, it is true, were left to the enemy, but Wessex and Mercia were Alfred's. A compact signed with Guthrum, and known as the Treaty of Wedmore, fixed the boundary line between them. It ran diagonally across the Midlands from London up to Chester, roughly following the course of Watling Street, the old Roman road. North of this line the country remained in Danish hands, and was called the Danelaw. South of this line, England, ruled by Alfred, prospered and grew strong. And when in the last years of his reign, a fresh Danish host from France came over under Hastings, Alfred was ready. He had much hard fighting to shake the enemy off; but his reforms had borne their

fruit. His fleet did excellent service on the seas; and his improved army routed the Danes by land. As a final stroke he caught them napping upon the River Lea where it flows into the Thames just below London. He built a boom across the river-mouth and trapped their fleet entire. The Danes now learnt their lesson, and they troubled England no more while Alfred lived. He had saved half England, and what is more, the half that mattered most. In the century that followed, the Danes were absorbed into England and became Englishmen. England was not destined to be a mere colony of Scandinavia: and that was Alfred's work.

Some men in history have been great in war: others in peace. Few have been equally great in both. Pitt would probably have been a failure on the battlefield: and Wellington was but a poor hand at politics. Alfred was one of the rare exceptions. Like Caesar and Charlemagne, he combined the qualities of a wise ruler with those of a skilful general; and, in the fifteen years which intervened between Guthrum's defeat and Hastings' attack he had full opportunity to show his gifts. He used it well. He found the country in an evil state; its people ignorant, its priests idle, its judges lax. All this he set himself deliberately to change. As in war, he began by setting a high example in his own life; he never spared himself. Here is what Asser, his friend and great admirer, wrote of him: "In the meantime the King continued to carry on the government, and to exercise hunting in all its branches; to teach his workers in gold and artificers of all kinds, his falconers, hawkers, and dog-keepers; to recite Saxon books, and especially to learn by heart the Saxon poems and to make others learn them; and he alone never desisted from studying most diligently to the best of his ability; he attended the mass and other daily services of religion; he was frequent in psalm-singing and prayer at the 'hours' both of the day and of the night. . . . His bishops, too, and all ecclesiastics, his earls and nobles, minstrels and

friends, were loved by him with wonderful affection ; and their sons, who were bred up in the royal household, were no less dear to him than his own. He had them instructed in all kinds of good morals ; and among other things never ceased to teach them letters day and night." Single-handed, however, Alfred could never have effected one half of his reforms. Aware of this, he lost no time in gathering round him the best brains in England ; he even summoned men of piety and learning from the Continent and gave them posts of honour in Church and State. There was no scholar, teacher or ecclesiastic but was welcome at his court in Winchester.

With such helpers and advisers Alfred was able to carry his projects through. He revised the laws of the realm, incorporating among them (with a quaint fidelity to Scripture) large extracts from the book of Exodus ! In these early times the old stern justice of the Mosaic law, "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth," was still almost literally accepted.¹ It was a strict code ; but Alfred always allowed appeal to his own judgment-seat ; and his verdicts, like Solomon's, were the admiration of all comers. In money matters Alfred was even more practical. Having counted up the revenue derived from his taxes and estates, he set one half aside for purposes to be described hereafter ; the other half he divided equally between the improvement of his army, the entertainment of his guests, and the upkeep of his workshops. About all arts and crafts Alfred was an enthusiast ; he encouraged invention and even made with his own hands a contrivance for telling the hours of day—a simple arrangement of six tallow candles measured into lengths and enclosed in lanterns of transparent horn. His favourite art was jewellery ; and near Athelney a beautiful specimen of this work has been dug up. It is an

¹ Fines were the favourite form of punishment : and in Alfred's code of laws we find a regular tariff for injuries to the person : for a front tooth 8 shillings, for a grinder 15 shillings, a cleft chin-bone 12 shillings, thumb struck off 30 shillings, shooting finger 15 shillings, its nail 4 shillings, little finger 9 shillings, its nail 1 shilling.

enamelled figure of a king and bears the inscription, *ÆLFRED MEC HEHT GEWYRCAN*, "Alfred had me worked". He must have carried it with him to his retreat among the marshes.

But the chief and most anxious concern of the King's mind was education: and to this the second half of his revenues was in part devoted. The need was urgent. Only very few could read or write: the priests themselves who read the Latin services in Church could not understand them. "There was not one south of the Thames," says Alfred, "who could render the Epistle out of Latin into English." So he started schools where such as wished might learn English letters and, if fit, Latin too. Good books were scarce in those days; so Alfred collected old Anglo-Saxon ballads, and translated out of the Latin many books on philosophy and religion. He first set men to compile a history of this country; it began with the coming of the English, and was continued after Alfred's death until the Conquest. It is called the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*; and without it we should know but little of these distant times.

There yet remained, however, other monies to be spent, and for a Christian king one clear duty to perform. The welfare of religion and the salvation of men's souls lay under his special care. Now among the many institutions of the Church there was one which came to be regarded as the key-stone of them all—the Monastery. To ourselves it appears incredible that the right way of serving God should be to escape the world. A thousand years ago Christians thought otherwise. They believed that a life given up to prayer and psalm-singing and pious thought, and spent in the renunciation of the pleasures of the world, possessed a double virtue; not only did it offer a sure refuge from the vice and cruel violence of the times (and evil, bitter times they truly were), but it also served as a standing witness of God's presence in an evil world; it ministered, like the angels' song in Heaven, to the Glory of God on earth. So men

became monks; they left their home and family, often while still mere boys, and devoted themselves to the religious life. Gathered with a score or two of like-minded people, they lived out their lives apart from other men; read, taught, or wrote in the secluded cloister; held their services by themselves (independently of the public and the parish priests) in the great monastic church; and, if ever they passed beyond the walls of their confinement, did so only to till the soil or tend the sick. It was a strict life; yet to make it stricter the monks of Italy and France were wont to take a vow of lifelong obedience to the rules laid down by some great and pious leader.¹ The seven rules of St. Benedict were the most popular, and these had a large following on the Continent. But here in England men were slow and loath to take such vows, and most monasteries preferred to go their own ways independent of such rules. As a result discipline became lax; the monks were no better than they should be, and the chief purpose of monastic life was thus in danger. So at least thought Alfred when he came to found his monasteries. Two he built himself (one in the Isle of Athelney), a third he planned to build at Winchester. But the task of filling them was not so easy; men who would take the full vows of Benedict were not forthcoming; and Alfred was actually compelled to bring them over from abroad. Had he lived longer, more might have been done; but it was left for others to carry on the work which he began. More than half a century later, Dunstan, the great Archbishop, showed himself a stern opponent of all lax half-hearted ways. Forty new monasteries of the Benedictine rule were founded; and men who were not willing to take the vow were simply replaced by those who would. Thus purged and reinforced, the Church grew stronger. Enriched by vast gifts of land or treasure which Alfred and other

¹ Monks thus bound by vows of obedience to a rule were called "regulars," from the Latin word "regula" = a rule. Other clerics, not so bound, were known as "seculars".

monarchs, anxious about the salvation of their souls, had showered upon them, the abbots and bishops acquired great influence. Even reckless kings and lawless nobles bowed to the commands of mother Church; and the superstitious people, cowed by the threat of eternal punishment hereafter, or won by the pious example set before their eyes, began to mend their ways. The Church became a power in the land second to none.

It was left for Alfred's son, Edward the Elder, to build the new monastery at Winchester. Despite all his energy and courage, Alfred's own strength was spent. Throughout his life he had suffered much from a strange disease which no doctor was able to cure or even diagnose. In A.D. 900, being only fifty-three, he died. His reign had lasted close on thirty years. Its first quarter was spent in mastering the Danes; the second and third in quiet government and wise reform; and, though in the last quarter Alfred was troubled by still further war, he left England at peace. And when, just one thousand years before Queen Victoria's death, his short life came to a close, he knew that it had not been spent in vain. If one man more than another has the claim to be called our country's founder, it is he.

CHAPTER V

SAXON, DANE AND NORMAN

AT Alfred's death, England was left divided—as it were a bone under dispute between two dogs—the south saved indeed by the Saxon, but the north still firmly in the Danish grip. For a century and a half the struggle was prolonged, now one side prevailing, now the other, until, just when the issue appeared to have been clinched and the Saxon's victory won, there stepped in a third competitor, and from under the very noses of the rival disputants the Norman took the prize.

The story of this struggle between Dane and Saxon is long and wearisome, the names and details grievously confusing. But from among those kings of Wessex who recovered (if only for a time) the lost provinces of the north, three stand out: Edward, the son, Athelstan, the grandson, and Edgar, the great-grandson of King Alfred. The first overcame the Dane's resistance; the second crushed their most determined effort at revolt; the third succeeded in winning their loyalty and trust.

Edward the Elder soon buckled to the task which his father left him. Bit by bit he fought the Danes down. They were now no longer the formidable foe of previous years, having settled down with wives and families to farm the land, yet in a scattered fashion, and serving no common king. So, when Edward pressed into their country, built strong forts or "burghs" upon their borders (just as they in the past had built against his father), and thence began to harry them by constant raids, the tables

were soon turned. The Danes were not for fighting to the bitter end: they had homes to save and, rather than lose these, they asked for terms. Before he died Edward had them at his feet: he received full homage from the princes of the north and east, and even Constantine, King of the Scots, acknowledged him as "father and lord" (A.D. 925).

But, though beaten, the Danes' spirit was not crushed: and under Athelstan, Edward's son and successor, the new vassals soon revolted. A large host of rebels took the field, the Northumbrian Danes being joined not only by Constantine from Scotland but also by brother Vikings from the Irish coast. They met Athelstan at the unidentified Brunan Burgh, where a tremendous fight took place. Years after it was still called the "great battle," and the grand old ballad, "the Song of Brunanburgh," went down on the pages of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle:—

Here King Athelstan	: of earls the ruler
of heroes the ring-giver	: and eke his brother
Edmund the Atheling	: long lasting glory
won in the battle	: with the edges of swords
near to Brunanburgh	: the shield wall they clove
they hewed the war-lindens	: with leavings of hammers. . . .

	There lay many men
with spears done to death	: heroes of Northmen
over their shields shot	: as eke the Scottish
wearry, of war sad	: Wessex men onwards
the livelong day	: in their companies
foot prints followed	: of loathed peoples
hewed they the runaways	: behind terribly
with swords milled to sharpness.	

Five kings and six earls were slain among the enemy. The rebels scattered to their homes. The victory of Athelstan was complete (A.D. 937).

None the less, as others succeeded to his throne, the Danes would again and again "belie their oath" and make a bid for liberty; so that each new king had in turn to make good his claim to the supremacy by force of arms. Yet persuasion goes deeper than force, and

little by little through these troubled years, the wise government of the English kings was converting the rebellious Danes into loyal subjects. Their leaders were admitted to the king's council-board as members of his Witan: some were entrusted with wide provinces to govern. Even the Archbishopric itself was given to a Dane. When he became a good Christian the Dane was well on the way to becoming a good Englishman too; and the Church had an important and useful part to play in binding the two hostile races into one. Archbishops had great weight in the councils of the kings: and none more than Dunstan, famous in legend for his numerous encounters with the Evil One, and worthy to be reckoned in his day the foremost man in England. The king he served was Edgar (A.D. 959-975); and Edgar, guided by Dunstan's wise advice, did more to bring Saxon and Dane together than any king before him. He even angered his subjects of the south by the mild treatment which he showed the north; but his policy bore good fruit. The tale is told how once he gathered his northern vassals to Chester and, summoning six princes on to the royal barge, caused them to row him down the River Dee. The tale is at least a symbol of newly won harmony. With Edgar at the helm, and with Dane and Saxon pulling side by side, England seemed to have voyaged beyond the tempest and to be heading a straight course for calmer seas.

So indeed it might have seemed; but, on a sudden, fickle fortune veered, and everything went wrong. Blow after blow fell, till all that Edward, Athelstan and Edgar had accomplished, went utterly to shipwreck. First Edgar himself died, cut off in his very prime; then his elder son was murdered after the briefest reign, and the kingdom, passing to Ethelred, his younger son, fell to a fool, and a weak fool at that. To cap all this, there broke out once again, more fiercely now than ever, the old terror of the Norse invasion. Olaf Trygvasson, prince among pirates (owning the finest name, as I think,

in English history), began to make descents on our eastern coasts. There was worse to follow; for Olaf presently was joined by Sweyn, the King of Denmark. Sweyn came at the head of a strong well-found host; for Denmark was now a settled and united realm, and, when it went to war, its power was far more dangerous than the independent piracy of chance adventurers which Alfred had to face. And there was no Alfred now. Ethelred the Redeless, or Unready, would, as his name declares, take neither "rede" nor counsel in the hour of peril. He ordered the third psalm to be sung daily in the churches and proceeded to buy off the Danes with gold. No worse step could have been taken; the Dane-geld (as this blackmail tax was called) served only to whet the enemy's appetite; and the oftener the English paid the Danes to go away, the sooner did the Danes return to ask for more. Ethelred bled England white to meet this tax; but the tale of his folly was not yet complete. Learning that certain Danes who had settled in the south were leagued with the enemy from overseas, he sent out a secret order for their massacre. On St. Brice's day (12th Nov., 1002) the order was carried out; and large numbers of Danes were murdered in cold blood. This outrage brought swift vengeance. Sweyn came over once more and harried England right and left. For ten years the terror grew: more raids, more Danegeld, and again more raids. Canterbury was taken and the Archbishop made prisoner; and, when sufficient ransom was not forthcoming, the Danes in a drunken fury dragged their hostage out and pelted him cruelly to death with the marrow-bones from their feast. The king himself made no protest; but his people, tired of their long agony and Ethelred's futility, had reached the limit of their patience. They offered the crown to Sweyn. Ethelred fled (A.D. 1013).

Thus the fortunes of the struggle shifted; and a century's work of diplomacy and fighting was undone by the weak ways of a single king. Hitherto it had been

the Saxons of the south who led, and the Danes of the north who followed. Now south and north alike, seeing no other choice but endless warfare, preferred a Danish king. And when some six months later Sweyn fell dead in a sudden fit, they offered the kingdom to his son, Cnut. Only the Londoners upheld the claim of Edmund Ironside, Ethelred's true heir. Edmund's resistance, however, was soon broken and, contriving to get this rival murdered, Cnut reigned himself as England's undisputed king. He was a great monarch: emperor is hardly too big a name to give him. Besides England and Denmark, which were his, Scotland did him homage; and even Norway was brought under his heel. Yet Cnut never used his power to ill-treat or humble England; he ruled her rather as Englishman than as Dane, and by whatever means sought to win the loyalty of his Saxon subjects. He took Ethelred's widow as his queen; he gave Saxon nobles a liberal share in the government, enlisted Saxon warriors in his bodyguard of "house-carles," and (with piety unlooked for in a Dane) bestowed many priceless gifts on the English Church. Under such government the country throve afresh; its trade was prosperous, and its people, now for the first time after many years, enjoyed peace. Cnut was of the stuff of which great rulers are made; and, had his sons been like him, the course of our history would have been strangely altered. England would have remained under the crown of Denmark, and Danes not Normans would have had the shaping of her destiny.

But the strong hand with which Cnut had driven his native country and his English province upon a single rein was wanting in his heirs. Between the two of them, they soon lost their hold on England; and, when they died, the English Witan went back to Alfred's line and offered the crown to an Englishman (A.D. 1042). Their choice, as it so happened, could hardly have been worse; they little knew that, in taking Edward the Confessor for their king, they had taken a Norman in disguise.

By birth half-Norman—for he was Ethelred's son by a Norman mother—he had already spent more than half his life in Normandy, flying thither with the rest of his family after his father's overthrow. Bred up there from early youth, he was now Norman in speech, Norman in habits and sympathies, and Norman in the whole temper of his mind. Once, therefore, he was settled on the throne of England, he surrounded himself with Norman friends, giving them high offices in court and country. Norman priests were among his leading favourites, one being made Archbishop of Canterbury, another Bishop of London; and the influence of these and other clerics had a great hold over his superstitious mind. Religion was a downright craze with Edward, and, though his exaggerated piety won him the title of Confessor in his life-time and of saint after his death, it played also a large and fatal part in binding him more closely to the very country which his people had most to fear. For it was now in that quarter rather than in any other that England's chief danger lay. The Norman dukedom was indeed no power to scoff at. Though at first a mere settlement of Danish pirates, its strength had steadily grown. The Northmen settlers had become the Norman people—a people great in the arts of peace as well as the art of war. Living side by side with France, they had soon lost something of their northern roughness, adopting the French language, French institutions, French architecture, and French ways of life. From being vassals to the French king, they had risen to the position of an independent state; but they were now bent on more than this. William, their reigning duke, whose conquests of neighbouring territory in France had made him already the foremost figure of his time, was a man of vast ambitions; and the prize which he most coveted was England. By fair means or by foul he meant this country to be his; and in the pro-Norman Edward he found, as it were, a tool made ready to his hand. His schemes looked far ahead: England with Edward on the

throne was fast being Normanised by peaceful penetration. The ground being thus prepared, the next step was easy. Edward must be got to nominate him as his heir: the English King would not live for ever; and, when he died, William, as heir by promise, had only to claim his crown. So the Duke could easily afford to wait: there was no merit in winning England by the sword, if England could be won without it. The signs were favourable; and the Norman Conquest might well have been accomplished without either battle or bloodshed—but for a single hitch. William had reckoned only with the English King, not with the people whom he ruled; and presently there was disclosed the awkward fact that, though Edward wore the crown, he could not pass it on to whom he would. Truth to tell, the King was far from being master in his own dominions; and England, as William was to learn, had not one but many masters.

The situation, none too simple in itself, can perhaps best be understood by considering who these masters were and how they came to be.

In the everyday life of the ordinary Englishman, were he farmer or peasant, smith, carpenter, or wheelwright, it was not the power of the Crown which bulked most large. There was somebody whose strong arm he feared and respected far more than a king he never saw, and whose single word was weightier with him than any royal degree. This, to be brief, was the big man of the village, shire, or district: landowner or squire as we moderns should call him—Ealdorman or Thegn in Anglo-Saxon speech. The local power of such men was very great, and what really mattered to the little men of the countryside was how the big man treated them: was he easy-going and generous, then they prospered and were happy; was he stern and exacting, they were miserable and groaned. In short, he was their king in miniature, their master, protector, captain, and magistrate rolled into one.

How so much power came to be gathered into one man's hands is a somewhat lengthy story. It all began in the far-away days when the Anglo-Saxons settled down upon their conquered territory. When at that time the King parcelled out the land among the different families, instead of giving it to them for nothing, he made a sort of bargain with the people. By this bargain he undertook on his part to do the fighting for them, if they would provide on their part for the support and upkeep of his court and warrior-band. Their support was to be given in various ways. First, by contributions made to the King's table, eggs at Easter, geese at Michaelmas, pork, cheese, poultry, or a cask of ale, each in its season. Secondly, by work to be done on the royal estate (for the King reserved to himself many acres out of the village plots). The amount and character of this work might vary: some giving a day or two weekly all the year round, others only at the corn-harvest; but all may be lending a hand for the King at sheep-washing time. Third and lastly, whenever the local court of justice met, and fines were levied for acts of robbery or violence, these fines, when paid, were sent to the royal exchequer. So, in one way or another the King's needs were well supplied and he lived in comfortable independence, as a king should do.

By and by, however, the King's realm increased: distances were great and roads bad; it was no easy matter for the King to keep an eye on all his villages. Officials called sheriffs were appointed to act as his deputies, whether by superintending at the local court or by gathering the annual contributions, which now, indeed, were regarded as the King's lawful and permanent "rents". But even officials were not always to be trusted, and the King had work enough to control them all. So he hit upon a better plan and decided to appoint a representative upon the spot. From among his warrior thegns he selected some faithful veteran whose services he was anxious to reward and, summoning this man to

him, spoke much as follows: "Go you to such and such a village and, in a manner of speaking, be lord over it in my place. My estate therein (since I have others enough) I make into your hands. The 'rents' or contributions of the villagers shall, instead of mine, be yours. The work which has been done for me shall be done for you. The fines too, since you shall preside at the local court, shall be your perquisite. All this I freely offer you—only"—it was not like the King to forget his own side to a bargain—"for all this you must do something in return. It shall be your duty, whenever war breaks out, to present yourself at whatever place I name, suitably equipped and bringing six stout fellows, well accoutred, at your heels. On this condition, and on this condition only, will I make over the village into your hands; and to this condition you must plight me your troth." So the bargain was struck and the oath taken, and the old warrior became the King's sworn liegeman. As for the villagers, they got a new master—a less pleasant master, as it seemed to them, because a nearer and more exacting one.

As years went on, moreover, the lot of the villagers grew anything but lighter. The new lord added little by little to his power; so did his son and his son's son after him. It is the old story. Then, as always, the rich man had the whip hand of the poor man; and in one way or another the lord would find occasion to draw the rein tighter. There came, it may be, lean years, or a party of Danish plunderers to sack the village, and the annual crop failing or being destroyed, corn was scarce among the villagers. My lord, having corn (or money at least) to spare, perceived his chance and made the villagers pay dear for his assistance. From one he got a pledge to pay in future an extra bushel or an extra pig above his customary rent; from another the promise to work one day extra weekly upon the manor farm; a third, even more desperate with hunger than the rest, bartered away his very land, and a few extra acres were thus

added to my lord's domain. So, in this way or in that, the cord would be drawn a little tighter and a little tighter, until many of the villagers were hardly better than my lord's bondslaves. Half their time was his to be employed at his discretion: even liberty of movement had been lost, and without the lord's leave they might not quit the parish or seek another master. Bound to him for life, they were in truth his men, or (as the phrase ran) his "villeins," men of his "villa" or estate. Some who had had the misfortune to lose all their lands were almost as much his property as a horse or an ox in his stalls. And even for the free tenants, working for nobody but themselves and paying for their land a yearly rent, there was none the less a duty of service to my lord. They were in his debt for many things—for protection against the violence of strangers, for justice secured them in the local court, for a place behind his palisade in time of war—for all this some service in return was clearly due. So from the first it was understood that in emergencies they should answer his call to arm and fight under his standard—or at the very least pay a substitute to fight. And, just as he himself had taken an oath of service to the King, so the lord required a similar oath of them. They were sworn to be his servants and supporters "for life, limb, and earthly regard"; they knelt before him, placed their hands in his hands, received his kiss of approbation, and thenceforth they were his liegemen, even as he, in his turn, was liegeman to the King.

Thus by slow, strong growth of custom was developed what we call the Feudal System.¹ Every man had his place in it, each owning allegiance to some one above him. Step by step, from top to bottom, the men of all

¹System is a misleading word, as a matter of fact, for the terms of feudal service grew up very much at haphazard. The terms of service differed from village to village and from shire to shire. They were kept by local custom, not by written agreement. In the Danish north, the development of Feudalism was especially slow to mature, as the Normans found out later.

classes were ranged in a sort of pedigree of service. At the head was the King, father and lord over all. Under him, and rendering homage to him were the great earls, lords over many shires, ruling whole quarters of England. Under them again came the lesser lords, governors of single shires, or merely of towns or villages. To these in their turn the lesser folk were subservient and did homage, some as free tenants, farmers or peasants, some as villeins owing him regular work, still possessing land, others mere slaves, having lost their land and being no longer free. Thus each lord had under him a group of men all of whom acknowledged him as head, many of whom worked for him, and of whom some at least fought for him. In his own sphere, each lord was king in miniature, keeping mimic court in his manor hall, maintaining his tiny retinue of servants, huntsmen, artisans and men-at-arms, exacting rents and services from his vassals, settling their quarrels in the local court, and in general controlling and ordering their lives. Now it was a most natural thing, and a thing which nearly always happened, that, when the true King was weak or indolent, the kings in miniature grew strong, making light of their duty to the crown and gathering to themselves more power. This was precisely what occurred when Edward the Confessor, weak king if ever there was one, ascended to the throne. Edward was, in short, less his vassals' master than they his; and when he and Duke William conspired, as we have seen, to deliver England into Norman hands, it was these so-called subjects of his—and in particular the great earls—who stood between the shameful scheme and its execution. For they were Englishmen to the core, and had little intention of parting with their native liberties without a struggle.

Now one man there was, as it so happened, infinitely more powerful than the rest. Godwin was his name and he was Earl of Wessex. His influence, however, did not stop short there. In addition to his own province of the south, he practically controlled the eastern counties and

the south-west midlands also, having obtained these earldoms for his two sons, Harold and Sweyn. Only in Mercia and Northumbria he had no footing: their earls held jealously aloof. Wessex, East Anglia, and the whole country between the Severn and the Thames were not a bad beginning for a single family; but Godwin went still further and procured for his daughter a royal husband. He married her to the King. The man who thus, besides being at the head of half England, was father-in-law to the reigning monarch, was clearly a power in the land—and a power with which its enemies, too, had to reckon. Godwin was not the man to wink at what was going on between Normandy and London,¹ and his full influence was thrown into the scale against William's machinations. Thus a scarcely veiled struggle began between the English earl and the Norman duke, a struggle which a trivial incident brought presently to a crisis. Some Norman knights, returning to the Continent by way of Dover, forced themselves on the unwilling townsfolk with a demand for board and lodging. Resistance was offered, and in the ensuing brawl seven of the unwelcome visitors were killed. The King promptly ordered Godwin to punish the town of Dover; and Godwin—secretly delighted over the whole affair—refused. Edward could be obstinate when he chose and called Godwin to account. The country was on the brink of civil war and the situation was saved only by the flight of Godwin and his sons out of the country (A.D. 1051).

But Edward's victory was brief. The English sympathy was with the great earl; nor was this sympathy lessened when William presently came over in person to visit Edward and extract a definite promise of the crown. Feeling rose high for Godwin, and next year saw the exiled family's return. Their position was now stronger than ever, and, though Godwin died, Harold succeeded

¹ Under Edward, London now for the first time began to supplant Winchester, the old Wessex centre, as the capital of all England.

to his father's place and to more than his father's power. Himself now Earl of Wessex, Harold obtained East Anglia for his two brothers, Leofwine and Gurth. Northumbria (hitherto outside the family) he procured for a third brother, Tostig. Mercia alone of all England was hostile to Harold, and sulkily withheld support to the true English cause. For by now it was clear as day that Harold was the country's champion against the Norman peril. While his power stood firm, William's schemes had no prospect of success. This William himself saw. He had measured his antagonist and, well aware that only by force could England now be conquered, the Norman bode his chance.

CHAPTER VI

HASTINGS

WHEN, upon the death of an English king, the Witan was called on to appoint a fit successor, the dead man's next-of-kin had as a rule the strongest claim; and as a rule (though not an invariable rule) he was accepted. Now the Confessor had no son: his next-of-kin was a great-nephew, Edgar, called the Atheling, a member of Edmund Ironside's exiled family. But Edgar was still a boy, and not, in such troubled times as these, a likely king. There was therefore room for other candidates; and, as such, William, though a Norman, meant to stand. He had the Confessor's own promise of the crown, and, seeing that he and Edward (through Edward's Norman mother) were first cousins, there was at least some show of right upon his side. The other candidate was Harold; but, though brother-in-law to the King and the foremost man in England, Harold carried none of the blood-royal in his veins and had therefore no legal claim upon the throne. Yet he, too, meant to stand.

A chance occurrence—one of those odd accidents that from time to time divert the course of history—had served to upset the balance of these rival claims, making William's look much better, Harold's much worse. In 1061, Harold, sailing in the Channel, was carried by a westerly gale to the French coast. Recognised there by the fisherfolk, he was taken prisoner by one of William's vassals and handed into the custody of the Duke.

William was not one to let such a chance slip by, and the condition of release which he proposed was nothing less than Harold's promise to support his claim on England. It was taking a cruel advantage, but Harold had no choice. Before a great gathering of noble witnesses, he took the oath, his hand upon an altar. The oath taken, there was revealed hidden beneath the altar a sacred relic.¹ Harold had sworn upon the bones of Christian saints. He had been doubly tricked. To ourselves the incident seems almost trivial, an oath extracted by compulsion, scarcely binding, but to the men of that day an oath was an oath, whatever the circumstances might be. Oaths were the bond by which (as we have seen) feudal society was held together. Harold had done what was virtually an act of homage. He was now Duke William's "man". An oath, too, taken thus over a sacred relic was no ordinary pledge. It was a religious act, solemn as the sacrament itself; its violation meant not treachery alone, but a deep offence towards God. So seriously was the pledge taken that the Pope himself backed it, sending to Rouen a banner blessed by his own hands. Thus doubly fortified with Harold's oath and the Confessor's promise, William might well feel confident, and when the time was ripe he counted to appear on this side of the water, not as an enemy usurper, but as claiming what was his by right. Two facts only stood in his way: his rival was an Englishman, and his rival was on the spot.

Harold played his cards well. On 5th January, 1066, he saw Edward on his death-bed, by him was entrusted with the care of the realm, and next day was crowned, The Witan accepted him; he had outplayed the Duke. Nevertheless, it would be idle to suppose that the mass of Englishmen, dull, unlettered peasants as they were,

¹ The evidence for the "sacred relic" is not too good. Some modern historians even doubt whether Harold took the oath under compulsion. It is quite possible that at this date he did not realise the danger of William's rivalry.

were enthusiasts for the new King's cause. A few months later, when Harold himself was dead and William crowned, they accepted the change without much protest or commotion. Their small minds indeed could scarcely travel beyond the end of their own village green; and in this, as in other matters, the big men led them by the nose. That the Witan had taken Harold was enough; and Harold's call to arms, when it should come, would be obeyed. If kings must fight, the people had at least learnt to suffer silently. Yet throughout these months of waiting, there was a sense as of coming disaster in the air, and a huge comet appearing in the night skies at the end of spring terrified men's minds.

All that spring and summer William was gathering his host, and on 28th September he landed at Pevensey beach in Sussex. But Harold, though he had long awaited William, was not there. The landing of another enemy had called him north.

This blow in the back came from his own brother, Tostig, the Northumbrian earl. Exiled by his subjects for misgovernment, Tostig had stuck at nothing for the recovery of his power, and had appealed for assistance to the Norwegian king, Hardrada. This act of treachery Tostig had committed believing that Harold was against him; but it was treachery none the less. For Hardrada, tempted by the apparent weakness of her newly crowned King, was determined to win England for himself, and he put in with a fleet of 300 galleys at the mouth of Humber.

Rightly or wrongly, Harold conceived the situation as a race against time. Things were indeed critical. Just a week before William landed, the defence of the north had broken down. The two brother earls, Edwin of Mercia and Morcar, Tostig's successor in Northumbria, had met and fought Hardrada. They had been beaten, and already Harold was marching north. Every day was vital. Strike he must; for, whatever terms might be possible with Tostig, there could be none with the

Norwegian—saving Harold's grim offer of a tomb: "seven feet of English ground; or as much more as he is taller than other men". And the blow must at all costs be parried quickly before the other blow in the south should fall. Harold met Hardrada at Stamford Bridge, seven miles east of York, and he won a crushing and decisive victory. Tostig and his ally were left dead on the field; and only a remnant, the crews of four and twenty galleys, found their way home to Norway.

The battle was over and Harold was sitting in York, celebrating his victory at a feast, when the news of William's landing came. This was on a Monday. By the Friday evening (or Saturday at latest) Harold was in London. The distance from York to London is 200 miles: he had ridden it in four days. Even the foot army, weary with its long northward march and a hard-fought battle, followed him in nine. Such marching seems incredible. England had never seen its like, and has seen no better since. Yet five days was all that Harold gave himself in London. The men were coming in from the country-side, but he allowed no time for the Northumbrian and Mercian levies to get down. It may be that, since Edwin and Morcar were no great friends of his, they never would have come at all. In any case, Harold, still thinking time was everything, marched with the men he had, the levies of the southern shires and perhaps the eastern too. He was on the move all Thursday, and by Friday night he had reached the field of Senlac—the most brilliant feat of all; for from London to Senlac it is sixty miles. What private reasons Harold had for such haste, it is impossible to tell; perhaps he even doubted the loyalty of the absent earls. But, as a point of pure generalship, such haste seems scarcely wise. William had been on the coast a fortnight. He was there still. The plain fact was that he could not safely leave it. Dependence on his overseas supplies tied him to his ships, and a march on London or the Thames valley would have been hazardous in the extreme. It

suiting his book far better to draw Harold out against him, and to this end he harried and plundered Sussex with systematic violence. None the less it was a false step on Harold's part to be thus drawn; and, even when he reached the neighbourhood of William's army, he had not the strength to strike. His own men were outworn by 500 miles of marching; in quality and equipment they were no match for the Normans; even in numbers they were inferior, for, though Harold was some five and twenty thousand strong, William could certainly count more. So Harold (wise in this, at least) stood on his defence.

The position on which his choice fell was good: the English army lay astride the London road, a forest at its back and to the front a clear slope falling gently to a marshy bottom. We have it from Wace, a chronicler writing ninety years after the event, that Harold strengthened his line yet further with an earthwork topped by a strong wattled fence. The building of this barricade, though other and earlier writers give it no mention, is possible enough; it was an old device, employed by the Danes in Alfred's time and likely now to prove a useful barrier to the rush of William's horse. Against the English thus posted, and on the very morrow of their arrival, the Normans moved out from their quarters on the coast. From Hastings to Senlac is seven miles; and they started at daybreak on Saturday, 14th October, 1066.

What followed it is worth while to tell in detail, not only because the battle itself was to decide the whole future of England, but because, for the good understanding of an age in which fighting was a great part of life and in which the men who counted for most were the fighters, it is well for us to know what the manner of their fighting was.

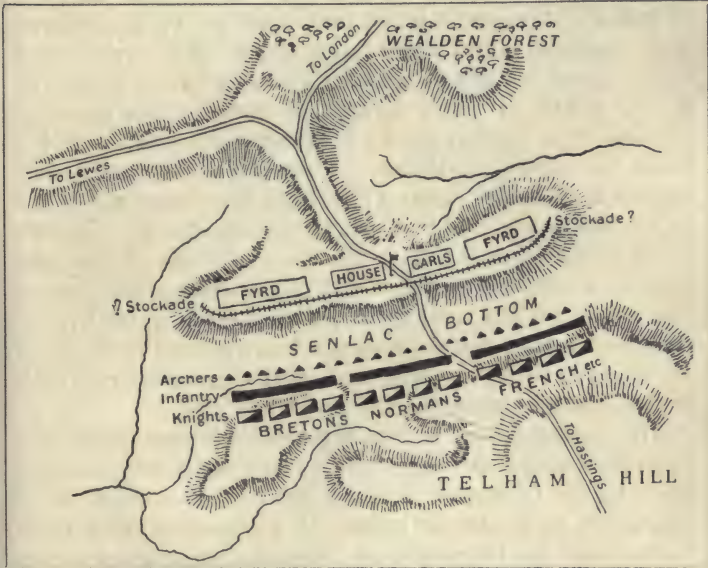
Between the two armies that were to meet this day there was, as has been said, a wide and striking difference. They differed in their personnel, in their equipment,

in the whole method upon which they fought. English soldiery rested on the old tradition of the Danish wars: it was of the past. Not so the Normans: they stood in the very van of military science, able to draw for the arming and disposition of their troops on a rich experience of Continental warfare; and it was their tactics which were to be the accepted tactics of the coming age. Hastings, in a word, was a testing issue between the old system and the new, between a system which relied on infantry and a system which relied on horse.

Harold's army fought entirely upon foot: the bulk of it was inferior stuff, ill disciplined, ill equipped. The shire levies, taken from the plough and led by their feudal lords, the local thegns, were neither armed nor trained upon a settled scheme. Some came with spear and sword, a few with bows, many with nothing but clubbed sticks, stones fitted with a handle and flung at distant range, even with rude implements borrowed from the farm—hoes, and forks and mattocks. None, unless it were the thegns, wore body armour; a metal cap and a kite-shaped leathern shield were their sole weapons of defence. Such was the Fyrd, nine-tenths perhaps of the host that fought at Senlac. It is astonishing that they fought so well. Yet, even as it was, their stand would have been impossible without the stiffening of Harold's other arm. This was the famous House Carles, a picked body-guard, two or three thousand strong, which, since Cnut had set the fashion, had been maintained by every king succeeding him on a permanent war-footing. Few even in the Norman host were better armed than were the Carles. They carried mail and on their heads close-fitting steel caps; they, too, fought with sword or javelin when the press was close. But, when there was room to swing it, their true weapon was the axe, a thing of havoc and terror, shearing metal and mail like tow, and capable (as Harold showed at Senlac) of felling both horse and rider at a single stroke. It was in truth the axe-work

of the House Carles that held the enemy at bay through the morning and afternoon of that long Saturday.

The Norman host was differently composed. It was no national levy which followed William, but the feudal contingents of volunteers from among the Norman nobility. Many great princes (though some, indeed, held back) had come to share the Duke's adventure, and had



BATTLE OF SENLAC, 14TH OCT., 1066

brought their own personal retainers with them. There were Eustace of Boulogne, Count Alan of Brittany, William Fitz Osborne, Neal of St. Saviour, and many other resounding names, destined in some cases to play no trifling part in the ruling of conquered England. The material of the Norman host was thus drawn from very various quarters; but the different arms were accurately divided. They were three: archers, heavy infantry, and knights on horse-back. Of the archers and infantry little

need be said, their business being simply to prepare the way for the delivery of the main blow—the charge of knights. These knights not merely formed a large proportion of the entire host; they were the very core of William's offensive, and Europe had no better riders. On the scenes of the Bayeux tapestry (woven to commemorate the victory they won) the massed figures of these men stand out conspicuous. They rode chargers of heavy but powerful build, like cart-horses; they moved well together; and their equipment was complete: a conical steel helmet fitted with a jutting bar to guard the nose; a suit of mail, formed of metal rings or discs stitched on a leather shirt; a kite-shaped shield; and a lance for thrust or throw. That the charge of such a force was this day broken not once but many times is a proof, not merely of English toughness, but of Harold's generalship as well. For the man who faced him was himself a tried commander. William understood the use of troops; he had used them well and often in his French campaigns, and his skill was acknowledged throughout all Western Europe. Yet seldom, if ever, had it met with such a test as now was coming.

The Norman host had no sight of their opponents, nor, indeed—except through scouts—any knowledge of the field to be disputed, until, after two hours or so of marching, they gained the top of Telham hill, and from there could see the slopes of Senlac, a mile away across the valley. The knights, who, to avoid fatigue, had thus far ridden unaccoutred, now took their mail suits from the bearers, and a pause was made for preparation. It is said that William in his haste drew on his mail back foremost, and that, seeing his superstitious friends alarmed by the mistake, he passed it off quietly with a joke, declaring that in like fashion a duke's suit would presently be turned into a king's. Nor was William without good ground for confidence, seeing what men he led; yet, even so, the price of victory was probably beyond his highest reckoning. The task before him

was no easy one. The enemy (let us recall) was posted well up out of the valley, covering the slopes of the opposing hill. The Fyrd held the two wings: in the centre, grouped around the King's flag of the "Fighting Man" and its fellow, the red "Wessex Dragon," there stood the Carles. Below them on the slopes, and almost masking their foremost ranks from sight, ran a low but substantial palisade. To carry such a position, uphill, chiefly by charge of horse, and through a direct assault frontally delivered (for the simple strategy of the day aspired to little else) could hardly be other than a deadly business; yet to such an action the Norman with good hopes now commanded his men out. It was about nine o'clock in the morning.

William had planned to deliver the attack in three successive waves: archers first, then infantry, and last the knights. In that order then the line went forward. The archers skirmished up the hill-side, playing their arrows on the thick ranks behind the palisade. Their volleys (since bowmen were few among the English) must have gone practically unanswered. Yet so little was the English line shaken that, when the infantry in turn came on, they made next to no impression. The front was nowhere breached when the cavalry took the hill. The various contingents of the knights were marshalled in advance under their several leaders: William with his Normans in the centre (where the enemy was strongest), his allies on the wings. But at the charge itself the ranks closed in, forming to the English eye almost one unbroken line. Crossing the level the riders must have sunk deep and floundered as hunters will in a sodden field in autumn; but the ranks were well kept, and a solitary knight alone, pushing his horse ahead, outdistanced his companions. This was a minstrel named Taillefer, and, as he rode, he broke into a song. It was the "Song of Roland," a famous ballad of the days of Charlemagne's chivalry; and, as the English caught the notes, they saw the singer play with his sword, fling it

spinning in the air, and catch it again like a juggler in his hand. The song was soon cut short, for Taillefer was felled, and a moment after the charge went home. The shock was cruel, but the English ranks stood it well. And presently, the French knights upon the left recoiling, the excited Fyrd poured out in hot pursuit. It was an ill-judged act—proof, if any were needed, of the indiscipline of the Fyrd, and an act, as shall be seen hereafter, most fatal to the English cause. Out in the open the Fyrd were no match for Norman knights, and, severely handled for their rashness, they got back as best they could. Meanwhile, however, William, who had drawn off his cavalry, returned anew. This time he pushed the attack both hard and long, and there was desperate fighting on both sides, the Normans urging their horses to the palisade and driving their lances through, the Saxons dealing back with long sweeping blows of the axe. The whole valley must have echoed with the crash of steel on steel, and rising above it voices, two tongues in a strange confusion, the long rolling “Ha Rou” of the Normans, and the sharp English rally, “Out! Out!” and “Holy Cross”. But such work could not last for ever. The defenders were hard beset, and here and there perhaps a breach was made. But the attackers too (and their horses, which were armourless, still more) had been suffering severely. At length the Normans flagged, broke off the battle, and drew away into the valley.

It was now mid-afternoon. The crisis of the battle had arrived, and William's situation looked anything but well. The flower of his cavalry was badly mauled; only four hours, or, at most, five remained to him of daylight, and he was as far off victory as ever.

A weaker man might have faltered and that day gone down upon a very different ending; but at this testing moment, when such another, fearful of further sacrifice, would have counted the battle lost, the Duke's genius stood revealed. Although throughout the day he had

shared the charges with the rest, had three horses killed under him, and was at one moment felled, so that he needed to unmask his face for the reassurance of his followers, yet William had none the less kept a firm grip on the details of the day's battle. And now two separate resources, both suggested in part by his own observation of the day's engagement, and each in its way disastrous to different portions of the English host, were summoned into play. William's quick mind had noted and remembered the indiscretion already committed by the Saxon Fyrd. They had followed out rashly once; they should do it again. Orders were issued, and, next time the Norman troops advanced, the attack was not pressed home. After a brief encounter they recoiled and scattered in apparent flight. It was the work of a moment: the Fyrd came pelting downhill after them, and then, as the Normans faced about and cut in on their unguarded flanks, found themselves in a trap. This time there was small chance to rally; very few got back to the shelter of the line; the most part either were killed or fled. The ruse had succeeded, and, whatever remnant may even yet have rallied to the King, the Fyrd as a whole might henceforth be counted out.

There remained the House Carles, still holding on staunchly and with a resistance not lightly to be broken. Against them William now played his second card. He told his archers to elevate their aim and direct their shafts so that they might fall steeply on the enemy ranks. The Carles had stood much hammering; but this fresh ordeal was almost beyond endurance. The volleys descending from the sky distracted their attention, pierced them in unexpected places, caused them to raise their shields when these were needed to the front, and finally stung them to break from an unbearable inaction into bold but futile sallies. The Norman knights burst in where the archers had prepared the way; and soon only a central group, a forlorn hope of indomitable warriors, stood guarding the double banner and their

fighting King. Harold and what few survivors remained to him out of the slaughter held firm to the bitter end; but at length he too went down transfixed (as the tapestry at Bayeux shows him) with an arrow through the eye. The remnant, now leaderless, began to waver. The Normans broke in, hacked Harold's body where it lay, and cut down the standard poles. As the sun was setting, the rout went through the Wealden forest behind Senlac hill. Some of the Normans, indeed, pressing the pursuit too hotly in the failing light, stumbled on broken ground in a ravine and were cut up; but the English army never rallied, either that day or any after. The national resistance, such as it was, was broken, and the Conqueror had England at his feet. It still remained for him to receive the unwilling homage of his new subjects: he had still to crush some isolated efforts at revolt. But, when Harold fell dead at Senlac, none remained to dispute his title to the throne.

If William had a conscience, it was easily quieted, and the shallow superstition of the day had ready salves for any such qualms as his. During the day of Senlac (so the story runs) he had worn slung round his neck the sacred relic once used for Harold's oath; and on the battle site itself he had vowed to raise (and did raise) a great monastic church. And when, on the Christmas of that year, he took the Confessor's crown in the Confessor's own Abbey of Westminster, he felt little doubt, as one may guess, that the Almighty smiled on the event.

CHAPTER VII

THE CONQUEROR

WESSEX and London were but the first fruits of his victory ; yet William made little haste to gather the full harvest. There now remained no national centre of resistance ; and the submission of the rest was a matter of time alone. So William waited, as the master waits for a disobedient cur to come to heel, knowing that it will come.

England was indeed cowed. All that year she made no move ; nor, until William's back was turned and business in Normandy had called him overseas, did opposition venture to raise a timid head. Gathering at Exeter, the thegns of the south-west made preparations for defence. Harold's mother was with them ; and in a rash moment they declared their independence. Then the master's whip cracked. In 1068 William descended upon Exeter, and laid it under siege. The feeble folk gave in. In the Midlands, where Edwin and Morcar, absent from Senlac, attempted to retrieve what there was lost, it was the same story. At the first news of William's approach their armies melted away, and the two earls, tamely submitting, were attached to William's court. For once, however, William was too trustful ; for, a year or two later, they both got away, Edwin to fall in some petty skirmish, Morcar to join a last desperate rally in the East Anglian fens. At Ely a small band of patriots had collected under Hereward the Wake (A.D. 1071), and there, among the bogs and marshes,

they were able to defy the Normans, who did not know the secret of the fenland tracks. Timber was brought and a solid causeway built; but Hereward's men fired the reeds and burnt it. Only when at last the Cathedral monks turned traitor did the island fortress fall. Morcar was caught and his followers punished by hideous mutilation. Hereward himself escaped; yet to support an outlawed man was more than any of the English dared; instead, they assisted the foreigner to hunt him down. England was now learning to recognise the master's voice.

The toughest resistance came where it might have been least expected. Northern England, which had fallen to the Danes in Alfred's day, was still full of Danish blood, and its people were thus kinsmen to the Normans, who sprang from the same Scandinavian stock. Yet what William encountered beyond Humber was not friendly welcome, but savage independence and (worse still) alliance with the Danish king. In 1069 a fleet arrived from Denmark and all Northumbria rose. They swept on York, burnt down the city, carried the castle and slaughtered all the Normans in it. Chronicles tell how Waltheof, last of the great English earls, "stood at the wicket hewing their heads off one by one," as the garrison came out. William could strike hard when it was needed, and he chose to strike hard now. He pardoned Waltheof, it is true, but he made of the northern rebels an awful example of his vengeance. From Ouse to Tyne he undertook deliberately to blot out man and all his works. Villages were fired wholesale, their inhabitants either massacred or starved. Churches were left in ruins, farms in ashes. Not even the fields were spared. Later in William's reign the Domesday survey tells the tale of what he did. Entry after entry in village after village bears the same word, "waste". The whole country was a desert, and its recovery was so slow that the better part of five centuries elapsed before proper cultivation was restored. Mean-

while the lesson had not been lost on England. She saw now, if she did not see before, that her new master was not one to trifle with. There were no more revolts.

It is a pitiful sight to watch a people, great and vigorous in its day, bowing thus meekly to the conquest of a foreign prince. The spirit of the Danish north serves only as a foil to make the southerners' collapse seem more contemptible. Truth to tell, the Saxon had long since lost his grit. Though warlike and adventurous when first he came over to England, a settled life had spoilt him. His interests became rooted in his farm, and, even amid the perils of the Danish wars, the duties of national defence began to be forgotten. It became too much a habit to leave the fighting to the king and his special warrior-class, and after Hastings, where these perished almost to a man, the common folk were helpless. The day of the Saxons was over; they were already a people in decay, slow of speech, indolent in habit, dull of wits, living in mean ramshackle hovels, wearing primitive, untidy clothes, ready to sell their liberty for bread or to buy off an enemy with gold, and so besotted with ignorance and vice that "they would eat" (says the chronicler) "till they were surfeited and drink till they were sick". For such a people slavery was hardly an unnatural fate, and, if masters they were to have, then the Normans were the men.

Of the vigour and vivacity of this very different race it is scarcely possible to say enough. The Norman was a portent in Europe. Here was a tiny people springing at one bound from obscurity to greatness; in a brief hundred years transforming England, conquering and governing Sicily and Naples, leading Christendom to the Crusade against the Turk. And, wherever he went, the Norman left his mark in laws, in organisation, in buildings. If you would know a nation's temper, look to what it builds. In the colossal close-knit masonry of Rome's aqueducts and bridges, you may read the practical unbending will of that great people. And,

seeing the majesty of a Norman minster—the walls that often measure six, eight, or ten feet through, the round carved arch-heads rising tier on tier from their squat sturdy pillars, the tower, massive as a fortress, which the whole edifice carries and supports—seeing all this, you may attempt to guess what was the energy and ardour of the men who filled England from end to end with buildings such as these. In the fifty years that followed the Conquest, more than half of our great cathedrals took their earliest shape. There is scarcely a parish church (above all in central and southern England) which does not still possess a Norman arch or two to show that here also their masons were at work. And, besides the churches, castles rose, at first of timber, but very soon converted into stone. Much of this building, it is true, was done by the forced labour of Englishmen. But that was the Norman way. These men possessed the habit of command. They walked the earth like lords and looked on a subject people as their natural servants. And they were hard task-masters.

To such men—a mere handful, two or three thousand at the most—England at the Conquest was delivered over. From the outset it was William's policy to treat all English soil as forfeit to himself, thus dispossessing at one stroke all the native English thegns. A few, perhaps a fifth, were pardoned (because they had not fought at Senlac or for some such reason) and received their acres back. But the great bulk of English land changed hands during these years. The old Anglo-Saxon names are heard no more : the day of Gurths and Godwins, Elfgars and Leofrics is over ; FitzStephens and de Mandevilles, Bellêmes and Taillebois reign in their stead. For it was also part of William's policy to divide the spoils among his followers. Indeed, he had no choice. Those who had joined his expedition had stipulated in advance for their reward, and to keep his pact William was forced to grant them the confiscated lands. So England was parcelled out among the barons :

to this one a group of villages; to that one half a shire; to a few (though very few) great earldoms in the Saxon style. It was easily done: a title was lost, a title won; and so the great change arrived. But for the small men of England, peasants, farmers, craftsmen, and the rest, this change was the beginning of different and less happy times. An evil day it must have been and long remembered in the village, when the old easy-going Saxon thegn came back no more from Senlac, but in his place a foreigner entered upon possession of the hall. The new master was not what the old had been: he had not been brought up among the villagers; he did not even understand their speech; he cared little or nothing for their welfare, but considered mainly what profit he could draw from them. Doubtless there were exceptions, good barons as well as bad; but, taking him altogether, the Norman was beyond dispute a greedy fellow. "All must needs get and get," says the Saxon poet, "and none asks how his gains are gotten." Too often, we may guess, the Norman showed himself a petty tyrant; his high spirit could ill brook a settled uneventful life, and, when fighting was over and even hunting palled, he would work off his sullen temper on the helpless folk beneath him. Their plight was not to be envied. They were made to work harder on his fields than they had ever worked before. Many of them lost what little land they had and from being villeins sank into the condition of mere serfs. Resistance was impossible: the Norman had a short way with those who crossed his will. And besides, with every year that passed, he was increasing the strength of his position. He would build himself a castle, if nobody was strong enough to stop him. He would gather round himself a formidable retinue of men-at-arms,¹ the chief business of whose life was to fight their lord's battles—on the king's side if their lord was loyal, against the king if it fell otherwise. These were

¹ One hundred men-at-arms would, in point of fact, have been a very large following for those days.

no rabble of raw peasants like the Saxon Fyrd. They were soldiers trained to carry a lance, wear mail, and ride a horse. Better men did not charge the hill at Senlac, and, whether settled as tenants on their lord's estate or kept as regular retainers of his household, they were always ready to answer his call to arms. And he, on his part, with such men to back him, grew doubly proud of his little kingdom. His ambitions rose; he measured his power with jealous eye against the power of his brother barons; he resented any attempt at interference from without. In fine, the Norman was what we call "a man upon the make," masterful to his inferiors, carrying his head high among his equals, and ready to challenge even the authority of the crown itself.

And for the man who wore the crown and counted these men his subjects, what awkward obstreperous subjects were they likely to prove. They had crossed the channel, let us remember, not as William's servants, but rather as his companions-in-arms. At home in Normandy they had enjoyed great independence: they had never acknowledged the Duke's authority beyond what suited their own taste.¹ And here in England they saw little necessity to change their habits, because the Duke now called himself a King. In short, they had no intention of being driven on too tight a rein, and they were not an easy team for any man to handle. Luckily, however, William was what some of his successors (most unluckily) were not, a man who knew his own mind and who meant to have his own way. He is an immense figure, the commanding personality of perhaps five centuries, the one man out of a million for performing such a task. From the outset he stood up to the barons fearlessly; he checked and limited them at every turn, and by sheer force of character he made his will prevail.

William's methods were personal and autocratic, rather than constitutional or legal. He issued no great code of

¹ William's authority over his feudal tenants was, however, a good deal stronger than was the case in other parts of France.

laws, such as did the second Henry : he held no theory of the royal prerogative like Charles the First. He simply ruled as a strong man, whose slightest word must be obeyed. But, though his hold over the barons rested not so much on novel or striking legislation as on thorough and determined government from day to day and year by year, yet, among his various policies and measures, some seem to stand out as of capital importance. They are these :—

(i) First, in the matter of granting land to individuals, William took one very obvious precaution. No baron who received considerable estates, received them in one piece ; on the contrary, they were widely scattered, one patch maybe in Norfolk, another patch in Kent, and a third far away in the west. Thus the estates which were granted to Robert of Mortain, amounting in all to 793 manors, were divided among twenty different counties. This scattering of estates made it extremely difficult for any baron to combine his forces or to acquire such widespread influence as the Godwin family acquired in the Confessor's reign. Indeed, William had no wish to see the dangerous power of the old Saxon earldoms perpetuated under his own régime. He made some exceptions, it is true, but they were rare, and for each exception, a good reason can be found. Along the borderland of Wales, for instance, he allowed several properties of unusual size. The Earls of Shropshire, Hereford, and Chester, were useful sentries against the warlike Welsh. But they were a danger to William too, and we shall hear of one at least again. On the Scottish border also he left a similar earldom with similar intent ; but this for greater safety he made over to the Bishop of Durham, as being less likely than a layman to abuse the trust. His own personal requirements, on the other hand, William did not stint. He kept huge estates under his control, and, with some 1400 royal manors up and down the country, he was by far the largest landowner and therefore by far the richest man in England. This was

of special importance in days when there was as yet no regular system of taxation and a king had to draw upon his own resources for the upkeep of his power.

(ii) As with lands, so with castles, William was careful to see that all the strongest places were his own. At London he began the building of the Tower, the main structure of which was a keep or donjon, quadrangular in shape, and with walls of stone just five yards thick at the base. Such solidity, however, was uncommon. The score or so of castles which he built in other places were completed in as many months, and their keeps cannot



originally have been much more than timber palisades. Nevertheless, they were a great source of strength to William; all the more so since no other person was allowed a castle at all without his leave. Such leave was seldom given; and it was not until the reign of weaker monarchs, like King Stephen, that a large crop of baronial castles rose.

(iii) These were strong checks upon the barons' power; yet there was another still stronger and more subtle. This was the Feudal Oath. Not in England alone, but on the Continent as well, all men regarded the feudal tie as a most binding force. Vassalage was the outstanding

feature of the age. For little by little it had come to be the practice that no man should be landowner in his own right : land was always held from somebody else. Thus the baron to whom the king granted an estate was said to hold it from the king ; that is, the land was his, but only on condition of rendering some service in return. The man again to whom the baron granted some portion of his land was said to hold it from the baron ; that is, the land was his, but, once more, only on condition of rendering some service to the baron. The form of service might vary infinitely : there was no settled system. The baron served the king in many ways, but chiefly by providing an armed contingent in times of war. The free tenant served the baron by paying rent in kind or by donning mail and carrying a spear when so required ; the villein, by working on his lord's estate. But the root and centre of the matter was the feudal oath. Each man, in return for the land he held, did homage and swore obedience to the man from whom he held it.

Now, at the time of his conquest, William had taken a far-reaching decision. As we have seen, he declared all English land to be forfeit to himself. So, when he came presently to parcel out the land among his Norman friends, he required of them the vassal's oath. The barons (or tenants-in-chief, as they were called) were sworn to be " his men " ; it was their bounden duty to obey and support the king. But now a difficulty arose. The men to whom the barons granted land (the mesne or middle tenants, as these were called) were sworn the " baron's men ". They were, therefore, bound in duty to obey and support the baron. What then would happen if king and baron should fall out ? Should the mesne-tenants support the baron or the king ? It was in truth an awkward dilemma : it resembles the situation of the prefects in a school, should the head-master order them one way and their immediate chief, the house-master, then order them another. Yet it was precisely the situation with which the Conqueror was faced. He

met it characteristically by asserting his own personal authority. In the year 1086, when invasion was threatening him from Denmark, he saw his chance, and summoned at Salisbury a meeting of all landowners, both great and small. How many actually came we cannot tell: the tenants-in-chief would certainly be there, but it is unlikely that the mesne-tenants could have been present in large numbers. In any case, whether all were there or no, the upshot of the meeting was the same. William established once and for all the principle that in his own house the king is the real master. Every rood of English land was by right of conquest his; every grant of land thus came in the last resort from him; and every man who held any land in England owed therefore obedience to himself. No man, were he ten times a baron's vassal, was in future to support the baron in preference to the king. The oath, which was taken at Salisbury, put an end to the lesser men's dilemma. It made every Englishman a "King's man" first, a "baron's man" but second. Englishmen did not always remember this, nor always act upon this principle. But there it stood: if head-master and house-master should disagree, the prefect's duty cannot stand in doubt; there is no king but Caesar.

William was nothing if not thorough. Seeing the country his by double right of conquest and the feudal oath, he further decided to catalogue its contents. In the year previous to the Salisbury moot, he had sent out surveyors into every corner of the land. They set about their task in a systematic fashion: every town and village was visited, and they went armed with a whole catechism of questions to be put to every tenant, small or great. "What is the name of your manor? Who held it under King Edward? Who holds it now? How many hides¹ does it contain? How many ploughs are

¹ A "hide" was used in various senses, originally for that amount of land which would support a family—later for a unit relative to the taxation of land.

there on the demesne? How many belong to the tenants? How many villeins, cottiers, slaves, free men, socmen are there? How much woodland? How much meadow? How many pastures? How many mills? How many fish-ponds? etc., etc. And whether more can be got than has been got?" From the answers given to these questions, the great catalogue was compiled. Its details were extraordinarily minute: one might almost say that every pig in England had been noted down. The natives, humorously pretending that not the Last Judgment itself could be more thorough, dubbed it the "Domesday Book". Nor was the object of all this information mere idle curiosity on William's part. It was likely to be useful to him in many ways; useful when he gathered in the Danegeld—a tax which he still levied, though its original purpose had long vanished; useful again in checking the details of the Salisbury moot; above all, it was likely to prove an invaluable guide to the King's officers, the Sheriffs, when these went on their rounds collecting the royal rents, supervising the business of the local courts, or spying on ambitious barons who were suspected of tyranny to their tenants or treason to the King. In short, what with these agents of the Crown to watch them, Domesday to lay bare their weakness and their strength, feudal oath to deter them from rash disobedience, and, above and behind all these, the stern unsleeping eye of the Conqueror himself, quick to note the slightest misdemeanour and prompt to visit it with dign retribution or disgrace, there can be little doubt that the Norman barons were held in a tight grip. For all their turbulence and headstrong character, these men had met their match. Yet, even so, William's own life was not sufficiently prolonged to make the position of his successor quite secure. Salisbury was barely over and Domesday was still unfinished when the Conqueror died, in 1087, upon Norman soil.

As reigns go, his was a quiet reign. The trouble with

the Saxons came to an end when Ely fell. Open defiance from his Norman subjects was confined (in England at least) to one revolt. This isolated effort fell on this wise. Roger, Earl de Hereford, and Ralph, Earl of Norfolk, two of the biggest landowners in England, bore a private grudge against William, because he had forbidden a marriage match between their families. In 1075 William happened (as was not infrequent) to be away in Normandy. During his absence, the two earls brought off the forbidden marriage, and after the ceremony proceeded to hatch a plot for the overthrow of the King. They further enlisted the support of Waltheof, the Englishman, who had been pardoned for his share in the northern rising and reinstated in his earldom. Waltheof was induced to join the plot by a promise of the crown; but the conspirators' confidence proved a little premature. The secret leaked out; prompt measures were taken, and the rising turned out a miserable fiasco. The truth was that Waltheof had given the whole thing away. The memory of his feudal oath troubled him. A feudal oath was a very solemn matter: it was often taken (like Harold's oath in Normandy) over some sacred relic. Stricken in conscience, Waltheof confessed to the Archbishop and received his absolution. He had better have held his tongue. Ralph escaped to Normandy. Roger was let off with imprisonment for life. But the English earl was condemned to death and lost his head on the hill by Winchester. William still found it politic to be merciful to Normans; but he was never at much pains to conciliate the conquered race.

It would be idle to pretend that the English folk were happy under William. He was a hard task-master: he caused great misery by turning large tracts of cultivated land into hunting forests for himself. His code of punishments was barbarously cruel, for he preferred mutilation to the death sentence, not from any feelings of humanity, but because he considered life without limbs or eyes more terrible than death. Yet, take him

for all in all, the man was just. If he ruled the Saxons sternly, he ruled the Normans sternly too. These were rough and violent times, and, though no doubt the conquered people suffered, they would have suffered more under a weaker king. Even Englishmen themselves acknowledged that. Hear what one of them—the writer of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle—has got to say. He does not flatter: his is a verdict we can trust. “King William was a very wise man and very mighty; gentle to the good men who loved God, and beyond measure severe to the men who withstood his will. . . . He had earls in bonds, who had done against his pleasure; bishops he put away from their bishoprics, and abbots from their abbeys, and thegns he put in prison, and at last he spared not his own brother Odo. . . . Amongst other things is not to be forgotten the good peace that he made in this land, so that a man who was himself aught might fare through his realm with his bosom full of gold. And no man durst slay another, how much evil soever he had done to the other. . . . Truly in his time men had much hardship and full many troubles. He caused castles to be built and poor men to be sore oppressed. . . . His mighty men were grieved and the poor men murmured, but he was so hard that he cared not for the hatred of them all; and they must follow the king’s will withal, if they would live or hold lands or chattels, or even have his peace. Ah, that any man should be so haughty and lift himself up and count himself above all men. May God Almighty shew his soul loving-kindness and forgive him his sins.” There is no tribute like the tribute of an enemy. William was a great man as few are great. A great wrong he had done to England, but he had done her great service too; for, before he died, he had made it possible beyond all expectation for Englishmen and Normans to become one people.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CONQUEROR'S SONS AND THE POPE OF ROME

THE Conqueror, dying, left behind him two kingdoms and three sons—a problem of practical arithmetic not too easy of solution. And such in fact it proved. The three brothers were Robert, William, and Henry; and of these Robert, the eldest, was a fool. Already, as nominal Duke of Normandy during the Conqueror's own life, he had turned out a dismal failure. Not only could he keep no order among the baronage, but he had actually levied war against his father and come within an ace of killing him in battle. This act of folly was to cost him dear. The Duchy, it is true, he was allowed to keep; but England, too good to be wasted upon such a man, the Conqueror bequeathed to his second and favourite son, William the Red. Henry, the youngest and far the most able of the three, was put off with a legacy of £5000.

Here was plenty of material for a good family quarrel; so quarrel the three brothers did unceasingly, and, whatever happened, the eldest always lost. Robert had no luck, neither did he deserve it. Though a brave fighter, he was quite incapable of steady purpose, and so thriftless that once, as we are told, he even parted with his wardrobe and was forced to keep his bed for lack of clothes to wear. So it was that Robert, being seldom out of debt, was always ready to barter his rights and properties away for gold. He sold the Côtentin, the long peninsula

by Cherbourg, to the ambitious Henry. Then, when Rufus came over and beat him out of half Normandy, he swallowed the humiliation and helped his greedy brother to get the Côtentin too. When, after an interval, Rufus came back for more, Robert grew sick of domestic fighting and of Normandy, pawned the whole province for a loan of £6666, and departed for the First Crusade.

At Rufus' death he was to turn up once again, but his old ill-luck still dogged him, and he arrived just a month too late. Hearing the news that Henry had usurped the English crown, Robert planned invasion, crossed the Channel, and got half way to London. But even now the offer of a pension sent him well satisfied home. The pension he was not to enjoy for long. Normandy, which was now his again, was in a terrible state; and it was clear to Henry's mind that the farce of Robert's misgovernment must cease. At the battle of Tenchebrai, in mid Normandy, the elder brother was taken prisoner and brought back to England, where he was kept in close custody for life. Tenchebrai, however, meant something more than the eclipse of Robert. By the English victory, the verdict of Hastings was, so to speak, reversed, and Normandy in her turn became the subject state. It was a blessing in disguise. The barons of the Duchy, spoilt by long years of anarchy and licence, were utterly out of hand, and it was high time that they should taste the firm rule of the English king.

For, though neither of the Conqueror's successors was his equal, both Rufus and Henry had something of their father's energy and wits. All the fiercest and least pleasant side of the Conqueror's character was reproduced and exaggerated in his second son. Rufus was a loud-voiced, boastful bully, gross in his habits, frequently given to outbursts of wild temper, blatantly contemptuous of decency, honour, and even of Christianity itself. Nor was the man good to look upon. His corpulence, no doubt, was in part hereditary, for the Conqueror too was fat, and we are told how at his funeral the coffin lid

could not be made to shut, so much did the old king's body overlap. But Rufus' features were his own, and the sneering mouth, the sullen eyes, and the blotched, fiery face (whence came his name), were the unmistakable tokens of an ugly character and an evil life. It is but one further proof how complete had been the Conqueror's work, and how sound the model of government he left behind, that such a man was at all able to follow in his steps.

Yet, with all his faults, Rufus was no weakling, and in politics he was even not without some instinct for doing the right thing. For the better rounding off of his dominion, he pushed the Scots back from Cumberland and fixed the boundary at Solway Firth. He likewise led an expedition into Wales, which left, however, less mark on the wild mountaineers than did the steady pressure kept up by the great Marcher earls. As for the baronage, Rufus was not the man to let them have their way, and he early showed himself their master. In the first year of his reign, Odo, Prince Bishop of Bayeux, half-brother to the Conqueror and Earl of Kent, organised a great revolt. His pretext was to claim the English crown for Norman Robert, and the barons, prompt as ever in the support of any but the king they had, rallied to Odo's side. Simultaneously, revolt broke out in Sussex, East Anglia, and the west. Rufus' crown was in danger, and he took a step at once boldly original and unexpectedly successful. He appealed to the English peasantry for aid against the Norman barons. Promises were not difficult to make, and Rufus made them in plenty—better justice, lighter taxes, and an end of the cruel forest laws. These promises had the desired effect. The Fyrd came out enthusiastically for Rufus. The rebels were soon beleaguered in their strongholds and forced to yield. Odo and his accomplices were driven into exile. The peasants returned home again, and Rufus, as the peasants might have guessed, forgot the promises which he had made. He had never meant to

keep them. It was no policy of his to promote his subjects' welfare nor even, except at a crisis, to value their good will. His father's yoke had been heavy: Rufus added to that yoke. The forest laws above mentioned were a case in point. Under the Conqueror, as we have seen, large tracts of land had been withdrawn from cultivation and made a hunting ground for the monarch and his court. The laws made for the protection of these so-called "forests" were harsh in the extreme. To cut down timber, to disturb the game, or even to drive them off the standing crops was forbidden, under penalty of fine or mutilation. Rufus went one better, and made it death to kill a deer. It was a just revenge of fate that the king who thus sacrificed the lives of others to his sport, should have lost his own thereby. He was hunting in the New Forest near Winchester, when an arrow carelessly aimed by Tyrell, a member of his suite, struck him down. Tyrell fled. The body, packed into a charcoal-burner's cart, was carried to Winchester, where it was buried, without rites of Church, under the cathedral tower. Not long afterwards, the tower fell in, and men said that divine displeasure had pursued the ungodly king even into his grave.

Like many younger sons whose fortunes must depend upon their wits, Henry was far cleverer than either the feckless Robert or the boorish, illiterate Rufus. The title of Beau-clerc was not given him for nothing; he was a man of education, who had seen something of the world and could appreciate the conversation of learned men and monks. The years he had spent waiting for his chance to come had not been thrown away, and when it came, he showed himself not a strong man only, but a wise man too. Having seized the English kingdom without much legal right (since Robert, his elder brother, was alive), he saw clearly the need of popular support, and what Rufus had done from necessity, Henry attempted of deliberate purpose. In more ways than one, he set out to conciliate the English folk and pose as a

genuinely English king. His marriage was a good beginning, for he took as his queen, Matilda, a princess of Edward the Confessor's line. At his accession, too, he made splendid promises of great reforms, and, though like most royal promises, they were much too splendid to be kept, yet during his long reign Henry did much to set his realm in order and strengthen the authority of law. His methods were severe; theft, hitherto more mildly treated, was made by him a capital offence, and as a start we hear of four and forty robbers hanged at one assize. Nor, for that matter, was much respect of persons shown; rich and poor were alike to suffer the penalty of their misdeeds, and even the lord who killed one of his villeins was not to go scot-free. Henry's chief problem rose, however, from the very wide divergence which he found between existing laws. These had grown up at haphazard, part coming from the Anglo-Saxons, part from the Danes, so that the law which held in one shire was often quite different from the law which held over the border, and the customs of East Anglia bore little relation to the customs of the West. Henry made a brave attempt to standardise them all. A careful record was kept of all verdicts given in the King's central court. This was intended to serve as a model code for all the local courts, and travelling justices were sent out on circuit to enforce the code. Progress was naturally slow, but little by little England through such reforms was ceasing to be a mere bundle of disunited folks, each independent of its neighbour, each following laws and customs of its own, each using a different coinage, and each talking a dialect which was all but a separate speech. Little by little she was becoming a single and more compact state, a state which could bind the interests of even Englishmen and Normans into one. For already the barons themselves were beginning to lose something of their foreign character. They now were the sons of those who had first crossed the water, and this new generation had been bred in

England; they had grown familiar with English habits and the English tongue, and they had learned to look with a more friendly eye upon the English peasants that they ruled. Some, it is true, were still cruel and bloody tyrants. Such, for example, was the notorious Earl of Shrewsbury, Robert of Bellême, a man who could take a devilish delight in watching the torture of poor wretches who had been so foolish as to cross his will. Even under Henry this man did much as he listed. He built for himself great castles on the Welsh border and, when the chance offered, he took arms against the King. The English Fyrd came out for Henry, as it had done for Rufus, and Bellême was driven an exile into Normandy. Yet even there he continued his treasonous intrigues, until, after Tenchebrai, Henry was able to lay him by the heels. It would have been well indeed for England had Bellême been the only baron of his kind, but there were plenty of others ready to imitate his ways, if once the opportunity was given them. How much the country owed to the sturdy if brutal government of the Conqueror's two sons, was manifest only when a weaker monarch succeeded to the throne. The misrule of Stephen makes even Rufus' reign look bright.

Yet, strange to say, the chief quarrel of these two reigns was not with the baronage at all. The subject who gave most trouble to Rufus and Henry was neither an Odo nor a Bellême, but a mild, saintly, stiff-necked old Archbishop of Canterbury, and the weapons with which the Archbishop fought were in a sense more dangerous to the crown than the whole armoury of the strongest Marcher earl. For just now the Church was beginning to enter into competition with the King; she was no longer his ally but his rival; her ministers' allegiance was slipping from him; it was claimed for another lord, the Pope. This was an awkward matter for the King; awkward that a bishop owning whole counties should refuse him feudal homage; still more awkward that the defaulter should support his action by arguments from

Holy Writ. For in this quarrel the King could not safely count upon the loyal support of his other subjects. When barons rebelled, the people's duty was plainly to the crown ; but, when bishop and king fell out, the people stood in doubt. Who were they that they should take sides against the appointed ministers of God ?

Of all the institutions of the Middle Age, none commanded a more wide or popular devotion than the Church. All men alike acknowledged her authority ; they leant on her with the helpless simplicity of children who never question a mother's word or act. To lose the Church's favour was for them intolerable, and excommunication from her rites the most terrible punishment they knew. Religion, in short, was ingrained into their lives : its forms and ordinances were a part of their daily habits, and to cross themselves or rattle off a Pater Noster was for them as natural as for us to brush our teeth or read the morning paper. Not that the men of those times were any better behaved than we are to-day ; the contrary is probably more true, but they were infinitely more concerned about the salvation of their souls. The very criminal had pious moments when he suffered agonies of spiritual remorse, and even kings and princes, leading the most scandalous of lives, would seldom omit a regular attendance at the mass. In part, all this was due to a very simple, yet an earnest faith, but in part also it was due to the superstitious temper of those times. Men believed in all sorts of queer occurrences which would be called mere fairy tales to-day : apparitions of angels, saints, and devils were by no means rare ; evil-doers fell suddenly dead by a direct manifestation of divine displeasure ; sick folk were miraculously healed by contact with a dead saint's bones, and even living kings were credited with power to cure an epileptic by their touch. And along with superstition went its companion, ignorance. Ignorance put the people completely at the mercy of the more educated priests, and the priests themselves were not slow to find methods of compelling the

obedience of their flock. One obvious and powerful instrument was the threat of eternal punishment, and there was little inclination on the clergy's part to palliate the horrors of Hell fire. In many village churches there stood over the chancel arch a frescoed representation of the Judgment Day, in which horned, cloven-footed demons were to be seen pitchforking the naked figures of damned souls into the flaming jaws of the Bottomless Pit. The moral of the warning was not lost. Unquiet consciences are made more pliable by fear, and, though there were hardened sinners and sceptics too, no doubt, the majority preferred to satisfy their qualms by truckling to the priest. What the priest told them, they believed; whatever he commanded, they trembled and obeyed. They had indeed no other guide. Very few were capable of reading for themselves, and, if they were, the Bible and Church Services were written and recited in unintelligible Latin. So men brought their sins, as a matter of course, to the Confessional, and whatever amends the priest required, flogging or fast or penance, pilgrimage to some shrine or gifts of land or money to the Church, we may be sure the priest's bidding was speedily obeyed. The trustful laity regarded him as the inspired mouthpiece of the Deity, the steward of mysteries incomprehensible to themselves. And all this the priest himself believed no less. He saw himself a man set peculiarly apart, devoted to the service of Almighty God. The claims of the world he abjured or disregarded. He did not marry¹; and he was exempt from civil law. If his duties were not easy, neither were his privileges few, and the priest made most of them.

But, great as was the priest's authority, the bishop's was still greater. His influence was not spiritual alone; he was a power in the land. For bishops did not confine themselves to sacred things; they took a leading

¹ In theory a priest remained single all his life, but in practice this rule was not too strictly kept, and, though Popes and bishops were continually trying to enforce it, a great many English priests had wives.

part in politics and war. They vied in influence with the barons, building castles, leading their contingents into battle, wearing mailed armour underneath their robes; some held high offices of state. Such was Ranulf Flambard, for example: he was Bishop of Durham, then Archbishop of York, and he was also Rufus' right-hand man. He rose to be Chancellor, the most powerful position in the land. In short, an ecclesiastical career offered great opportunities for the ambitious, and election to a see brought with it abundance of worldly wealth and much temporal power, as well as spiritual. Even the humble monk, elevated on a sudden direct from his cloister cell to a bishop's throne, found himself turned into a veritable prince, beset by flatterers, canvassed by courtiers, pursued by jealousy and intrigue, living in a palace which also did duty for a fortress, keeping a retinue of servitors and men-at-arms that any baron might have envied, owning vast estates which even a king (as we shall see) might covet. To ourselves, no doubt, this pomp and circumstance seems strangely out of keeping with the Christian creed; the churchmen of that age thought otherwise. Nor was it from pure worldliness that they sought such power (for, though some were worldly, many bishops led holy, self-sacrificing lives); rather, they valued the power for the uses to which it could be put. For they meant (or said they meant) to use it in Christ's service for the furtherance of His Church. If stubborn men would not hear the truth for the truth's own sake, other means of conversion must be found, and, if spiritual arguments did not impress them, it was necessary to fall back upon arguments which would. Worldly power had assuredly its use.

Such then was the theory and policy of the mediæval Church. Its chief exponent—the man who might almost be said to have invented it—was the Pope Hildebrand, a contemporary of the Conqueror, and more commonly known as Gregory the Seventh. Throughout his years of office Gregory laboured hard and skilfully to improve

and strengthen the position of the Papacy. He left it a power in Europe second to none. The pretensions of this great Churchman were novel and extreme. He claimed to dictate his will to all Christendom; he interfered between sovereigns and their subjects; kings and princes were expected to bow to his decision; to humble their greatness was his special delight. "Young lions and adders," he quoted proudly, "thou shalt trample under foot." It was a motto which Gregory's successors adopted and expanded.

For these great prelates stuck at nothing. Even the theory of feudal tenure was turned to the advantage of the Church. To them the king's supremacy was nothing. The Church was divine; God was her head, her lands and properties she held from God, and the homage of her ministers, if paid to man at all, could be paid only to God's vice-regent upon earth, the Pope. Now it was plain that bishops could not serve both Pope and king at the same time, and this claim was a distinct challenge to the feudal claim of kings; it threatened the very foundations of their power. Everywhere, as was natural, the Papal pretensions were bitterly resented, but by none more bitterly than by the English kings. That the Bishop of Rome had the right to order the affairs of the English Church, none of them ever doubted or denied till a much later date. But, while acknowledging him as their Father in Christ, they utterly refused to allow his temporal claims or to submit their own temporal authority to his.

One after another they stoutly resisted the Pope's attempt to interfere between their subjects and themselves. The quarrel dragged on through four centuries, the point at issue varied; it was one thing under Rufus, another under Henry II, and yet another under John; but no sooner was the quarrel settled in one shape than it broke out again in another, until at the Reformation England took her final stand and once for all rejected the supremacy of Rome.

Gregory and the Conqueror died in the same year, and, strong ambitious men though both had been, they none the less remained on good terms to the end. But William's tact was sadly wanting in his son. Rufus was too quarrelsome and too greedy to keep the peace for long, and the quarrel, when it came, was the direct outcome of his greed. The Church, as we have seen already, was rich in lands; vast estates had come to her from pious benefactors or conscience-stricken rogues, until one-fifth of the country was under her control. From such estates enormous rents were paid to abbots, bishops, and archbishops, and on these rents Rufus began to cast an avaricious eye. Presently a bishop died; a see fell vacant and, instead of appointing a successor, Rufus left it unfilled. Then, as there was nobody to take the rents, he took them for himself. Nothing could be more simple. The game was played with great success in numerous instances; finally, it was played with Canterbury itself. The Church, thus left without a head, protested; but protests were quite vain: "By the Holy Cross of Lucca," Rufus swore, "none shall be Archbishop but myself". The see was still vacant when Rufus fell dangerously ill. Being a coward, as bullies mostly are, he made a death-bed repentance on the spot, and declared that he would fill the vacant see. The Archbishop of his choice was Anselm, as modest and saintly a man as ever stepped and Abbot of Bec in Normandy. Anselm, who happened to be near at hand, resisted the appointment violently. He was dragged struggling into the King's bed-chamber; his clenched hand was forced open by the forefinger and the pastoral staff thrust into it. A *Te Deum* was sung; the clergy rejoiced, and Rufus—recovered. "When the Devil was sick, the Devil a saint would be; when the Devil was well, the devil a saint was he." With convalescence the penitential mood departed. Anselm had got the staff of office, but Rufus had not the least intention he should get the lands. "By the Holy Cross of Lucca,"

he swore again, "God shall get as little good from me as I have got from God."

It was now Anselm's turn to take the quarrel up, and he did not mean to let the King off lightly. Not only did he insist on the surrender of all his lands, but shortly afterwards he actually repudiated his feudal duty to the crown. Rufus was planning a campaign against his brother Robert and had asked the Archbishop, in common with his other vassals, for feudal aid. Anselm at first refused outright, then offered five hundred marks, and, when so insignificant a sum was scorned, distributed the money to the poor. Rufus did not trouble to conceal his anger. "Tell the Archbishop," he said, "that I hated him yesterday; I hate him more to-day, and to-morrow I shall hate him further still." But this was not all: Anselm had made a successful stand upon his temporal rights; he was now to put forward a religious claim. The special badge or emblem of the archbishopric was a vestment called the "pallium," a sort of single stole looped round the neck and hanging down the breast. Without the pallium, Anselm said he was no true archbishop, and he could receive it from none but the Pope; short of that the appointment could not stand. It is hardly surprising that Rufus was suspicious, or that he disputed Anselm's arguments. He had appointed the Archbishop; it was his royal privilege; there was no call whatever for dragging in the Pope. A council of bishops and barons was convened; and (as we might have guessed) the barons supported Anselm, though the bishops, fearing the King, did not. Envoys were sent to Rome; but the Pope, as befitted Hildebrand's successor, took Anselm's side and Rufus was forced to yield. So Anselm got his pallium from Rome, and for a while things went quietly again. Nevertheless there could be no lasting peace between a king and prelate so utterly opposed, and, shortly before the Red King's death, the two fell out again. This time Anselm left the country, and went himself to Rome to seek advice. Once there he stayed.

When Henry took over the kingdom, Anselm had not returned. This was unfortunate, for, as we have seen, the young king felt uncertain of popular support and wished above all things to be legitimately crowned. He sent to Anselm, apologised for holding the coronation in his absence, and begged him to come back. Anselm came, but came fully primed with new and dangerous notions learnt in Rome. Shortly before his arrival at the Papal court a general council of the Church had met, and in the plainest language had declared that for any layman whatsoever to invest a bishop in his office was an illegal or, at the very least, an invalid act. This was old Hildebrand's doctrine with a vengeance, and Anselm's head was full of it. He refused point blank to do homage to the King; he announced that all Henry's ecclesiastical appointments were null and void. Much as Henry desired peace, this was more than he could stand. He said so plainly, and back went Anselm to the Continent again to take up his quarters at his old monastery of Bec. Nevertheless, the King kept his temper well, and continued to argue with the Pope, with such effect that at last an agreement was effected. By this agreement the rights of investiture were to be shared. From the Pope a bishop was to receive his staff and ring, symbols of his spiritual power. From the king he was to receive his lands and properties, performing homage for the same. It was, in short, a compromise of give and take. "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." With Anselm's return, the controversy ended, and the King came into his full feudal rights once more. Yet the compromise was, in fact, no better than a truce, and it remained for Becket some twenty years later to revive in a different shape the quarrel which Henry's statesmanship had so successfully allayed.

Towards the end of his long reign, Henry reaped the benefit of the various triumphs he had won. Men looked up to him, praised him, called him the "Lion of Justice,"

there was none but respected his strong arm. Nevertheless, his last years were clouded by the knowledge that at his death he could leave the kingdom in no worthy hands. Of his two children, a daughter and a son, the son had been lost at sea. In 1120 the young man and his riotous companions had put out from Harfleur in a boat called the White Ship to cross the Channel. The pilot (nor was he the only guilty one) was drunk, and at midnight they ran upon a reef. The ship foundered with all hands, and only a Rouen butcher, escaping on some wreckage, survived to tell the tale. For two days the courtiers dared not inform the King; then a page dressed in black was sent in to break the news. It was a shock to Henry, from which he never wholly recovered. Only his daughter, Matilda, now remained to him, and before his death he decided to commit the kingdom to her hands. The decision was not happy, for nobody in England wanted a queen of any sort, and Matilda least of all. Yet the results of the decision no one could have foreseen. The wreck of the White Ship was a tragic end to Henry's hopes: it was the beginning of worse than tragedy for England.

CHAPTER IX
FROM ANARCHY TO ORDER

I

UPON one point at Henry's death the barons were quite clear. They would have none of his daughter, Matilda. They knew only too well what sort of sovereign they would find in this unpleasant dame, hard as her father Henry, grasping as her uncle Rufus, doubly ambitious in the interests of a baby son, who, come what might, she intended to be king, doubly uplifted by her marriage, first, to the German Emperor, and then quite recently to Geoffrey, Count of the great French province of Anjou. Masterful and meddlesome Matilda could not fail to be, especially with this foreign consort at her back; and the barons were sick to death of royal busybodies. All they asked was a sovereign who would leave them to themselves, and, as it so happened, Matilda's rival candidate suited their ideas exactly. Stephen de Blois, a son of the Conqueror's daughter, was as good-natured, generous, easy-going a gentleman as ever you might wish to meet; but search the whole world through, and you would scarcely find another gentleman so little fitted to be king. For that, however, the barons did not care a jot, nor for the fact that Stephen's support was already promised to Matilda. So, when Henry died, the promise was as soon forgotten, and Stephen, coming forward, was joyfully accepted.

Matilda, however, was not the woman to take this

usurpation quietly, and she promptly appealed to the Pope to denounce the promise-breaker. But the Pope, as it so happened, approved of a weak king for the same reason as the barons did, and, instead of denouncing Stephen, commended him. Matilda's next hope was to foment rebellion, and there was little difficulty in that. Any baron worth his salt was always ready to rebel against anyone; and the most natural thing after setting a king up was to knock him down again. Nevertheless, for the first two years of Stephen's reign insurrection hung fire. Then Matilda won the ear of her half-brother, Robert, Earl of Gloucester. Robert was a great man, an illegitimate son of the late king and by far the most powerful baron in the west country. No sooner did he rebel than a host of lesser lordlings began to raise their heads. In a moment all the west was up. Hereford, Dorchester, Exeter, Corfe, Ludlow, Shrewsbury, and a score of other castles were in rebel hands. East Anglia was little better. The only sound elements remaining were the Midlands and the valley of the Thames.

Before this storm, which either Rufus or Henry could have stemmed, Stephen was helpless. The very rudiments of discipline were unknown to him; he would have been a failure even as a company commander. Then, as always, there was a time for severe measures and a time for mercy, a time to strike and a time to hold the hand, but which was which Stephen, poor simple gentleman, could never tell. Thus, when barons built themselves castles, he looked the other way. When two bishops did it, he caused them to be clapped into a dungeon and "tortured with sharp fasting," and by so doing he lost the one ally which he might have kept, the Church. He even alienated his own brother, Henry de Blois, the Bishop of Winchester. Henry had all the strength of character which Stephen lacked, and, with an impudence which even the stubborn Anselm never could have rivalled, he summoned his brother, the King,

to appear in the episcopal palace at Winchester, and there to explain his conduct before a court of clerics, and—Stephen went. It was just like him to be most weak when there was most need for strength: that was invariably his way. Before the Barons' revolt was fairly started, there occurred a serious invasion from the north. David, King of Scotland, broke over the border and got nearly to York before the brave old archbishop gathered an army to Northallerton and beat him in the so-called Battle of the Standard. Now, instead of taking full advantage of this victory, Stephen showed a quite gratuitous indulgence towards the Scot, and ended by making a present of the whole county of Northumberland to David's son. Such weak generosity was a fatal policy above all with the barons, and Stephen's methods were simply an invitation to rebellion. When too much power had made the big men restless, Stephen gave them more to keep them quiet—with the natural and precisely opposite result. When they rose in arms against him, he had no settled strategy, but dashed about here, there, and everywhere, behaving, as somebody has remarked, like a maddened bull in the ring. Brave as a lion in battle, and possessing great physical strength, he could have outmatched any one of his opponents in single combat; but to beat them by generalship was utterly beyond him. He was too much of a gentleman to beat them by any other means. When Matilda first came over to England in 1140, he had her at one moment completely in his power. But Stephen "did not make war on ladies," and she was allowed to go at liberty and continue her intrigues. At last, after four years of aimless and inconclusive warfare, another powerful ally joined the rebels. Next to the Earl of Gloucester the most important baron of the west was the Earl of Chester (these Marcher earldoms left by the Conqueror were a fatal legacy to his successors); and, when this man added his forces to the rest, it was too much for Stephen. He was caught at Lincoln by superior numbers. He fought

(as the chronicler relates) "more bravely than the bravest, cutting down all within his reach till the sword broke in his hands. Thereupon a citizen put into his hand an old Danish axe. Though left alone, and with almost all his fellows scattered, no man dared to lay hands on him," but at last a great stone struck him from behind. He was overpowered and sent in safe custody to Bristol. Matilda's hour seemed to have arrived.

In taking this new mistress (the full title of queen was never given her) the English soon found how bad a bargain they had made. Matilda was, as we have said, an aggressively masculine character. Had she lived in the twentieth century, she would certainly have been a suffragette, and militant at that; but the men of her own time were little accustomed to the type, and it did not take Matilda long to lose what she had won. On the 2nd of June she took up her residence in London. Within a few days her high-handed behaviour had raised a storm of indignation. The bells rang, a mob of citizens gathered, and Matilda and her suite were forced to leave their dinner-table and escape as best they could. After some wandering, she took up her quarters at Winchester, the ancient royal capital. Here she fell out with the strong-minded bishop, Henry de Blois, fought him, and once again was compelled to make a rapid exit. This time she escaped, so the story goes, disguised as a corpse in a coffin. By this ruse she herself got away, but her brother and ally, the Earl of Gloucester, did not. He was caught by the King's partisans, and his release could only be procured by the release of Stephen. So the war began again, and dragged on wearily till Gloucester died and Matilda left the country. But England's agony was not yet ended. To the common folk it mattered little whether Stephen kept the crown or lost it, so long as the duties of the crown went unperformed. For, when the royal discipline grew lax, the barons acted like a set of obstreperous boys and bullied the smaller fry. If the country's plight under the Conqueror was

hard, it was tenfold harder now. Everywhere castles were hastily run up, a thousand or so, and no permission asked, mere stockades of timber, no doubt, rather than of stone, but formidable enough at that. From the security of these castle-keeps the barons watched like spiders for their prey, and within the castle dungeons they wreaked their will upon the hapless victims of their lust and cruelty. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, in what is almost its last chapter, relates the hideous doings of these men : " They filled the land full of castles, and when the castles were made, they filled them with devils and evil men. Then they took those men whom they deemed to have any possessions, both by day and by night, husbandmen and women, and tortured them with unspeakable tortures. For never were martyrs tortured as they were. They hanged them up by the feet, and smoked them with foul smoke. They hanged them up by the thumbs or by the head and hung fires on their feet. They put knotted cords about their heads, and twisted them so that it went to the brain. Some they put in a crucet-hus, that is a chest that was short, narrow and shallow, and put sharp stones therein and pressed the man therein, so that they brake all his limbs. In many castles there were neck-bands so that two or three men had enough to bear one. It was made thus, that is, fastened to a beam, and they put a sharp iron about the man's throat and his neck, so that he might in nowise sit or lie or sleep, but must bear all that iron. Many thousands they killed with hunger. They laid fines upon the towns, and when the wretched men had no more to pay, they robbed and burned the towns. Then was corn dear, and meat and cheese and butter, for there was none in the land. However a man tilled, the earth bare no corn, for the land was undone with such deeds, and they said openly that Christ and His saints slept." In truth, the plight of the oppressed and famished people could hardly have been worse. England's distress called aloud for the firm hand of a strong courageous man, and where could such a man be found ?

Happily he was not far off. Matilda's infant son was now of age, and in 1153 a second Henry, grandson of the first, crossed over from France to try conclusions with his cousin. The campaign did not last long and ended in a bargain. Stephen thereby retained the crown, but during his lifetime Henry was to share the power, a king in all but name, and on his death he was to take the crown and reign as full king, as Matilda meant he should. Neither Henry nor England was kept waiting long. The very next year, 1154, saw Stephen's death. The darkest chapter in our history ended, and a fresh chapter, bright as this was dark, began.

The task confronting Henry was tremendous. England, all to pieces as she was, might have seemed in herself a sufficient handful for one man; but England was not all. In one way or another it was Henry's fortune—or misfortune—to be master over nearly a third of France. All the countries of the western sea-board came to him: Normandy and Maine, as the hereditary appendage of the English crown; Anjou, just to the south of these, from his father Geoffrey, who was Anjou's Count. Southward yet his realm included the province of Gascony and Aquitaine, for he took to wife its princess Eleanor, and the lands along with her. Thus from the Tweed to the English Channel, and from the English Channel to the Pyrenees, Henry II was rightful lord—and he was twenty-one. On no English king except the Conqueror was so heavy a burden laid; yet, with the same exception, no one was perhaps so well equipped to bear it. For, like the Conqueror himself, young Henry was a portent: "tawny-haired, round-headed and freckled, with large flashing grey eyes, thick-set and coarse of frame, of the bulldog breed; utterly indifferent to food and drink and to all the conventionalities of kingship; so restless and active that he seldom slept two nights running in one bed; a passionate sportsman, who never let sport interfere with business; knowing something about everything, and much of law, philosophy, history,



languages, and poetry; never ceasing to add to his stock of knowledge and experience, and never missing an opportunity to pick the brains of a learned man; a firm friend, but a good hater, proud and unforgiving, and given to such frightful fits of passion that he would fling himself on the floor and gnaw the rushes which then did duty for a carpet. A man of this extraordinary character naturally perplexed the brave reticent Normans . . . and very annoying indeed it must have been to the rebellious feudal baron of such a man, and to find that he whom you knew to be in Rouen four days ago suddenly appeared before your castle in Northants at 5 a.m., with an entire English army at his heels, long before you had been able to lay in your stock of lead for melting and your lean salt beef. The only thing to be done was to let down your drawbridge and ask him in to breakfast: perhaps his politic clemency was the hardest of all to bear. The existence of such a king made rebellion a more sacred duty for the barons than ever; but it made it infinitely more hopeless of success."¹

Even if Henry did not equal the Conqueror in strength and firmness, yet in one sense he did better, making good where the Conqueror had failed. For nothing after all was done in William's reign sufficient to prevent what happened during Stephen's. William ruled well because he was William. Personal character was the secret of his success; but character is what no man can bequeath to his successor. Henry too had character; but he had something more. His was a mind which looked ahead, and he had the foresight to build up a system which might survive when he himself was gone.

II

Henry's reign, in short, was to be a landmark in our political development. Hitherto laws and customs had grown up at haphazard, each king adding a little here

¹ From Mr. C. R. L. Fletcher's *History of England*.

perhaps and a little there; but, for the most part, laws and customs depended on immemorial custom, handed down from generation to generation; and their actual administration was largely left to the individual governors of shires or counties, or to the barons who administered their own estates as they themselves thought best. There was no unity or consistency; you could never have written down the constitution as a whole. Now Henry did not add much which was positively new; and, even when he did make innovations, he would try to cloak their novelty by quoting precedents from former reigns. What he did do was first to get to know about these scattered laws and customs; then to take them, as far as possible, under his own control. In a word, he reduced them to a system, of which he himself was the supreme authority and head. In all this he was much helped by his own unusual learning. Like all great law-givers, he drew for inspiration on a wider past and he looked back to the greatest source of law the world has ever seen—the tradition of Imperial Rome. The Romans first conceived of a great empire in which there should be one law for all, and in which all authority should centre upon a single and all-powerful person. By using the model of Roman law, Henry was able to give to our institutions just that unity and system which in their casual patch-work development had hitherto been lacking. The English State as he left it was no longer a vehicle which kept the road or was landed in the ditch according to the skill or incompetence of the driver on the box. It became a machine, moving, if you will, with lurches, creaks, and even stoppages, but yet, for all that, a machine which worked and kept the rails.¹

¹ We must not mistake the character of Henry's "Legislation". It was not effected by the passing of definite "Laws," as we know laws. What happened was rather this. The King issued an order to his officers and judges to act in such and such a way; and the observance of such orders came gradually to be the custom, and so, to all intents and purposes, the law. But it is important to realise that, in the Middle Ages, measures were nearly always taken to meet some special problem, not to assert a

Wherein then did this constitutional machinery consist? In every form of government there are two sides: first, there is the duty owed by the governed to the governor, and, second, the duty owed by the governor to them. In the Middle Ages, the first of these two duties centred almost wholly round the great royal business of conducting war. Every king (and Henry was no exception) felt bound to make frequent war upon his neighbours; and in this undertaking it was his subjects' duty to support him with money and with men. Money had hitherto been gathered by the old Danegeld tax; but it had been gathered very ineffectually, from landowners alone among the classes, in money of many different currencies, by sheriffs who usually kept back more than a little for themselves. Henry made a clean sweep of the old deceitful sheriffs and supervised their successors far more strictly. He established a single coinage for the whole realm; and (most important of all) he adopted a new system of taxation whereby every wealthy citizen, town-dweller, merchant, or whatever he might be, was bound to pay his share. This reform was doubly beneficial: now that taxation was to be conducted in a less haphazard fashion, every man understood more precisely for how much he was liable; and the royal income was thereby multiplied perhaps three-fold.¹ The result was that Henry was able to organise a much more efficient army than hitherto. Instead of relying wholly on the feudal contingents of the baronage, he could now hire soldiers who would be more directly under his own control, and (what is more) whom he could use, if need be, against rebellious barons. Besides this, however,

general principle. Cf. what is said about Magna Carta, pages 144 *sqq.*, and in the footnote below.

¹ Henry's system of taxation did not take proper shape until nearly the last years of his reign. He instituted in 1187 a tax for the Crusade, known as the Saladin tithe, which was levied on all in proportion to their wealth, and not merely upon holders of land. Just assessment of this "tax on capital" was ensured by the use of juries who, in each district, computed the value of their neighbours' property.

Henry wished in case of emergencies to have a national army at his back; and here again he very justly insisted that all alike should bear their share. By his Assize of Arms in 1181 he made all freemen liable for service. In addition it became each man's duty to find himself in arms; and all were bound to appear at the King's summons suitably equipped, from the baron, with his mail suit and charger, down to the humble smith or miller with his pike and leather shirt. It was not perhaps in practice a very formidable militia, but the principle in itself was so sound that it seems strange how many Englishmen had till yesterday forgotten it.

But service commands service; and for all this the King, as we have said, owed in return some duty towards his subjects. To give them justice was the least that he could do, and in this matter of justice also Henry aimed at the same sound principle of equality for all. Obstacles indeed were neither few nor insignificant. The barons liked to be judges of the disputes and misdemeanours of their tenants; and they were not particularly impartial judges. Worse still, as we have seen in the first Henry's reign, the customs holding in the local courts varied not merely between different counties, but even between different villages and towns. The second Henry was even more determined than his grandfather to suppress these variations. There was to be one law for all, King's Law or Common Law, as we still call it to this day. As a start he made the "King's Court," of which we spoke above, a much more regular and powerful instrument. A court of five justices sat in permanence, and on points of difficulty consulted with the King. The only trouble was that, as the King travelled, the King's Court must travel too: and one unlucky suitor is said to have pursued the court for five whole years together before he could catch it up! As under Henry I, the Common Law, of which the King's Court set the model, was carried outward into the country courts by Judges of Assize: but here a new idea, by far the most important of the

King's reforms, was hit upon. [Whatever else Henry may have copied from his predecessors, Trial by Jury was in very deed an innovation. By the old-fashioned method of conducting trials, justice—or injustice—had been done, not by the plain intelligence of twelve good men and true, but by a more or less direct appeal to the Providence of God. This appeal took various forms, none of which could have been accepted in any but a grossly superstitious age. The most popular was the ordeal. The accused man was forced to plunge his hand into boiling oil, and, if the skin failed to heal within a fortnight, God's judgment was held to be against him; he was condemned to death, fine or mutilation on the spot. As an alternative to boiling oil, he might walk blindfold between rows of red-hot plough-shares, hold a lump of molten metal in his naked hand, fight a duel with his accuser or with the official champion of the Crown. In each case, as before, the verdict was left to accident or (as they put it) to the Providence of God. Last, and most strange of all, was the verdict by Compurgation. If the evidence was inconclusive, the prisoner who could get twelve men to swear his innocence on oath was considered clear of crime; and here again we must remember the superstitious temper of the time, and the peculiar sanctity attached to oaths.] All this nonsense had gone on for centuries, and even Henry himself did not stop it altogether. His new juries had the power merely to acquit the prisoner or commit him to trial; not to declare his guilt or pass his sentence. If committed, he appeared before a judge, who gave him the chance of undergoing the ordeal. The verdict was still left to accident—or God. Queer times indeed; but this strange mixture of cruel injustice and superstitious faith was characteristic of the Middle Ages; and how deeply it was rooted in men's minds is shown by the practice of ducking "witches," which scarcely a hundred years ago was still in vogue. Nevertheless, Henry's new Jury system paved the way for better things, and, as the

growing influence of the Church brought more enlightened notions into play, the ordeal finally dropped out.¹

In these reforms, however, the ultimate test of Henry's real success was, as Henry himself knew well, the measure of authority he was able to exercise over the Church. It was useless clearly to establish the principle of "one law for all," if the clerics as a body remained outside the operation of the law. For the clerics or "clerks," as they were called, were a numerous and motley crew, standing much in need of legal discipline. Besides those properly invested with the full orders of the priesthood were many in minor orders, performing some humbler function in the Church—choirmen, sacristans, bishop's secretaries, or members of his suite. These minor orders, in fact, were very often taken for no other reason than that they opened the way to promotions and preferments inaccessible to laymen. Admission to such minor orders was not difficult. The test of learning was absurdly superficial; and to become a "clerk" it was often held sufficient to have been able to recite in the Latin tongue a single verse out of the Vulgate. The privileges, on the other hand, which these "clerks" enjoyed were solid and important. Not least of these was the very one of which Henry himself fell foul. By long established custom it was the Church's right to try all clerks, of whatever crime or felony accused, in her own courts and in her own way. Did a sacristan pick my lord's pocket, or an archdeacon poison a prince, the King's law was impotent to touch him. He went before the clerical courts, and, as may well be guessed, the clerical courts let the "clerk" down very lightly. A fine or a penance was considered ample punishment for the

¹ The Church played a great part in reforming these and other abuses. The Lateran Council of 1215 forbad the continuance of such evil practices as the ordeal, but, even so, its influence was slow to take effect. Indeed, it is curious how long these old-fashioned forms of justice lingered on. Never having been definitely repealed, they crop up in rare cases in quite recent times. Compurgation was actually used as late as 1824; and Trial by Battle was claimed, though not allowed, by a plaintiff in 1819.

most serious crimes ; and, though murders were not unfrequently committed by "clerks," the death sentence was unknown.

Henry, who was determined that this farce should cease, decided to try conclusions with the Church ; and, looking about him for an instrument, discovered (as he fancied) what he sought. His most trusted servant, close companion, and firm friend was the Chancellor, Thomas à Becket. What more suitable assistant for his schemes than such a man? Becket was accordingly persuaded to turn priest and to accept the Archbishopric of Canterbury. The change was easily made ; but for once Henry's judgment was at fault. Becket was indeed a loyal servant ; whomsoever he served, he served with his whole heart ; but he could not serve two masters, and, now that it was a choice between God and Mammon, Church and King, Becket chose the Church. To Henry's horror it was soon abundantly revealed that Becket took his new orders seriously. There were no half measures with Becket ; whatever he did, he did thoroughly, and he now began to push the interests of the Church with the same whole-hearted energy as he had hitherto bestowed on the management of the royal estates. He outdid the veriest saint in the strictness of his life ; took to fasting and scourging and suchlike humiliations of the flesh, as naturally as though he had never feasted upon sumptuous banquets, or lived with the pomp of a prince. He wore habitually (as the monks to their great contentment discovered at his death) a hair-shirt next his skin ; and—a still more characteristic mark of mediæval piety—he seldom washed. The story goes that once, when a princess noticed something moving in his sleeve, he shook that something out, and lo—to the Archbishop's own surprise and to the young lady's joy—the moving bodies had turned miraculously to pearls ! But, such legends apart, there could be no doubt whatever that Becket was a changed man—changed in all respects save one : he had not lost an atom of his obstinacy and pride.

As for the King's designs upon the Church and the clerical courts, it was now clear that Becket would be no friend to these; and, seeing what two powerful champions both Church and State possessed, it could not be long before the old quarrel which Anselm and Rufus had begun, and which Henry's grandfather had so skillfully allayed, should flare up again anew. Henry, having determined that the Church's exemption from civil law must cease, made a direct attack on the power of the clerical courts. He had not indeed the courage to suggest their total abolition; he offered a compromise. When a clerk had been tried by a Church court and there found guilty, he was first to be degraded from his orders and then handed over as a layman for a second and decisive trial in the King's lay courts, and from these receive his sentence. To this effect Henry issued a definite decree in the so-called Constitutions of Clarendon (1181). Becket was furious; stood upon his rights; defied the King "to touch the Lord's anointed"; blustered, faltered, and finally, in a weak moment, gave his archiepiscopal assent. The moment after he repented bitterly of what he had done. He went back upon his word, and appealed to the Pope to absolve him from his promise—a service which the Holy Father was only too delighted to perform. It was now Henry's turn to be angry. At a Council held in Northampton there was a battle royal between the King and the Archbishop. Becket appealed against the King to Rome, a thing which, as was pointed out, another clause in the Constitutions of Clarendon had positively forbidden. The Archbishop's patience was at length exhausted; he stalked out of the hall threatening those who tried to bar his passage at the door, travelled in disguise down to the coast, crossed to the Continent, and appeared before the Pope. The Pope, as was natural, gave Becket his comfort and support. The two laid their heads together, and as luck would have it Henry made a false step which delivered him into their hands. He had been anxious

(it was no unusual precaution in these unsettled times) to have his son and heir safely crowned as his successor even while he himself was still alive. Tired of waiting for the Archbishop to return, Henry got the ceremony performed by other bishops against the Pope's wishes and without the Pope's leave. The Holy Father's wrath was terrible; excommunication was plainly hinted at, and Henry saw no other course than to give way. The hatchet was buried. Becket was permitted to return.

But one rash act begets another. The Archbishop came home in no repentant or conciliatory mood. The illegal coronation still rankled in his mind. The bishops who had been so unwise as to usurp his special privilege should feel his hand. He had not excommunicated them before; he would excommunicate them now. It was Christmas-tide, and Henry was keeping the festival in France when the fatal news arrived. "My subjects are sluggish men of no spirit," he exclaimed; "they let me be the laughing-stock of a low-born clerk." Four of his knights, without his knowledge, resolved to take him at his word. They crossed in secret to the Kentish coast and made their way on horse to Canterbury. Becket received them in his bed-chamber, sitting on his bed. The knights sat on the floor. The interview was heated, angry words were passed, and Becket refused to withdraw his ban upon the bishops: the knights retired; was it for consultation, or to arm? The terrified monks persuaded their master, not without difficulty, to take refuge in the Cathedral near at hand. The bell was tolling for vespers and it was dark. Had he wished, Becket might easily have hidden or escaped. But, whatever else he was, the Archbishop was no coward; some say that he even desired to die a martyr's death. He remained with one or two companions to confront his enemies who were already battering at the great West door. The knights' blood was up; and, when Becket (whose tongue was somewhat sharp for a would-be holy martyr) called one by an ugly name, a blow was aimed at his head. Edward

Grim, his biographer, and now at this last crisis his sole companion, caught the blow upon his arm. Other blows followed, and Becket soon went down. One of the knights drove his sword-point into the dying man's skull and scattered the brains upon the floor.

No single act throughout the Middle Ages so startled Christendom with horror. Becket dead did Henry far more harm than Becket living. The king had no choice but to repudiate the crime: he did penance barefoot, fasting at the dead archbishop's tomb, and there he submitted to a scourging from the monks. And, worse humiliation still, he abandoned his attempt to overcome the pretensions of the Church. The Constitutions of Clarendon were a dead letter from the hour that Becket died. The clerical courts survived. Popular feeling allowed of no other course. Becket was universally hailed as a saint. His shrine at Canterbury—a veritable treasure-house blazing with gold and precious stones—became the favourite object of pious pilgrimage. His death gave a halo of romance to a life of doubtful usefulness, and reinforced, as no other act of his had ever done, the influence and reputation of the Church. Had he been able to foresee the full outcome of his martyrdom, Becket would most undoubtedly have wished it.

It was fortunate perhaps for Henry—maybe it was even his deliberate policy—that he was soon able to forget his domestic troubles in the excitements and incidents of war. In the year of Becket's murder he had allowed the Earl of Pembroke, Strongbow by name, to lead a freebooting party against Ireland. Things had gone well at first; then Strongbow had found himself in difficulties, and at his appeal for help Henry had set to work to organise an expedition. For an English king at the head of an English army it was easy enough to cow the wild Irish tribesmen: to tame them was impossible. Henry planted garrisons in various centres, received the homage of the native chiefs, confirmed his

barons in their new-won lands, and returned again to England. The true conquest of Ireland was not yet.

During his absence, however, trouble of a very different sort had been brewing over in France; and soon the king had war enough to make him forget all else. His eldest sons, Henry and Richard, to whom he had given control over his continental provinces, were of the same wild ambitious temper as himself. Their young heads had latterly been filled with treasonable notions by his disloyal wife, Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine; and in the same year that Henry returned from Ireland they rebelled. To make matters worse, they found a powerful ally in the King of France, Louis VII. Between Louis and Henry there was never much love lost. Henry was always glad to take whatever opportunity he could of extending his influence over fresh parts of France; and Louis on his part would not have been sorry to see him ejected from what parts he already held. This family quarrel came as a heaven-sent chance to the Frenchman. He, the two princes, and several discontented members of the English baronage appeared a formidable combination; but Henry was one too many for them all. Wherever he appeared, he conquered; and, when at last the rebels made their peace, Henry felt strong enough to pardon the disobedience of his sons. Only for his wife he had no forgiveness, and she never saw his court again. A few years of peace, however, were all that was allowed him. Louis VII died and another and stouter king reigned in his stead. Philip Augustus, the new king, was one of the greatest monarchs who ever bore the Fleur-de-lys; and throughout his life he stood for the unity of France and he never rested from his efforts to turn the English off French soil. Of the two rebel princes, the elder was now dead, but Richard remained restless as ever, and further embittered by the obvious preference which his father showed towards his younger brother John. Even Richard's succession to the English crown seemed insecure, and, though after his

recent failure it took a good deal to turn the son once more against his father, jealousy and Philip Augustus at length prevailed. In 1187 a fresh challenge was offered to King Henry, and this time he was unequal to the strain. Though barely fifty-six, his strength was spent; he fled before his enemies and at last was forced to a humiliating peace, whereby he confirmed Richard in his succession to the crown and bought off Philip with hard cash. One last and fatal blow remained. On the list of those who were implicated in this second revolt, and for whom his royal pardon was required, he found the name of his favourite son, Prince John. The treachery of his children crushed even his proud spirit. "Let the rest go as it will," he cried with bitterness, and turned his face to the wall—a dying and broken-hearted man. He had deserved better treatment at the hands of fate.

CHAPTER X
CHIVALRY AND CRUSADE

I

DURING the first Henry's reign, the Anglo-Saxon and the Norman inhabitants of England were beginning, as has been said, to form a single race. Under the second Henry this union became well-nigh an accomplished fact. The Norman baron's son had taken to himself an English wife, and when he, in turn, had daughters of his own, he married them to Englishmen. So the stocks mixed, and to draw a hard and fast line between the two was soon impossible. In language, however, a distinction lingered on. The nobility still continued to talk Norman-French, despising the Anglo-Saxon of the peasants as unintelligible jargon, mere "wlafteryng, chiteryng, haryng, and garryng grisbayting," as it seemed to them. Hence, just as Latin was the language of the learned, being used by monks, scholars, chroniclers, and writers of official documents, so French remained (both now and for centuries to come) the language of polite society. It was talked by the king and at his court; even Henry II himself understood no English when he succeeded to the crown, and it was only on the rarest of occasions that a sovereign would address his subjects in their native speech. In the schools too (such as there were) the children were taught French, and this very fact served in the end to bridge the gulf between the classes. For the average

Englishman began to borrow in his daily talk from both vocabularies; while he took "ox" and "sheep" from the Anglo-Saxon, he equally took "beef" and "mutton" from the Norman-French. So, too, in "fowl" and "poultry," "hunt" and "chase," "horse" and "palfrey," "lord" and "baron," "king" and "prince," the first word in each case is of Anglo-Saxon origin, the second of French; and we see the two vocabularies employed thus side by side, and almost without discrimination, for one and the same thing. In this manner the tongues blended, and by the time that we reach Chaucer and the fourteenth century, the two threads have become inextricably interwoven, and of the two is formed an English speech, awkward perhaps for us to understand, queerly spelt, and containing many words long since forgotten, yet for all that essentially the same as the English which we ourselves speak to-day.

But long before the rich and poor had come to adopt a common language, there can be no doubt that they acknowledged a community of race, and at the close of the twelfth century England was beginning to find her true self at last. Men recognised the fact, not without pride, and felt that it was a fine thing to be an Englishman. Her writers praised the country in no measured terms: "Engelond ful of pley, fremen well worthy to pleye; fre men, fre tonges, hert fre; free health all the leden (people); their lond is more fre, more better than their tonge". Slowly, too, there was emerging a national character to match this boasted freedom, a character which was neither Saxon nor Norman, but a mixture of them both. The mirthful, jolly, good-natured, happy-go-lucky Englishman was regarded by his Continental neighbours with a slightly shocked surprise, tempered perhaps by just a touch of envy. For, while our people took life less seriously than others, they undoubtedly got more enjoyment out of it. They loved the open air. Every class had its favourite pastime; hunting for the rich, and for the others sports of many kinds; they

danced, held cock-fights, baited bears, skated in winter-time, and even learned to kick a football in their youth. Nor was the time far distant when the archers' butts would be set up on every village green. They gloried in gay fantastic dresses, told tales, recited ballads, kept apes and peacocks and other curious pets, and, above all, they never lacked an appetite for food. The capacity of the mediæval diner was astounding. A meal of ten to twenty courses was not among the rich anything extraordinary, and royalty did even better. This is part of the menu of a banquet given at Westminster in 1429: "Boars' heads in castles of gold and armed, a red leche with lions carven therein, custard-royal with leopards of gold sitting therein and holding a fleur-de-lys, pig en-dored, crane roasted, great breme, jelly-partie written and noted with 'Te Deum Laudamus,' and roast mutton". Even the breakfast served to a Lord and Lady not much later sounds to our ears substantial: "Furst, a Loif of Brede in Trenchors, 2 Manchetts (fine white loaves), a quart of Bere, a quart of Wyne, 2 Pecys of Saltfish, 6 Baconn'd Herryng, 3 white Herryng or a Dysche of Sproits (sprats)". The peasants, it is true, lived chiefly upon vegetables and bread and cheese, but the yeomen farmer and the artisan kept a good table. "It snowed meat and drink in his house," says Chaucer of the Franklin in his tale. Drink, indeed, was always a prevailing vice: "They make it their business," so a foreigner complains, "to drink full goblets, for an Englishman will take a cup of wine and drain it saying, 'Ge bi: a vu,' which is to say, 'It behoveth you to drink as much as I drink'." It was scarcely an abstemious nation: there were ale and cider, mead and mulberry-wine for all, and for the well-to-do imported wines from France.

But let not our picture be too rosy. Men's condition varied much according to their station, and there was an enormous gulf between the few rich and the many poor. The share of life's good things was very scanty for the "villein," or peasant labourer. The tale of work which

he must render to his feudal over-lord takes approximately one day in every two: 140 or 150 days out of the year is common, and in one case, at least, the number rises to as much as 259. The work is hard and the villein may not absent himself on pain of fine. "From the whole village of little Ogbourne, except 7: for not coming to wash the lord's sheep, fine 6s. 8d.," so runs the verdict of a Wiltshire manor court; and no doubt the fine was paid. He must give good honest work, too, or suffer for it: "William Jordan, in mercy for bad ploughing, on the lord's land, fine 6d". Sixpence was in those days a valuable sum and would have bought William Jordan a sheep or a goose or ten dozen eggs. Nor must he, under penalty of law, quit the village or estate in which he has been born. "The court present that William Noah's son is the born bond-man of the lord and a fugitive and dwells at Dodford; therefore he must be sought." The villein's life was a hard life, and his grievances were genuine enough. Yet, truth to tell, he scarcely had the wits to understand them, much less to air them. He could neither read nor write. His experience was too narrow to conceive the possibility of better things. Custom had made him what he was: what custom had made him she had made his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather before him, and who was he to question her decree? And, meanwhile, if his master was a generous master, who was not too strict in the enforcement of his fines, who did not keep too close a watch on how the wheat threshed out, and who would allow him to marry his daughter to what man he willed, the villein was tolerably content. The time had not yet come when he could think of rebelling openly against his lot, and, if he grumbled, it was behind his master's back.

The townsman was more prosperous. Trade throve, and for weavers, dyers, tanners, smiths, shoemakers and the rest, there was good money to be earned. These men were slaves to no man. They stood upon their

rights, and, for the better protection of their trade and to secure themselves good prices, each craft banded together in a Union, called a Guild. These Guilds grew very powerful, and they came to play a great part in the organisation and government of towns. For more and more, as trade grew in volume and importance, the townfolk began to raise their heads and assert their independence. They resented meddling from the barons; they spoke out if taxes were too high, and (as Matilda learnt at London to her cost) they would stand no nonsense even from the crown. For enterprise and high spirit, so rare among the dull-witted peasants of the soil, was natural to the merchants, craftsmen, and apprentices of cities. This energy showed itself in many forms. Coarse practical jokes were all too common, such as "taking off the hoods of people and laying hands upon them". Riots and drunken brawls abounded, in which men were killed. Free fights would frequently occur between the townfolk and the servants of a baron or a bishop. But such high spirits found an outlet, too, in less illegal ways. Carnivals and shows were always popular; great fairs were held, to which men from all parts gathered, buying and selling and making general holiday; minstrels would be there and jugglers and wizard fortune-tellers; plays of a rough humorous sort were acted; processions and pageants gave frequent opportunity of showing off fine dresses. Even religious festivals were an occasion for display and banqueting. For careless, rollicking, full-blooded fellows as they were, religion still claimed a large share of men's attention. They gave alms to beggars with lavish hand. They spent enormous sums on building and beautifying their churches, and not a few, let us remember, devoted themselves to the religious life. The cowl was popular as ever, and in some strange manner it would seem that the same high spirit of overflowing energy which drove many to be reckless sinners, turned others equally towards the scarcely less reckless self-sacrifice of saints. Men took the

vow in the enthusiasm of youth and without counting the full cost, and, even though new and stricter orders had been introduced, this only added to their zeal. The ways of the old-fashioned Benedictines had grown lax; they still, it is true, worked hard: they farmed, they copied manuscripts, they visited the poor and sick. But, for the rest, they lived more like ordinary mortals than like monks, keeping pets and falcons, sitting down to a ten course dinner, and even hunting with the hounds. Such a life, though infinitely more useful to mankind at large, was not austere or rigorous enough for many who could think of nothing else but the salvation of their own immortal souls. So, when there came over from the Continent a set of monks calling themselves Cistercians, who were anxious to restore the forgotten ideals of St. Benedict and to practice the holy life with full severity, it was not unnatural that they were well received. The rich contributed to their funds with redoubled generosity. New abbeys were built, and these were planted of set purpose as far as possible from the abodes of men, at Fountains among the desolate Yorkshire dales or at Tintern among the woodlands of the Wye. To these remote and tranquil havens many were attracted, thankful to escape from a rude world and to forget, if they might, its sinful ways in the exercise of fasting, prayer and hard manual toil. It was a strange age which from the same material could produce such opposite extremes of piety and crime. But there was a stranger contrast yet.

No picture of the time can be complete with its leading characters left out. The very centre and pivot of mediæval society was the baronage. For the support of these men three-quarters of the nation laboured with toil and sweat; by their personal prowess the country's battles were decided; through their act kings' crowns were lost or won. Nor did their power rest solely upon the privilege of birth. A man of great character and grit was the successful baron, and the qualities he needed

were little different from those which went to the making of a successful king. He had extensive lands and manors to administer; quarrels and disputes of all sorts to decide; soldiers to train and to command. As wealth was counted, he was wealthy, not in money indeed, but in farms and stock and horses, in castles and instruments of war; for in those times a large landowner was as powerful as a millionaire, and a suit of mail armour was almost equivalent in value to a motor-car to-day. Luxury, however, was not among the baron's failings: his was no soft or idle life, and the castle in which he lived was comfortless and draughty, without glass in the windows or carpets on the floors. Privacy there was none, for the entire household lived, ate, and often slept in the single castle hall. Culture was rare, for outside the monasteries books were scarce and few but monks had either ability or taste to read them. The baron's energies (and they were boundless) found vent in other ways. Outdoor sport was his favourite occupation, and he was never happier than when flying his falcons or following the stag. And, did he crave more perilous excitements, he could take his fill in war. Adventure was the ruling passion of his life, and the biographies of many barons read less like sober history than like fairy-tales. For sheer romance and devilry the record of Geoffrey de Mandeville, who lived in Stephen's reign, would be difficult to beat. Unscrupulous scoundrel as he was, one cannot but admire the astounding vigour and audacity of the man. His support was first purchased by the King, who made him Earl of Essex, but on Stephen's capture he went over to Matilda, who made him Custodian of the Tower. On Stephen's release, he changed sides once again; but, still not content, he came back to Matilda, in consideration of some further bribe. He was arrested (on the charge, if you please, of treachery), but laughed at the King's authority, and flung out of Stephen's presence in a fine passion like "a runaway horse". Gathering a band of desperadoes to him, he went off to the East Anglian fens.

There he became the terror of the country-side, and spent the remainder of his unhallowed life, plundering travellers, kidnapping children, sacking towns and burning villages, and all the while defying and evading the King's officers like a bandit chief. Geoffrey de Mandeville is a type of the mediæval baron at his worst.

Now about the same time as this preposterous scoundrel was at large, another Geoffrey was making history in a different fashion. In 1147 Geoffrey, the Archdeacon of Monmouth, published in a book the famous story of King Arthur and his Knights. Thanks to Malory and Tennyson, who have retold it, the tale is now familiar; but in those days it was a startling novelty to read of kings whose life was wholly devoted to the service of mankind, of knights sent forth, not to plunder the defenceless but to set wrongs right, of wars conducted in the name of God, and perilous journeys undertaken to catch a vision of the Holy Grail. Yet, novel as was the theme, the tale was immensely popular, and it is clear that something more had happened in the world than the mere publication of a myth. Whatever its origin (and no book, we may be sure, could of itself produce it), the Age of Chivalry had dawned. The full splendour of its noonday indeed was still far off: years and even centuries must pass before the ideals which Geoffrey ascribed to Arthur and his knights could take effect, and the cruel instincts of a barbaric age be shed away. Yet even now, in the twelfth century itself, a change was coming. New ideas were slowly taking root, and new virtues were proclaimed by the mother and author of all chivalry, the Church. Instead of persecuting the weak, it was henceforth to be a privilege to defend them. Courtesy was to become a duty, above all to the gentler sex. Every true knight was at once the slave and champion of some fair one. He wore his mistress's handkerchief or glove upon his helm; he upheld her name and beauty against all comers in the lists. And among fellow knights no less was courtesy due, at first towards

friends, and then as time went on, towards foes, until we read how the Black Prince, fresh from the battle, would seat his captured enemy at table and wait in person on his needs before taking meat himself. Thus a code of etiquette and honourable conduct was established and accepted, by which even war's barbarity was softened. Hostilities became a game to be played according to the rules, and, whether in the tournament or on the battlefield, the spirit of fair play and sportsmanship was rigorously maintained. Chivalry, in short, became the fashion, and not least (strange as it may seem) among the wild, fierce, restless spirits of whom we have been speaking. Yet not so strange, perhaps, for adventure is still adventure in whatever cause, and to slay some fearful dragon or to rescue forlorn maidens is not in reality less valorous than to plunder travellers or burn towns. Even though dragons and imprisoned maidens were not in practice to be met with, it was pleasant, at any rate, to dream such deeds of daring, and meanwhile to play the gentleman, if only in a tilting-match, seemed somehow more romantic than to cheat and rob.

But the ardour of chivalry was not yet satisfied. The tournament was a good game, but no more than that. There was glamour in it, and excitement, if you will: the blood might well be stirred at the sound of the challenge and the trumpet, the clatter of the mailed men mounting and the horses' tramp; the eye might rejoice in the glitter of the knights' gay quarterings and the bright dresses of the lady onlookers; the heart might thrill at the thunder of the charge, the shock of collision, the triumph over an adversary unhorsed. But there was still lacking in all this that which might satisfy the soul. The men of the middle ages seldom did anything by halves. If chivalry meant in very truth devotion to the right, if the true knight owed his service to the noblest call of all, then the only cause worth championing was God's cause, and the only adversary worth fighting was the Devil. But how and where was the Devil to be

found? Happily about this time, and as if in answer to this unspoken question, the Devil himself appeared—in Palestine, where he drove the Christians from the Holy City and acted in a manner generally in keeping with his character. In plain words, the Devil had made his appearance in the guise of the infidel Turk, and it had become the duty of all good knights and true to make mincemeat of him on the spot. So Christendom, both the best and the worst of it, went forth upon Crusade. There is nothing stranger, perhaps, in the whole history of mankind than this sudden religious enthusiasm, which swept Europe like a wave, and with a force so irresistible that it drew men of every character and class and country to the Holy Land. The crusading spirit was infectious. At times it would die almost down, then it would spread again and rise to fever heat, so that men's minds were quite possessed by it and all sense of practical considerations was forgotten. Troops of people, poor as well as rich, often without arms or equipment or proper means of sustenance, would march to the ports, take ship and sail for the Syrian coast, only to be lost at sea or perish on some distant and inhospitable shore. Even children would leave their parents and take the eastward road: one party of boys and girls reached Constantinople; their fate may be imagined. Every class was in it, but to none was the appeal more strong than to the baron class. The thought of adventure in strange lands beyond the seas was tempting in itself; but adventure was not all. However careless and ungodly had been their previous lives, the fact remains that to very many the call of the Cross was a genuine enthusiasm. The Church herself had not been backward with promises of spiritual reward, and the greater was the burden of sin upon their conscience, the more men welcomed the opportunity of purchasing their soul's salvation on Crusade. Some, indeed, in the flush of enthusiasm, even took vows like monks, and the two great knightly orders of the Hospitallers and the Templars were established, which imposed a

strict discipline and much self-sacrifice upon their members, and exacted an oath of poverty, chastity, and life-long obedience to the rule. Truth to tell, the mediæval knight was an almost inexplicable mixture of low passions and high ideals: "When he was good, he was very, very good, and when he was bad, he was horrid". And so it came to pass that a host of warriors who at home had been guilty of every sort of crime, and who in battle with the Turk did deeds of unspeakable brutality, had still their moments of deep religious fervour. To discover a supposed fragment of the true and original Cross was to them more precious than the discovery of a gold-mine, and when for the first time they mounted the hills of Judah and caught a glimpse of the city of Jerusalem outstretched beyond, they could not forbear from falling in an ecstasy upon their knees, and shedding tears of unfeigned gratitude and joy.

II

England's part in the Crusades was less than that of other nations. Englishmen never rose to such heights of enthusiasm or folly as were seen in France. The great mass of the nation stayed at home, content to minister (whether grudgingly through taxes or willingly through gifts) to the upkeep of the men who went. Of the barons only the more adventurous or pious marched themselves. They were not very numerous, and it would be a great mistake to interpret every cross-legged effigy reposing in our churches as the record of a Crusading knight. Indeed, but for one circumstance, the expedition could not have been regarded as a national concern at all; that circumstance, however, was decisive: the expedition marched and fought under the banner of the English king. Richard Coeur-de-Lion, second son of Henry II, and his successor on the throne, was not the man to stay at home while there was crusading to be done. He had good reasons of his own (as we shall see)

for desiring the reconquest of Jerusalem, but, these apart, nature had marked him out for the leading part he played. A warrior to the backbone, a very Hercules in strength, and a captain of no ordinary skill, Richard possessed, in addition, the true knight-errant's soul. His generous, passionate, impulsive nature exulted in the make-believe of chivalry and the adventurous quest of noble deeds. In none, perhaps, were the opposite qualities of courtesy and violence, religious zeal and quarrelsome ambition more strangely intermingled. He had the magnanimity, when dying, to pardon the French sharp-shooter who had struck him down; yet it was the same man who at Acre first promised the Turkish garrison their lives and then hanged them in cold blood. Both on its good side and its bad, Richard was a type of the age in which he lived, and, not altogether without cause, tradition has chosen to regard him as its hero.

Richard's Crusade, though the most famous of them all, was not the first. More than a century before, and just ten years after Hastings, Palestine had originally fallen to the Turk. The effects of this disaster were immediate. The old Arab inhabitants had hitherto been friendly to the Christians, and had allowed free access to the Holy Sepulchre. All this was now altered. The Turks maltreated Christian residents, defiled the sacred places, murdered pilgrims. All Europe stood aghast, and, while men were still doubting what was to be done, there appeared in north-eastern France a strange prophetic figure—an old man, white-bearded, riding on a mule with cross in hand, and proclaiming with fiery energy a holy war against the Turk. Peter the Hermit, as he was called, passed on from town to town, and wherever he went men left their trades and businesses to take the cross. Talk of the Crusade was soon on every tongue; castles and cottages poured forth their volunteers. But the cause had been taken up by a greater than the Hermit. The Pope himself was moving: he had summoned a band of leading warriors to Clermont,

and in November, 1095, had given them, kneeling, his final benediction. Thus was launched the First Crusade. Its success was swift. Jerusalem was recaptured and a Christian king set up. That honourable post was first held by Godfrey de Bouillon, a baron of Lorraine, though he indeed refused to take the royal title or wear a golden crown in the city where Christ had been crowned with thorns; but by and by it passed to the princes of Anjou, the house to which, through his father Geoffrey, Henry II was kin. The Angevins were brave warriors, but in time their hold on Palestine had grown precarious. The Turks had renewed their menace, which even the Second Crusade had little power to check, and in the last years of Henry's reign the Holy City had been lost once more. Henry had himself projected a crusade, but death cut short his plans, and it devolved on Richard to execute his father's purpose and restore his unthroned kinsman to Jerusalem.

If an alliance of crowned heads was any guarantee of victory, the success of the Third Crusade seemed well assured. Besides Richard, it was joined by Philip Augustus, King of France, and by Frederic Barbarossa, the aged Emperor of Germany: among a host of lesser princes were the Counts of Flanders and of Burgundy, and Leopold, Duke of Austria. Yet, from the outset ill-luck pursued the enterprise. The Emperor was drowned upon the march in Asia Minor. Very few of his German troops reached Palestine. Worse still, a jealousy sprang up between the Kings of France and England, and during a brief stay in Sicily they almost came to blows. On reaching the Syrian coast, they found things in a parlous state. Every stronghold except Tyre was lost, the Christian forces, fighting for the recovery of Acre, were starving, and the hungry soldiers were eating grass and horse-flesh and offal taken from the dogs. The French and English reinforcements had come none too soon; nevertheless, their arrival put fresh heart into the siege. To win back Acre was at all costs necessary, for

no other port was fit to serve as a base ; and Richard, whom all hailed as the one capable commander, determined to continue the attack. The task was long and bitter. The Christians had brought with them wooden towers and long-range catapults and other instruments of siege ; but the Turks retaliated by pouring boiling oil on the assailants, and setting fire to catapults and towers by missiles of Greek fire, a concoction of sulphur, pitch, nitre, petroleum, and other inflammable materials. When the final assault took place, Richard himself was ill ; but he was carried to his post before the walls on a silken couch, from which he directed operations and even helped in aiming his siege artillery. Nor was such perseverance vain. The wall was breached, the garrison surrendered, and the port of Acre was won. Yet no sooner was this victory achieved than the old disastrous jealousies broke out afresh. Philip Augustus had not forgotten Sicily, and he now announced his intention of returning home to France. Ill he certainly was, so ill that the nails came off his fingers and the hair fell from his brows ; but none the less ill-health was not the true cause of his departure, and, once back home in Europe, he was to deal his one-time ally a treacherous blow in the back. Leopold of Austria, too, had a grudge against King Richard, who, for an insult levelled at the English flag, had ordered the duke's own banner to be cast into a sewer. Like Philip, Leopold went home to meditate revenge : we shall hear of both again.

Acre, the scene of Richard's first success, is situated slightly to the north of that single projection on the Syrian coast which we know by the name of Mount Carmel. Sixty miles southward along the coast, and almost on a level with Jerusalem, lies Jaffa, likewise a harbour of no mean importance. The taking of Jaffa formed Richard's next objective : it was the natural base from which to make his inland march upon Jerusalem itself. The route along the shore was desolate and dry and the Christian army suffered terribly. Despite the

linen surcoats that they wore, the sun beat down upon



their armour till it nearly scorched their flesh. Provisions ran out, and they were driven to eating the very horses

that died upon the march. Poisonous flies infested them, and venomous snakes, which could only be kept at a distance by a continual clatter of their shields—and all the while the enemy's horsemen hung upon their flanks. The Turks were riders of extraordinary skill and speed. Their commander, the Saladin, was a general of unusual audacity and cunning, and he saw that to harass the Christians was far better tactics than to attack them. When, however, Richard's army was approaching the actual neighbourhood of Jaffa, the Saladin gave battle at Arsouf. His forces outnumbered the Christians by three to one, and victory seemed secure. But the Turk had not reckoned with the quality of the English knights. Impatient of a defensive action, they burst out, as the Fyrd had done at Hastings, in flat disobedience of their orders; but, by sheer fighting, they carried all before them, and Richard himself, marking the opportunity, joined in the charge. His prowess threw all others into the shade. "Wherever he turned brandishing his sword, he carved a wide path before him. He cut down the enemy like a reaper with his sickle . . . till the corpses of dead Turks extended for over half a mile. . . . There might be seen numbers lying prostrate on the ground, horses riderless in crowds, wounded lamenting their hard fate, others at their last gasp and weltering in their gore: many lay headless, whilst their lifeless forms were trampled underfoot by friend and foe." It was a grim carnage, and the Turkish host barely escaped annihilation. The way along the coast lay open, and Richard entered Jaffa at the end of summer, 1191.

The Christians had, as it seemed, now reached their final stage. Richard seized Askalon as a forward base, and began his march upon Jerusalem. Yet the nearer he approached the city, the more impossible appeared his task. Winter was at hand: his forces were wholly insufficient for a siege, and his communications with the coast were doubtfully secure. In the last days of

December, having penetrated within two days marching of his goal, Richard despaired and, with a heavy heart, turned his back for the first time upon Jerusalem.

The winter was spent at Askalon, preparing for the spring campaign, but the omens were anything but reassuring. Bad news began to reach the King of the unrestful state of England, and of Philip's intrigues in France; quarrels sprang up among his followers, and the crown of Jerusalem (though Jerusalem was not yet won) was the subject of hot dispute. It was with deep misgivings and a sense of coming failure that Richard set out in spring to climb the Judæan hills once more. Once more he and his men came within striking distance of the city, and were even able, from a hill-top near Emmaus, to descry its very towers; and once more Richard was compelled to turn his back upon the prize and retrace his journey to the coast. It was a cruel ending to his dreams, and, rather than look upon the city which he could not save, he held his shield (so legend says) before his eyes and lamented his own unworthiness. The one course now left him was to treat for terms, but even this course gave little promise of success. To the Turks, no less than to the Christians, the struggle was a Holy War: they too were fighting for the honour of God and Mahomet his prophet. The Saladin himself had sworn he would never rest while a single unbeliever remained upon the earth. Nevertheless, a truce was eventually concluded, and during the truce the Christians were promised free access to the Holy Sepulchre. Then Richard at last set sail for Europe and left Palestine for ever. The Crusades dragged on spasmodically for another sixty years until, under the saintly King of France, Louis IX, one last attempt was made. It failed, and Jerusalem remained in Turkish hands—till yesterday.

King Richard's troubles, however, were far from ended. He had made many foes in Palestine, and they were on the watch for his return. Deeming it prudent to avoid

the ports of France, he sailed by the Adriatic, and was shipwrecked and attempted to cross Austria in disguise. There he was recognised, and fell into the hands of his old enemy, the Duke Leopold. Leopold handed him into the Emperor's keeping, and the ransom named for his release was 100,000 marks. England was hard put to it in finding such a sum: even the plate and treasure of the churches were called in; but the greater part of the ransom was duly paid, and Richard set out for home. He had been absent too long. John, his faithless brother, was stirring up trouble in the Midlands, and Philip Augustus, still bent upon revenge, was threatening Normandy. Richard spent six months in England; he crushed John's revolt, forgave him, and turned to France. Here, during six years of skirmishes and sieges, he contrived to hold his own. But at last, in a petty squabble with some rebel lord of Aquitaine, he received a fatal wound. The physicians could not check the gangrene that set in, and, with a last act of chivalrous forgiveness to the author of his death, Richard passed away. His life had been a failure, but at least he had failed heroically.

CHAPTER XI

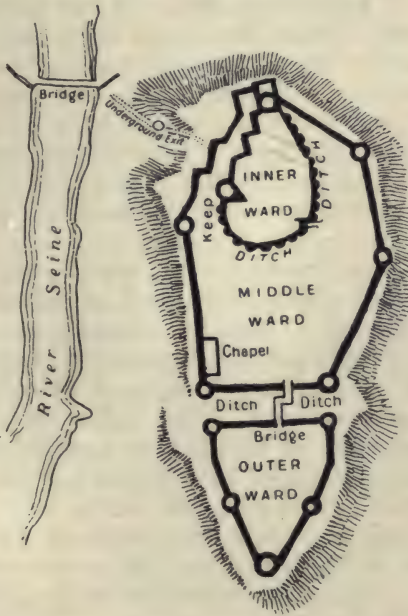
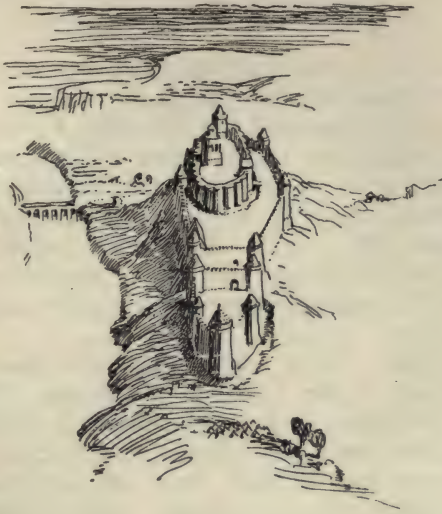
LACK-LAND AND LAW-BREAKER

NO English king, perhaps, had ever less direct influence upon the country than King Richard. During his ten years of rule ten months at most was all he spent in England; and the most important fact about his reign is undoubtedly his absence. "While the cat is away, the mice are sure to play." But in this case, happily, the more obstreperous of the mice had gone off with the cat to the Crusade. And those left behind were more sedate, more contented, and less eager to run wild than their ancestors had been in Stephen's time. The horror of the anarchy was not repeated. Not merely had the barons learnt its bitter lesson, but they had endured the stern schooling of King Henry's reign; and now, when left to manage affairs for themselves, they began to realise their own responsibility and to be conscious of some duty towards the State. In short, it was not from the nobility that treason was most to be feared now; it came from another quarter whence, least of all, it should have come.

When Richard sailed for Palestine, the chief power of government had been entrusted to a bishop, William Longchamp of Ely, the Chancellor of the Realm. He was a faithful servant of his absent master, and, though of mean birth and wanting tact, he played the part of Regent with ability. One mischief-maker, however, Richard had left behind, who was more than the Chancellor's match—his brother John. Why anybody ever trusted John remains a mystery. His father trusted

him, and we have seen how he broke Henry's heart. Mean, cowardly, grasping and unscrupulous, he was incapable of loyal affection and unredeemed by any single grace. "God's Teeth" was his favourite expletive; his temper was uncontrollable, and often in fits of passion the very features of his face became so distorted as to be beyond recognition—a disgusting man. Yet Richard, not content with leaving him behind, gave him four earldoms, thinking to keep him quiet. Such generosity was utterly thrown away. John was ready, as we have seen, to organise revolt behind his brother's back, and just as ready, when it failed, to grovel at his feet. He made the Chancellor's position so intolerable that Longchamp was compelled to flee the land. Above all, he never ceased from underhand intrigues with Richard's worst enemy, King Philip of France. During Richard's captivity a bargain was struck between the two whereby Philip was to receive a part of Richard's French possessions at the price of helping John to get the rest. On Richard's return the plan, of course, collapsed, but the harm was done. The French King did not relinquish his ambitions, and this John discovered to his cost, when in 1199 he succeeded to his brother's crown. For the traitor always reaps as he has sown; and troubles across the channel soon came thick and fast.

First, although Normandy and Aquitaine stood true to England, the middle provinces of Anjou, Touraine and Maine fell rapidly away and linked themselves with France. Then Philip and John, as traitors will, fell out. Past promises went for nothing, and Philip, so far from backing John, supported a rival claimant to the English throne. This was John's nephew Arthur, son of an elder brother long since dead. Though still a boy, Arthur's claim to England was as good as John's, or better. John knew this, knew too that Arthur was more popular than he; so, when an accident of warfare delivered the boy into his hands, he was not troubled with his prisoner long. Arthur disappeared mysteriously.



CHÂTEAU GAILLARD, 1196.

The current story was that John had ordered the gaoler to put out his eyes, that the gaoler refused, and that John had then murdered the boy with his own hands and thrown the body in the Seine. Dead men tell no tales and the truth is never likely to be known. What seems certain, however, is that Arthur's removal did John's cause little good. His French subjects turned from him with loathing; and Philip chose the moment to renew with redoubled energy his attempts on Normandy.

The natural barrier which severs Normandy from central France is the valley of the Seine. Hold that line and Normandy will stand; lose it and the whole province must surely fall. Some years before, Richard, with a shrewd eye for that line's defence, had built a powerful fortress at one of its most salient points. The Château Gaillard or Saucy Castle, as he called it, was a masterpiece of engineering skill. It was perched on a high rock, three sides of which fall sheer away; on the fourth side, where the slope is more accessible, was constructed a strong outwork, which was practically a separate fort, and which was parted from the main defences by a broad dry moat. To carry this outwork was an assailant's first and necessary step; that done, he might reach across the moat, the main quadrilateral of defence; even were this too carried, there was still an "inner ward" more formidable yet, to which the defenders might retire and which in its turn contained a high-walled donjon-keep. Thus the Château possessed, in addition to the outwork, three concentric rings of stout defences, each to be taken in its turn before the place could be finally reduced. Had John been half the general Richard was, or had he even provided the garrison with adequate support, the Château might have been held indefinitely. As it was, John lost it in six months.

The details of its capture throw so much light on the siege warfare of the times that they seem worthy of mention here. In the reduction of a strong walled castle

the initial business was to breach the walls. This was done usually by sapping. A portable timber roof or shed, protected against fire by a covering of raw hide, was first pushed against the walls. Under this shelter, the sappers set to work ; beginning at the corner-stones they extracted the lower courses of the masonry, and inserted in their place a wooden prop. Then, filling the cavity with combustible material, and setting light to it, they retired to watch the outcome of their handiwork. As the flames caught, the wooden props collapsed, and the stone courses above them, losing their support, subsided ; if all went well, a portion of the wall crashed down and opened an entrance to the storming party. Before this method of attack the outwork of the Château Gaillard quickly fell, and the garrison was driven back upon the main defence. The approach to this was much more difficult. The moat protecting it was deep ; the causeway which led across the moat was of a zig-zag shape and effectually prevented the bringing up of siege-artillery. The foundations of the walls themselves began at some height above the bottom of the moat, and, though the French sappers tried to reach them by climbing on daggers stuck into the chalk, they could make little headway. The siege must have come to a stand-still but for a clever ruse. Built into the west wall of the Castle was a chapel, the windows of which gave out over the rock : to these a party of Frenchmen climbed and (since no attack was expected from this quarter) clambered in unobserved. Too late by perhaps a minute the alarm was given ; the chapel doors were blocked and burning faggots piled against them to smoke the enemy out. It was in vain : by ill luck the wind shifted its direction and blew back the smoke upon the garrison, who now had no choice but to retire upon the inner ward.

But the siege was not yet over : the French were on the hill, but they were not its masters. The fortifications of the Inner Ward were the most carefully devised

of all, being faced with a series of semicircular projections, like a row of round turrets set side by side. The absence of corners rendered the sapping of these walls extremely difficult, and to breach them siege engines were called into play. The most favourite type of engine was a sort of gigantic catapult, consisting of a long timber beam acting on a pivot: one end of the beam was loaded with a heavy weight, the other fitted with a receptacle for missile stones. The latter end was first depressed and fastened with a catch; upon release it flew up, answering to the weight, and in its flight discharged its burden of stones with an appalling force and to a considerable range. Under such battering the walls of the Inner Ward were shaken; a breach was made; and the garrison, worn out by long privation and reduced in numbers to 140 men, abandoned all further effort at defence. Instead of holding the Keep, they fled by the postern gate, where they were cut off and captured to a man.

The capture of the Château laid open the valley of the Seine. Normandy was lost and John's endeavours to recover it were fruitless. He allied himself with the German Emperor Otto, and he is even said to have asked the Emir of Morocco to assist him; but Philip Augustus was one too many for his enemies. At Bouvines in 1214 he won a decisive victory over the Emperor's troops and forced even John to give up the game. Bouvines set the seal to the realisation of his life's ambitions. France was now united under his single crown; all or nearly all her provinces wrested from the foreign grip. Of the whole broad strip from the Channel to the Pyrenees, which had been the heritage of Henry II, Aquitaine alone remained to John. Even for this the credit did not lie with him. It was not that the men of this southern province loved England, but that they loved Philip less; and, rather than accept the discipline of so near a neighbour, they preferred the easy service of a more remote and less efficient king. So, for two centuries and over, Aquitaine

continued to be ours, a fertile source for our commercial enterprise, and—for our later kings—a useful base in their wars of aggression against France. Thus did John, by his folly rather than his misfortune, earn the name of Lack-land.

Yet, truth to tell, the loss of these French dependencies was in many ways a positive gain to England. It set her free from awkward foreign entanglements: it enabled her rulers to concentrate their whole attention on the domestic problems of English government. And, after all, it is easier for most men to drive a single horse than to drive a pair. King John, however, was an equally bad hand at either. He could no more rule England than he could keep a hold on France, and no sooner had he lost one of his steeds out of the stable than he found the other running away with him. It was not that he lacked the wits to govern. He had all the wits of an ingenious knave; but, just because he was a knave and England knew it, he failed disastrously. Yet at the start he had every advantage on his side. He inherited from his father Henry a strong and efficient system of centralised government. The system was still working when John came to the throne. The barons, despite their murmurings, had swallowed it; but they simply could not swallow John. What they had stood from his father, or even from that fine, careless fellow, his brother Richard, they would not stand from a man whose one consistent habit was to break his word, and whose one idea of government was to extort the utmost penny that he could. Just now, too, taxation was the barons' nightmare. One huge bill they had paid for the Crusades, another for Richard's ransom, and they were sick of paying. To meet the call of John's extravagant expenditure, to say nothing of his escapades in France, was beyond their purse, or, at any rate, beyond the limits of their patience.

All barons, be it remembered, held their estates under feudal tenure from the King. This fact was one which

no doubt they themselves would gladly have forgotten, but which the King did not forget; and in one way and another he made his tenants pay dearly for the privilege of owning land. For the right to inherit his estate at all, the baron had to pay the crown what was known as a "Relief"; and a relief was generally fixed at a substantial sum. It was further his bounden duty, if a royal princess was married, to contribute to her dowry, or, if the King himself were taken captive by his enemies, to subscribe to the ransom asked. There were other calls besides on the baron's purse, none of which did the baron particularly relish; but of them all much the most frequent and by far the most obnoxious was the War Tax. Under the early Norman kings, as we have seen, it had been the primary duty of a feudal tenant to furnish a military contingent for the king's wars. If he held large lands, he brought many men, if small lands, few; but in the good old days at any rate, furnish the men he must. This arrangement, however, did not always commend itself to Henry II; and in his reign it had been often made permissible to pay a tax instead of finding men. Under his successors the custom grew more common. The tax or fee was assessed in proportion to the number of the knights which each estate was considered able to provide; and it went by the name of Shield money or Scutage. The advantages of such a plan were obvious: instead of a miscellaneous levy of baronial squadrons, pledged to serve for a term of forty days, but not legally compelled to serve for more, the King was now able out of the proceeds of this tax, to hire a standing mercenary army, bound to see the campaign out to its finish, however lengthy it might be. For their part, too, the barons were not sorry to be quit of this often tiresome duty; and rather than follow the King out to France for a period undefined, many found it preferable to pay the tax. In John's reign, however, the burden grew and grew. As the wars in France were frequent, the calls for scutage were frequent also. John's demands were proportionate

to the expenses he incurred, and he fixed the knight's fee at a higher rate than it ever had been before; and, if reluctant barons refused payment, he sent his officers to seize their property in quittance of the debt. Now the barons themselves were more or less indifferent to the King's adventures overseas, and cared not a rap whether John or Philip ruled in Normandy. On more than one occasion they refused point-blank to assist him with either money or men. Though less wild and independent than their fathers had been, they had lost none of the old spirit, and little by little their determination grew to endure the extortions of the King no more. All that was now needed to force the matter to an issue was to find a spokesman and a leader. He arrived in a fashion which was somewhat unexpected and peculiar.

A year or two after the fall of the Château Gaillard the old Archbishop of Canterbury had died, and John had nominated to the see a weak creature of his own. This had aroused the opposition of the monks of Canterbury, who were legally entitled to some say in the appointment. They had retaliated by electing their own sub-prior to the position and sending him off to Rome to gain the Pope's approval. The Holy Father, instead of selecting one of these two rival candidates, had boldly rejected both, and had named one Stephen Langton, a Cardinal of English birth. This happy solution John stubbornly and quite unreasonably opposed, and defied the Pope to do his worst. The Pope was roused and took up the challenge and laid the King and all his people under an Interdict. The people suffered most. The ban of Rome's displeasure fell like a dark cloud over the country. The churches were closed, the bells went unring, mass had to be said in the churchyards, and weddings held in the church porch. The dead were carried out of towns and buried in roadside ditches without prayers or priests or any rites of Church. Yet John remained impenitent; and at the end of a year the Pope issued a further ban of full Excommunication. Still

John held out: the Pope waited four years more, then grew impatient. In times when the Church's power was still so vastly strong, it was clear that a monarch whom the Church disowned had thereby forfeited his title to the crown, and a suggestion was now made to Philip Augustus that he should cross the Channel and depose the excommunicated king. Such a threat would have stiffened most men's backs. John had now a case: the nation, which might have hesitated to oppose the Pope, was indubitably ready to resist the King of France; yet, just when popular support seemed for once to be behind him, John wavered, and, like the coward he was, threw up the sponge. Hard and humiliating as were the Pope's conditions, he accepted them *en bloc*. He promised, in the first place, to pay an annual tribute of 10,000 marks (which came, of course, out of his people's pocket). He consented to do a vassal's homage to the Pope as overlord (a humiliation which must have made old Rufus and Henry turn in their very graves). And, lastly, he acknowledged Stephen Langton, the cause of the whole quarrel, as Canterbury's archbishop. Before two years were out, Langton, at the head of a united and determined baronage, was reading John a lesson he was not likely to forget.

For Langton, as it turned out, was just such a leader as the barons had been seeking. He was a man of high courage and large ideas, yet possessing a sober, well-balanced, legal mind. He understood the barons' grievances and saw that they were right. So, when he backed them, the authority of his name and his high office won the entire nation to their cause. In the old days of the early Norman rulers, the King had relied upon the lower orders to help him in keeping the barons down, and, as we have seen, the Fyrd had on more than one occasion saved the throne. Now the balance of parties shifted, and all classes equally were combined against the King. The reason for this change of front lay largely in the barons' own attitude. Under the Conqueror and his sons they

had asserted their liberty by claiming the title to misgovern others. Under John they asserted their liberty by disputing the King's title to misgovern them. Instead of now regarding law as a royal encroachment at any cost to be resisted, all they desired was to bring the King himself under the law. The result was that, when they took action, they had justice on their side, and the nation as a whole was behind them.

It was in the year of the disastrous battle of Bouvines. John had returned from France discomfited, and, to cover the costs of his campaign, had made a fresh demand for "scutage". The indignant barons had gathered to Bury St. Edmund's, in the county of Suffolk, ostensibly to worship at St. Edmund's shrine. Once arrived there, however, the pilgrimage had changed into an indignation meeting. Langton had taken the lead and had suggested that the old Charter issued by Henry I at his coronation should be taken as the basis of their claims. Here at least was something definite: the proposal was unanimously approved, and all present swore an oath on the relics of the saint that John should have no peace till that Charter was confirmed. Next spring the barons' forces were mobilised at Stamford, and, when all was ready, began to move on London. The moment was critical, but it never came to war. The capital joined the rebels, and John, who had fled on their approach, had no choice but to give way. At Runnymede, an island on the Thames, half-way from Staines to Windsor, "the whole nobility of England met," and on 17th June, 1215, John acceded to the Charter and sealed it with his royal seal. The barons had won a bloodless victory.

"John, by the Grace of God, King of England, Lord of Ireland, Duke of Normandy and Aquitaine, Count of Anjou: to the archbishops, bishops, abbots, earls, barons, justices, foresters, sheriffs, prevosts, serving-men, and all his bailiffs and faithful subjects, greeting," so ran the Great Charter's prelude. Thereafter, head by head, in three and sixty clauses, redress was promised to all the

barons' grievances, both great and small. Two in particular stand out. "*Scutage*," said Clause Twelve, "*shall not be imposed without the advice of the Common Council of the Realm.*" "*No free man*," said Clause Thirty-nine, "*shall be taken or dispossessed of property save by the lawful judgment of his peers.*" Among the other clauses of the Charter were many points which are perhaps of little interest to ourselves, but which meant a great deal to the men therein concerned: rights of inheritance, protection of timber, regulation of game laws, abolition of river-weirs, standardisation of weights and measures. In all these matters the King's oath bound him, not merely to respect his subjects' privileges, but to act more humbly and more sympathetically in the enforcement of his own. His sovereignty remained, it is true, unlimited and absolute. The King was still the master, not the servant of his folk, and it would be long years yet before the power of the Crown should be tempered by constitutional democracy. Yet in that long and bitter struggle between the people and their King, which was to outlast the Middle Ages, and was to attain its final settlement only with the downfall of the Stuarts, the signing of the Great Charter marks, as it were, the first clear step towards liberty.

But let us make no mistake: so far as its contents go, the Charter was no great novelty. Other kings had been wont to issue Charters at the time of their accession and to promise therein to respect this privilege and that. The very Charter which John himself confirmed was largely based, as we have seen, on that put out by his great-great-grandfather, King Henry I. What appears really new in it was rather the action of the barons than the King. For these men were making for the first time a stand upon a principle. Selfish, in many ways, their motives doubtless were. Their chief object was to gain protection for themselves rather than for Englishmen at large, and much of the Charter was aimed against that centralised machinery of government which Henry II

had managed to enforce. The clause, for instance, which guaranteed a man fair trial by his peers was a protest against the interference of the Royal courts. It meant simply that barons intended to be tried by barons and not by some meddling official of the Crown. Such a claim was, in fact, intolerable, and small good could have come to England by such an exemption of one class from the jurisdiction of common law. Yet, notwithstanding this, and, as it were despite themselves, the barons were moving in the right direction. In after years that very clause, whatever its original intention, was a valuable safeguard of individual liberty. And when four centuries later King Charles I imprisoned the Five Knights for refusing a forced loan, it was to this article of the Great Charter that they appealed. So, too, with the clause which forbade the levying of scutage without the consultation and approval of the Common Council of the Realm; at the time it meant little change. The Great Council of barons and bishops had habitually been called by earlier kings, like the Witenagemote in Saxon times. In Rufus' reign, as we have seen, they had their say in the quarrel between King and Church. They claimed a voice, too, in the regulation of the taxes. A king was bound in any case to test his barons' feeling before embarking upon war, and it lay in their power always, if they had the courage, to express their disapproval. Yet the clause had its value. Once the principle was set down in black and white, it became a germ from which might spring, albeit by slow and painful growth, our Parliamentary Government. "No taxation without Representation" was in later years the watchword of Pym, Hampden and their fellow revolutionaries in their struggle with King Charles. Now the Great Council, it is true, was in no sense a Parliament. The barons represented scarcely anybody but themselves. Yet none the less, in offering an organised resistance to the King's extortions, they gave a salutary check to his arbitrary use of power. Henceforward the wise king must needs

consult his subjects' wishes. So the Charter became to later generations a name to conjure with. A precedent had been set, and what these men had done, others, should the need arise, might also do; nor was it to be many years before the need arose.

Meanwhile, having caught King Proteus, the barons' next business was to hold him fast. John's word alone was a slender guarantee of good behaviour, and, as a wise precaution, a committee of twenty-five barons was appointed to keep him in the way that he should go. "Five and twenty over-lords," John called them bitterly, and forthwith turned for aid to his old enemy, the Pope. The Pope, knowing that he could count upon the King's subservience, but not upon the barons', did as he was asked, and (by what right it is difficult to see) declared the Charter null and void. Thus encouraged, John rounded on his persecutors. Civil war broke out; the barons called for assistance to old Philip's son, Prince Louis. They even offered him the English crown, and before long the Frenchman actually landed in the south. For some months the parties fought, and England was only saved from further humiliation by a lucky accident—the death of John himself. In the autumn of 1216 he had narrowly escaped disaster while crossing an arm of the Wash during low tide. The sea had come in with a rapidity beyond his calculations, and, though he himself had got away, he had been forced to abandon his whole train of baggage to the waves. A few days later, while resting at Newark, he died from excessive indulgence in peaches and new cider—an inglorious ending to an inglorious reign.

CHAPTER XII

ENGLAND FOR THE ENGLISH

ENGLAND, distracted by civil war and invaded by a foreign prince, was left at John's death in the hands of a Regent who was rising ninety, and of a boy who had just turned nine. The boy was John's son Henry. The Regent, chosen by the Great Council to govern during the boy's minority, was William Marshall, Earl of Pembroke. His task was not an easy one: he found London in the occupation of the French troops, the east and south-eastern counties at Prince Louis' feet, and half the baronage sworn to his support. Yet the old Earl was equal to the task: two vigorous blows, one by land and one by sea, and England saw the last of the invader. The first was dealt by the Earl Marshall himself, who caught a large body of French knights at Lincoln and suffered very few of them to escape. Weakened by this disaster, Louis sat down in London to await fresh troops from France. They never came. Hubert de Burgh and a plucky English fleet were on the watch, and when at length the enemy put out, they were caught and defeated at the mouth of the Thames. This victory was decisive, and Prince Louis threw up the game. Making what terms he could with the Regent, he took his way back to France. "The hand of God," says the pious chronicler, "was not with him."

The country breathed again at its escape, and, what is more, it took to heart the lesson it learnt; what the loss of Normandy had in part already taught it, that

England was England and not a mere appendage of French soil. For a century and more, let us remember, Englishmen had been ruled by kings of foreign speech, kings who spent a large portion of their days in France, and who, for all their pretended sympathy, seldom had the true welfare of the English folk at heart. But the national spirit was not dead: on the contrary, it had grown the stronger for its long suppression, and now in the reign of the third Henry it burst out into new life. We have heard much of late concerning barons, their revolts, their grievances, their charters. But the barons were after all a class apart, a privileged few, a tiny fraction of the whole community. For the ninety-nine per cent of struggling, toiling, much enduring Englishmen little thought had been taken, still less been done. Well might charters be drawn up and Common Councils gathered to safeguard the rights of the nobility. But where did the humble commoner come in? What benefit to him was the King's promise about "scutage" of the landowners? Nothing was said about the taxes which he paid. It was all very well for the barons to claim fair trial by their peers, but what redress had he against the violence of royal sheriffs or the injustice of the Manor courts? Hitherto, he felt, the baron's interest had been pushed to the exclusion of all else. But, once the demand for rights and privileges was raised, nothing was more natural than for the humble commoner to claim his modest share. Most assuredly the national spirit of English liberty was not dead. In the towns especially it had made a sturdy growth: there men could talk and act together, and many towns had assumed or purchased from the crown wide privileges concerning trade, taxation and self-government. London in particular had obtained a charter which gave its citizens a strong position against oppressive kings. It had a Mayor and something very like a Corporation, and, what is more, a fine sense of its own importance. The Capital was now a power not by any means to be despised. Much might depend, as John

had learnt, on what side the Londoners took ; and now in the struggle which was fast approaching they were to play no minor part.

If more yet were needed to whet the appetite of the people for freedom and to render control of their own destinies more urgent, it was supplied by the character and behaviour of the boy who had now assumed the crown. Henry III was not altogether bad, like John. The best that could be said of him was that he was well-meaning ; the worst, that being a fool he did not know it. Flatterers and schemers could manage him, so that he was like putty in their hands, yet all the time he imagined himself to be their master. His conceit inspired him with an absurd belief in his own political sagacity ; it allowed him equally, if things went wrong, to unsay what he had said. To break a promise or repudiate a debt was all the same to Henry, for to his own mind at any rate he was always in the right. And this was the more unfortunate because, on the one principle of which he was most stubbornly convinced, he was supremely in the wrong. He, the ruler of England, distrusted Englishmen. One of his first acts, as soon as ever he had come of age, was to quarrel with those who had England's cause most nearly at their heart. Hubert de Burgh, the hero of the sea fight, had assumed the Regency on the death of the Earl of Pembroke. Honest man as he was, the young King hated, resisted, and thwarted him, once in a fit of passion even called him traitor to his face and drawing a sword would there and then have run him through, had not those present intervened. A year or two later a trumped-up charge of maladministration was brought against de Burgh ; he was condemned, haled off, with his feet tied under the belly of his horse, and taken to London, there to be put in chains. Such treatment of their Chancellor was an insult to the nation, and the nation's true voice spoke out in the saying of a blacksmith charged with the fettering of his feet : " No hands of mine shall touch the man who beat back the French from England ".

But Henry's folly did not end with his hatred of the English. He had a ludicrous infatuation for the foreigner. He gathered to himself favourites from every part of Europe, and ousted Englishmen from office to make way for them. He married a princess from Provence in Southern France, and welcomed the members of her family along with her. Her uncles were his special friends; one he made an earl, a second Bishop of Hereford, a third Archbishop of Canterbury itself. These fellows soon found fat posts for their undeserving kinsmen, so that England was soon full of the Queen's uncles' poor relations. Trying as all this was, it might still have been endured had not the King's odd preferences run to alien priests. But, as ill luck would have it, Henry was the victim of a crazy superstition. He performed every duty which a superficial piety demanded. He loaded Becket's shrine with rich embellishments. Above all he stood in terror of the Pope, and would do anything to please him. At the Holy Father's wish he opened the door to a host of Italian clerics. Rich benefices were found in the English Church for many who never so much as set a foot in England. Those who did were none too well received. The people's patience was nearly at an end, and anti-alien riots actually broke out. In one instance the visit of a Roman Cardinal to Oxford resulted in an ugly brawl. The Cardinal's cook insulted a poor Oxford scholar by throwing in his face "some boiling water drawn from the cauldron where the fat meat was being cooked". At this injury to the poor man, one of the clerks drew a bow, and by an arrow discharged therefrom pierced the body of the cook. On the fall of the dead man, a cry was raised, "hearing which the legate was astounded, and struck with fear, which may overtake even the boldest man, he betook himself up the tower of the church, clad in his canonical hood, and secured the doors behind him". When darkness put an end to the tumult, he doffed his canonical dress and "quickly mounted his best horse" and made

off to the King. The King was all sympathy; he had the rioters clapped into prison; and, when the Cardinal left England, he departed in high favour, taking along with him, as England's offering to the Pope, large quantities of valuable Church plate.

Such gross misgovernment went on for some thirty years. But England, as this and other more serious episodes revealed, was slowly ripening for revolt. It remained to find a leader, and the need brought forth a man. Simon, surnamed de Montfort, and in his father's right the Earl of Leicester, was oddly enough by birth a Frenchman. He had even been a friend of Henry and had taken the King's sister as his wife. But by and by, as Henry's follies grew, the two had drifted apart, and in Simon's mind the determination formed to take up the national cause against the King. In this course he was encouraged by close and lasting friendship with the greatest Churchman in the land, Grosseteste, the Bishop of Lincoln. Grosseteste hated the King's subservience to the Pope, and openly withstood the inroads made in England by the Pope's Italian friends. He saw, too, with a great and wise man's sympathy, the helpless and wronged condition of the English folk. With these ideas he inspired his friend the Earl. De Montfort was an austere and deeply religious man. He had been to Palestine on a Crusade. He had read and studied much, and he had learnt the art of government as Seneschal of Aquitaine. And now, while the other barons were bent on serving their own selfish ends, and thought merely to restrain the King from misconduct towards themselves, Simon was setting his eyes upon a very different goal. He felt himself a man with a mission. "England for the Englishman" was to be his motto; and to his mind the Englishman meant every rank and station, nobility and commoners, lord and peasant, rich and poor, nor had he long to wait for his opportunity.

The crisis which first drove the barons into action and brought Simon to the fore was a crowning proof of

Henry's miserable subservience to the Pope. He had already allowed enormous sums to be wrung from the unwilling English Church for the benefit of Rome; now he proposed to tax the laity as well for the furtherance of a papal project with which England was about as much concerned as the man in the moon. The affair arose in this wise. The Island of Sicily was then, as it so happened, in the hands of a German Emperor whom the Pope regarded as his enemy and whom he was therefore most anxious to expel from such close proximity to Rome. But outside help was needed, and Henry had accordingly been asked to provide an army for the purpose and to subscribe as well the enormous sum of £90,000. Will it be believed that the foolish King, without consulting anyone, agreed? This was too much for the barons, out of whose pockets the subsidy was bound to come. They at once threw down the glove and declared that on one condition and one condition only would they consent to pay a penny. Henry must dismiss at once his alien ministers, and surrender the entire control of the administration to a committee of picked barons. Henry took fright and yielded to the storm. A great council was summoned to Oxford. There the King agreed to the so-called Provisions, and fifteen leading men were forthwith appointed to govern and reform the Realm. Among them was Earl Simon. This was his first step to power.

It was little likely that the Fifteen would be agreed over the problems which confronted them, and it was soon apparent that Simon did not see eye to eye with his colleagues. The other barons, it appeared, were anxious enough to reform the King; they had not the least desire, however, to reform themselves. Do what he might to get the grievances of the lower orders considered, Simon found that the barons were still purely selfish, still as unwilling as ever to do anything for their own unhappy tenants. Their aim, in short, was simply to substitute a tyranny of Fifteen for the tyranny of one;

and their attitude filled de Montfort with so much disgust that he quarrelled with them and left the country for a while. Events soon called him back, however. The King's submission had been no more than a temporary expedient. The royal party (for the King had followers too) were up in arms, and the Earl was perhaps not sorry to plunge into a struggle which, if successful, might enable him to deal with England as he wished to deal. There is little doubt that Simon was ambitious, though ambitious in a noble cause. He meant to set things right; and, in accomplishing his ends, he did not shrink, as we shall see, from taking the supreme power into his hands and making himself the virtual king of England. He was about to take the next and the most momentous step towards his goal.

For now, yet once again, the country became involved in civil war. The promises which Henry gave at Oxford had been torn up. The King, as usual, had gone back upon his word; the Pope, also as usual, had obligingly released him from his oath; and Louis of France, called in to arbitrate between the parties, had given his judgment for the King. Simon saw before him no other course but an appeal to arms. But now, to his infinite disgust, he discovered that the barons were deserting him. Except for a few enthusiasts he stood almost alone. Yet he did not despair. "Though all forsake me," he declared, "I and my four sons will stand for the just cause;" and his courage was rewarded. The just cause found other supporters than the baronage. The towns, where, as we have seen, the spirit of English independence was most strong, were ready now to follow this champion of their liberties. London was with the Earl and he fixed his headquarters there. All the chief commercial centres, especially the seaport towns of Kent and Sussex, rallied to London's lead. Simon was assured of an army, and of an army, as it turned out, sufficient to defeat the King.

While the Earl's army was gathering, the King, after

an excursion into the Midlands, marched on the south coast, aiming at the seaport towns. There Simon followed him. It was on the slopes of the South Downs above Lewes Castle that the fight took place. Simon caught the King's force napping as one morning he descended towards the town over the open turf. His generalship was of no mean order, and, although the raw levies of the Londoners fared badly, Simon's horsemen on the other wing drove back the royalist knights into the marshes of the Ouse. Here they floundered in the mud; many were drowned, the rest dispersed in flight. The Earl's triumph was complete, and among the prisoners taken were the King himself and his eldest son, Edward, Prince of Wales.

The victor seemed, for the time being at least, to have England at his feet. For one year Simon was King in all but name. For one year he was able to issue orders with all the authority which the possession of his royal captive's person lent him. For one year (and one year was all too brief) he endeavoured to carry into practice his schemes of reform for the betterment of England. By an agreement made at Lewes a new royal council or committee was to be appointed, of which all members were to be true-born Englishmen. Ministers were in future to be responsible to this council, and not to the King alone. For Simon, ahead as usual of the age in which he lived, seems to have formed the bold conception of a monarchy limited by constitutional government. Above all, the Commons, as well as the nobility, were to be represented in the Great Council of the Realm, which now already was beginning to be called by the name of Parliament. Four men from every shire and two burgesses from every borough were to join the barons at the board. Thus both townsfolk and country-folk were at least to have their spokesmen, and through the mouths of these the Commons might air their grievances. In other and quieter times the scheme might well have worked, and Simon's dreams been fully realised, But

those dreams were doomed to disappointment; and almost before his Parliament had met his short year of power was drawing to a close.

The country was in a turmoil. Many barons, as we have seen, had turned against the Earl; many had stayed at home, and now even among his immediate following the more conservative, doubting the wisdom of reducing the King's power to a mere shadow, began to falter. Fresh desertions took place, and amongst others the powerful Earl of Gloucester went over to the royalist cause. Then a great misfortune happened: the more dangerous of the Earl's two prisoners, the Prince of Wales, effected his escape. He was out riding with his guards; his friends were lying in wait. At a pre-arranged signal he set his horse at a gallop, threw off pursuit, and joined them. Once free, he joined hands with the Earl of Gloucester, rallied his supporters, and the civil war began afresh.

Simon was on the Welsh side of the Severn at the moment of the Prince's escape, and most unwisely he lingered there so long that the Prince and Gloucester had time to seize the river crossings and pin him, as it were, behind that line. Simon moved first to Newport, but there was no escape that way. Then he marched north to Worcester, but found the ford already held by the Prince, and himself cut off from the Midlands and his friends. His case seemed hopeless, but at this juncture an unexpected chance was given him. It so happened that his son Simon was at Kenilworth, the family seat of the de Montforts. The force with him was small, and its smallness tempted Prince Edward to make a rash diversion against Kenilworth, leaving the river-line for a short while unguarded. Young de Montfort was caught napping and most of his men slain. But meanwhile, quick as the Prince had been on his marching out to Kenilworth and back to Worcester, the Earl himself had been quicker. He had dropped down the Severn to a few miles below Worcester and had slipped across by

Kempsey Ford. The worst of his peril seemed over, and, confident of his escape, he rested that night at Evesham. Little did he dream that even then his enemies were gathering to his encirclement. During the night Mortimer's army was moving from the west, from the north-west Gloucester, and from the north Prince



Edward himself. The Earl, had he only known it, was caught in a trap.

Next morning he rose early and heard mass. As his men got to horse a report came in that troops were approaching by the northern road. It was believed that they were young de Montfort's men from Kenilworth—indeed, the de Montfort banner had been sighted stream-

ing in their van. The Earl went out to reconnoitre, and great was his dismay when he discovered that these troops were not his son's but the Prince Edward's, the banner a trophy brought from Kenilworth to be used as a *ruse de guerre*. Almost at the same moment the other two columns of Mortimer and Gloucester were sighted further west. The jaws of the trap were closing round him and the Earl recognised his fate. "May God have mercy on our souls," he cried, "for our bodies are Prince Edward's." But, though the issue of the fight was a foregone conclusion, there was no flinching. The Earl himself fought like a lion in the thickest of the *mêlée*. Engaged by half a dozen enemies at once he was surrounded, but even so his defence was so vigorous and his armour so impenetrable that for long he kept them at bay. At last some one found a slit in the back of his mail shirt, and thrust in a sword. The Earl fell dead. Like their leader, most of his companions went down fighting; very few outlived the day, and even the captive King himself narrowly escaped being cut down in error. "Such was the murder of Evesham, for battle it was none."

For some months after this battle a forlorn hope of Simon's followers held out at Kenilworth and elsewhere, but the cause of the King had triumphed, and the cause of the Earl failed—or so it seemed. Yet the work which Simon had begun survived his fall. The ideals for which he had lived and died were re-born—where least might have been expected—in his chief enemy, the Prince of Wales. That young man, when he came presently to wear the crown, showed himself as truly English as his father had been un-English. He cared for his people's welfare as no other king before him had ever cared. And, had Simon lived on, he would have seen his own scheme of a representative assembly carried into practice by the first of constitutional kings. The Earl's brave life had not been thrown away. His stand for the rights of the common folk and his championship of the true

English cause entitle him to a high place in the country's history. In the years that followed his death they won for him the name and reputation of a martyr, and miracles were even attributed to the magic of his sainthood.

The King himself survived de Montfort seven years. His death was no loss, and the sooner he made way for a wiser man, the better. There could be little peace for the country while such a man was on the throne; and even while he lay a-dying, the citizens of London were still howling their grievances outside his palace windows. He had ruled according to his folly, and it was with a touch of ironic justice that Dante, in his description of the Souls in Purgatory, placed him among the children and half-witted. Yet out of his folly there came this much of good, that he drove Englishmen by sheer misgovernment to a defence of their own rights, and thus hastened the coming of a constitutional government under his son. Four hundred years later another monarch drove the Englishmen's descendants, by a similar ineptitude, to complete and, as it were, set a cap on the same constitutional development. It was something surely beyond a mere coincidence which ordained that in both reign and character there should exist so striking a resemblance between Henry Plantagenet and Charles Stuart.

CHAPTER XIII

THE MAKING OF PARLIAMENT AND THE UNITING OF BRITAIN

I

ON Henry's death Edward received the kingdom from his father; but his policy he took from his dead enemy the Earl. He had learnt during those years of struggle the all-important lesson that England can best be governed only by gaining the confidence of Englishmen, and throughout his long reign he endeavoured himself to practice the principles which Simon preached. His work was slow but thorough: many experiments were made, and it was not till he had been for three and twenty years upon the throne that his idea of what Parliament should be took on a permanent and settled shape. The assembly which he then summoned has come, and with good reason, to be called the Model Parliament; for not only was it the model which Edward's own successors followed, but it is the model upon which, in the main, is based the Parliament that sits at Westminster to-day.

It was in the autumn of the year 1294 that Edward laid his plans for this assembly. He was on the brink of war with Philip of France; insurrection had broken out in Wales, and the Scots were giving trouble in the north. It was essential to the maintenance of the King's armies that he should raise a substantial tax, and, true to his principle that "in what concerneth all, all should be consulted," Edward determined that a full Parliament

must meet to vote that tax. So out go the writs of summons: one to the leading men of the baronial class, another to the bishop of each diocese, enjoining him, "by the faith and love which bind him to the crown, to be present at Westminster in person on the Sunday after Martinmas this coming winter," and further to bring with him delegates chosen from his cathedral chapter and from the lesser clergy of his see. A third writ (in our eyes, though perhaps not in Edward's, the most important of them all) goes to the sheriff of each county bidding him "cause to be elected two citizens from every city, two burghers from each borough, and two knights out of the shire, discreet men and ready to take pains, and to make them to appear before the king at the aforesaid time and place".¹ This summons when it comes to the ears of the elected, comes, it must be confessed, with any but a welcome sound. Everybody knows that, if the King calls Parliament, it can only mean one thing: it is money he is after, not advice; and, as nobody likes paying taxes, however politely or constitutionally asked, nobody is anxious either to go to Westminster and vote them. Members would gladly have shirked the tiresome duty, if they could; and it is even recorded that once the pair selected out of Oxfordshire were so aghast at the responsibility thus thrust upon them that they actually decamped and were never seen again.

Edward's royal palace named in the writ is conveniently placed, near the walls of London city, but not inside of them.² It stands upon Thames banks hard by the great Abbey of Westminster, and on the very site where five centuries later the Houses of Parliament were one day to be built. It is, therefore, upon historic ground that the Model Parliament collects this Sunday after

¹ A king could summon Parliament where he liked, and it was often held elsewhere than at Westminster.

² The "City" then corresponded roughly to the area of London which still goes by that name. Of the old Westminster Palace itself nothing now remains except the great Hall (rebuilt by Richard II in 1397) which is an adjunct of the present House of Parliament built in 1840.

Martinmas in the year of grace 1295. Bishops and Clergy, Lords and Commons, they are a large and motley throng; but the Hall of the Palace is spacious enough to accommodate all of them; and each of the three estates has its allotted station in the Hall. Judges sit on four woolsacks, ranged in a ring before the throne. To the right and left are benches. On the benches to the left sit the nobility, men of high-born families with resounding names, splendid in all the pride of heraldic quarterings and military accoutrements. On the benches to the right sit the spiritual peers, archbishops, bishops, priors and abbots, in the long sweeping robes of their office, brilliant with gems and delicate embroideries. Beyond these groups, and filling the further body of the Hall, are the Commons' representatives, members from city, shire, and borough, together with the delegates of the lesser clergy: shy awkward fellows for the most part, fish out of water among such noble company. Their dress is homely, and their names are as homely as their dress; yet names such as Roger the Draper, Andrew the Piper, John the Taverner, Durant the Cordwainer, Citizen Richard, and William the priest's son have at least a true English ring about them; but, as a mark of reverence, befitting their low degree, the Commons stand, while the Peers and the Sovereign sit.

The proceedings of the Parliament are formal. The King addresses the gathering in Norman-French, explains his policy, dwells on the dangerous ambitions of the king of France, states his financial needs. The Chancellor follows with some pompous legal Latin; and it then remains for the members to consider what answer they shall give. Now, instead of voting money in one general grant, it is a point of privilege with the three estates of Clergy, Lords and Commons, that each should have the right of fixing its own taxation independently. At this point, therefore, Parliament splits up into three groups for separate consultation. The Lords are accommodated in some other chamber of the Palace. The Commons,

who are not so privileged, must either make what shift they can in the general hall or may be they will repair (as in a few years' time they quite certainly do) to the neighbouring Abbey of Westminster, where, by the courtesy of the monks, they are allowed the use of the Refectory or Chapter House for their deliberations. It means much to the Commons that in those early days of stress and insecurity they can find a safe shelter behind these friendly walls. In what place the clergy meet concerns us less. For a very few years will see them meeting no more at Westminster, but cutting themselves altogether adrift from the rest of Parliament. The Bishops and Abbots, it is true, continue to sit among the Peers, even dominating that assembly, and until the Reformation outnumbering the lay barons; but the main body of the clergy's delegates prefer to shift their rendezvous to Canterbury and York, where they hold what they call their Convocation in separate privacy. This is undoubtedly their loss. Convocation is not Parliament. Problems of Church policy and Church government may be discussed conveniently enough at Canterbury and York (where they are still discussed by "Convocation" even to the present day); but, with this severance of the clergy from the rest of Parliament, all share in national policy and national government ceases to be theirs. These are left henceforward to the Commons and the Lords; and thus almost from the start the power which is first to challenge, and finally to supersede the authority of the Crown, is representative not of all three Estates, but of two alone.

In 1295, however, the year of which we are now speaking, the clergy were still there, and they returned with the rest to the Palace Hall when private consultations were completed, and each estate had separately resolved what answer should be given to the King. In the name of the class for which they stood, each proceeded now to authorise the raising of a tax. The Commons offered one-seventh of their income, and the Lords one-eleventh:

with the clergy's offer of one-tenth, Edward was disappointed. But, though he had hoped for more, yet he had no small ground for satisfaction with his Model Parliament. As a machine for voting taxes it had been distinctly a success. That he was presently to find it something more than a machine, and something which would upset his easy calculations, is not for ourselves so difficult to see.

For soon enough it was discovered that even at Westminster the tables might be turned against the King, and that Parliament might one day ask as well as give. Nothing, in fact, was simpler than to drive a bargain with His Majesty; or to make consideration of their wrongs and grievances a preliminary condition of their vote. Redress first, and taxes afterwards became the frequent cry and the normal method of Parliament's procedure. And, if the king refused to do what Parliament required of him, then the money he required of them was not forthcoming. Thus, when two years after the meeting of the Model Parliament, Edward was asking for funds again, he was firmly and politely told to renew all charter promises of previous kings; and, sure enough, he did as he was told. Again, in 1301, there came the opportunity for an even bolder claim. The Scottish war was going none to well; money was wanted to continue the campaign; and in due course Edward called a Parliament at Lincoln. No sooner was it met, than a certain Henry of Keighley, shire-knight for Lancashire, demanded an alteration in the Forest laws. We may guess that he was acting as spokesman or "Speaker"¹ of the Commons; and certainly he had an excellent case. The royal pleasure parks, so unpopular in Rufus' reign, were still unpopular. The foresters or gamekeepers were the petty tyrants of the country-side; the peasants were at their

¹ The "Speaker," now of course simply the "Chairman" of the House of Commons, seems originally to have been in a true sense the "speaker" or the mouthpiece; the other members not being worthy to address the King directly.

mercy; the barons were plagued with manifold restrictions and resented the encroachments on their own estates. All classes were agreed against the nuisance; but, though the King had often promised an inquiry, nothing had been done. When, therefore, the bold demand was made that, not merely should the rigour of the game-laws be abated, but part of the royal forest land should be abandoned by the Crown, it received a vigorous backing. Stormy scenes ensued. Edward was furious, and Henry of Keighley was thrown into prison for his pains. None the less, Parliament stuck to its guns, and, after ten days of argument, Edward was forced to yield. He undertook, upon his royal honour, to revise the Forest laws. Then, but not till then, did he get the vote of money that he asked. The importance of this deal is obvious. Parliament was no longer a mere machine for voting the King taxes: it had become an instrument for extracting necessary reforms and of getting new laws made. /

But even with such a triumph Parliament was not content: once having tasted power, it very naturally reached out for more, and eventually aspired to making new laws. This step was not taken, in point of fact, under Edward I, but within a century the change had come, and we shall find Parliament no longer approaching the throne with a mere tale of grievances and a humble petition for redress, nor satisfied to leave the further task of legislation with the King. Instead of that they undertook themselves to decide what measures should be taken. They frame in full particulars a document which they are pleased to call a Bill. That Bill, when the summons comes and a request is made for taxes, they then present for the royal consideration. It remains for the King to signify approval, and, when once the usher of the House has pronounced the magic words, "Le Roy le veult," that Bill becomes an Act with the full authority of law. No more far-reaching step can be imagined; and it is plain that Parliament is well upon the way to becoming

the real power behind the throne. Our English institutions change but slowly, and the methods devised under the Plantagenets still stand to-day. Before a new law can now be made, our Government still drafts its Bill, still sends it when approved by Parliament for His Majesty's assent, and still the assent is given by the same old-fashioned formula in Norman-French, "Le Roy le veult"—His Majesty is so resolved. "Between the two voices six centuries lie."¹

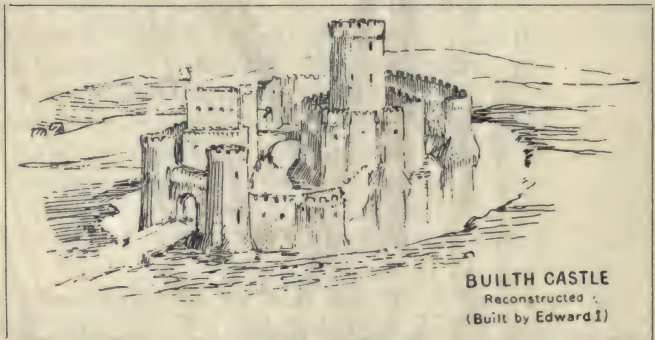
II

If Edward had done nothing more than launch our parliamentary institutions on their course, he would yet rank among the greatest of English kings. But this was only one among his many services. The man who thus in a single council had united all classes of his realm, held also in his brain the scheme for a larger union, whereby the divided countries of England, Wales, and Scotland might be merged and welded under his single crown. It was Edward's dream to be the founder of "Great Britain," and, though he did not in all respects succeed, it was not for want of trying.

The tribes of the Welsh hills were descendants of those ancient British fugitives who in far-off days had taken refuge there before the invading Saxon hordes. There among the mountains their Roman culture had been largely lost; and they were now, and had been for centuries, a rough wild folk, accustomed (as one writer of the period tell us) "to bere fewe clothes in wynter, thoughe winde blawe ryghte coldely; and to slepe despisinge shetes; withowte hoodes, coates, or tabards, bare on the legges; fightinge with short speres," and skilful (we may add) with the long bow; using "woodes as towres, and marshes for places of defence"; musical then as always, ready to welcome the minstrel harpist

¹ If the King intends to withhold his royal assent (which nowadays he never in practice does), "Le Roy s'avisera" is then the formula employed.

at their feasts ; ignorant and superstitious, telling strange tales of witches who could turn themselves at will into the shape of hares. Chieftains of the old-fashioned sort ruled over these tribes ; but the Marcher earls established on the Severn border by the Conqueror had long since overrun their country to the south ; and only in the north-west among the mountain valleys of Merioneth and Carnarvon did the Welsh chiefs retain a semblance of their one-time independence. The last of these, Llewellyn by name, had for some time been a thorn in Edward's side. He had taken a share in the de Montfort rising, and now he even planned a marriage with the



dead earl's daughter. Edward, dreaming of conquest, was not slow to avail himself of this excuse for war. He hunted Llewellyn into the hill country of Snowdon, then brought up a fleet of ships to blockade the seaboard, and starved the Welshmen out.

But Edward was not content with victory alone ; he intended to hold the conquered people down, and this in two different ways. First he built castles at important points, such as Conway and Carnarvon and elsewhere ; very formidable strongholds they were too, for the builder's art had progressed much since Richard's day, and not even the Château Gaillard itself was so scientifically planned as those "Edwardian" castles. Broad

moats surrounded them; the outer walls were flanked by massive corner towers, circular in shape, and thus offering no vulnerable angle to battering-ram or sapper's pick. Such towers, moreover, projecting outward from the walls, enabled the defenders to enfilade the party of attack; and, even should these main defences anywhere be breached, there still remained two other wards, concentrically contained, ring within ring, the inner not to be approached till the outer had been carried. The very presence of such castles was enough to cow the Welsh; to capture them was utterly beyond their power.

Edward's other measure had less success. In order to daunt the high spirit of these mountaineers, he ordered the establishment of English law in Wales. It was an ill-judged policy, typical of Edward's somewhat harsh, unsympathetic temper; and there is little wonder that the tribesmen soon rebelled. Llewellyn and his brother David took up arms. Of course, they failed. Llewellyn was killed in battle and his head, severed from the body, was sent to decorate the battlements of London Tower. David, his brother, was taken prisoner; and, since there was no mercy now for those who took arms against the King, he was duly hung, drawn, and quartered as a traitor, and the different parts of his body were distributed among the more important cities of the realm.

With that the Welshmen's independence disappeared for ever. They lost little of their spirit and none of their hatred for English ways and English speech, clinging (as they still do in some parts) to their own Celtic tongue. But they were under the conqueror's heel: Edward could use them as he would. Yet, wishing if possible to win their loyalty, he made at least a show of appealing to their native pride. He offered them a prince, a member of the royal house who (so he said—it is the one grim joke recorded of him) "could speak or understand no word of English". It was his infant first-born son who thus became the head of that long line

of royal heirs who have borne through six centuries the honourable title of "Prince of Wales". In what light the Welsh themselves regarded the honour is not so clear; but meanwhile King Edward had other fish to fry, for he was already at war with the Scots.

III

Few peoples have had a more chequered or romantic history than the Scots. Little as we know of the dark and early years when the nation was coming to its birth, we know that they were years of ceaseless struggle. First, the Scottish pirates, crossing from the Irish coast, had gained a footing on the west, fought, made friends, and finally (in Alfred's time) united with the Pictish tribes who were already in possession. In this way there was formed a purely Celtic kingdom in the Highlands of the north, but no sooner was it formed than quarrels began with its lowland neighbours across the Firth of Forth. Of these, the Strathclyde Britons soon went under; but the eastern coast, held by a stouter stock of Angle and Danish settlers, was less quickly won. For over a century they were claimed as subjects of the Saxon throne, but at last, in the reign of Edgar, this claim had been abandoned, and the Lowlands definitely passed into the hands of the Scottish king. The result was strange, for the Lowlanders were not absorbed into the Celtic race. On the contrary, their Saxon language spread, and, except in the Western Highlands (where the Gaelic speech even now still lingers on), it eventually prevailed. Eventually, too, the Anglo-Saxon element, aided by Norman settlers, got the better of the Highland Celts. David, the enemy of Stephen, half Norman baron and half Lowland king, succeeded in extending his authority over the whole country north of Tweed. Thus there arose a united Scottish kingdom, ruled by one king, feeling itself one nation, and not destined to merge its fortunes with the rival country

until the last monarch of its royal line became James the First of England.

The people, compounded of such various blood, were a vigorous and stalwart race, handsome and big in body, spare in diet, hardened by the bleak weather of their wind-swept moors, ill neighbours, lovers of the foray, and, as they since have proved on many fields, the finest fighting stock in the whole world. The spirit of the clan, which bound them by close ties to the support of their own kindred and the customs of their sires, made them in many respects the most independent and conservative of men. But the same spirit which gave them their fierce love of freedom, and which (as Edward was to learn) brooked "nyghe as well death as thraldome," sowed also among them the seed of bitter feuds and shattering disunion. Scots are nothing if not loyal. Whole-hearted devotion to their chosen leaders, whether that leader were a Bruce or a Prince Charlie, has surrounded their national history with a glamour of romance. But, loyal as they are by nature, their loyalty has too often been to clan or party when wider issues were at stake and when it was of supreme importance to unite. Scotland has always been more or less a house divided. It was this fatal weakness in its people's character which led some of them in Edward's reign to appeal for English help against their countrymen; and it was this which gave the English king the very opportunity he sought.

Edward had hoped indeed to gain his ends by other means than conquest. These were days when early marriages between royal heirs played a great part in the diplomacy of kings. A young princess from Norway had recently been offered the vacant Scottish throne, and Edward had succeeded in arranging a betrothal between this girl and his infant son, the Prince of Wales. But even the best-laid schemes, as the Scots proverb says, "gang aft agley". The passage over the sea from Norway was more than the young girl's health could stand, and no sooner had she reached her destination

than she died. But Edward's resources were not by any means exhausted: the Scottish throne now being in dispute, he offered his services in deciding between rival claims. Nine candidates came forward, and from these he selected one, John Balliol, a distant descendant of the



old royal line of Scotland. Balliol was accepted by his countrymen; he was duly crowned at Scone; but before long he had a sharp reminder that, so far from being his own master, he was Edward's nominee. Like many English kings before him, Edward claimed to be the overlord of Scotland: the circumstances of the new king's appointment made it doubly easy to uphold that claim, and Edward now deliberately encouraged Balliol's Scottish subjects to appeal against Balliol to himself. Some, as we have hinted, were only too ready to take advantage of this chance; among them the Duke of Fife. Edward interfered with equal readiness, and

summoned Balliol as a vassal-prince to answer at his court. Whether or no he was justified in this is doubtful; but it was a challenge to Scotland. Feeble creature as John Balliol was, his people's pride would not allow him thus to dance attendance on the English sovereign, and the Scotch barons impatiently declared for war. They caught Edward at an awkward moment when he was engaged in a struggle with the French. In 1295, the year of the Model Parliament, they entered upon an alliance with his enemies. Edward behaved with resolution: he cut short his campaign in France, led an army against the Scots, carried their strongholds, beat their army, deposed Balliol, and took the kingdom for himself; even the Holy Stone of Scone, reputed to be the self-same piece of rock on which Jacob's head had rested when he dreamed his dream of angels, he carried off to London as a trophy. The victory was sweeping, the collapse complete. All now seemed over, and the play played out. Yet in reality the curtain was but just about to rise upon a drama of national resistance among the most desperate and heroic in all history.

Truth to tell, Balliol was no genuine patriot leader, and the men who fought and failed with him were chiefly barons of English birth. But presently there arose a man fit to rally the true backbone of the nation, the crofters and the peasants, to the defence of the country's cause. In William Wallace Scotland found her soul; and from the bitter lesson of defeat she learnt to set a true value upon freedom. The first taste, indeed, of English tyranny had been more than enough. In 1297 Wallace gathered a band of malcontents about him, and offered battle to the English in the neighbourhood of Stirling, a town where a castle guarded the passage from the Lowlands to the north. Treating his challenge with most ill-timed contempt, the English crossed the river by a narrow bridge, and thus allowed their forces to be caught divided. They were very bloodily defeated. One of Edward's principal officials was among the

slain: his corpse was flayed, and pieces of the skin were distributed among the rebels to be used as belts. Edward was thoroughly aroused. It was war to the knife now, and, though neither Wallace nor the Scots were in any mood for drawing back, the tide of their success soon turned. A large English army, over thirty thousand¹ strong, was soon marching for the north. Wallace retired towards Stirling, burning the country as he went; the English came up with him at Falkirk, scattered his army, hunted him into the hills, and, after seven years of hue and cry, succeeded through foul play in making him their prisoner. His punishment was typical of the times. "He was led through the streets of London dragged at the tail of a horse, and dragged to a very high gallows where he was hanged by a halter, then taken down half dead, after which his body was divided into four quarters and his head fixed on a stake and set on London Bridge. His four quarters, thus divided, were sent to the four quarters of Scotland." For Scotland herself this was perhaps the darkest hour; with the loss of her leader, her last hope of liberty was threatened with extinction, and once again all chance of recovery seemed lost. It was not so. Within two years a blow was struck by the hand of a greater than Wallace, and in that blow, bloody and lawless as it was, men recognised that the free Scottish spirit still lived on.

Of the nine candidates who had sued before Edward for the Scottish throne, Balliol was now an exile; but his nephew, John Comyn, known as the Red Comyn, was acting regent for the English king. Chief of the other claimants had been a Bruce; and even now his grandson, Robert, had not by any means relinquished the family claim upon the crown. Robert Bruce loved England little, but he loved the Scottish friends of England less. He was resolved that, if liberty was at all to be regained, the Red Comyn must alter his policy

¹The numbers given by mediæval chroniclers are open to gravest suspicion of exaggeration, and may safely, as a rule, be divided by two.

or die. The two met by pre-arrangement in the Grey Friars' Chapel at Dumfries. What passed between them is not known. But, when Bruce came out from the church, he came alone. "I doubt I have slain the Red Comyn," he said to his friends. "We'll mak' sicker," answered one, and the better to "make sure" he entered the church door to dispatch the dying man. With this cruel and treacherous deed, Robert Bruce began his championship of Scotland.

Bruce did not hesitate to act: he hurried to Scone, there to be crowned King; but he began his reign as an outlaw and a fugitive. Not a moment's rest was given him: he was hunted by bloodhounds, and escaped them only by walking through a stream and so throwing his pursuers off the scent. At one time he was forced to take refuge on an island off the Irish coast; and, when he crossed again to the Scottish mainland, the English were again upon his track. But, like the spider of the legend, from whose pertinacity, as we are told, he drew a lesson for himself, Bruce struggled on; and his pluck had at the last its due reward. In 1307, while leading an army into Scotland, his chief enemy, the King of England, died. The tough old campaigner had outworn his strength. He knew it; and, feeling that his life was ebbing and wishing that the inspiration of his presence should go with the army which he could never lead to victory, Edward made a strange provision for the disposition of his corpse. He ordered that it "should be boiled in a cauldron till the flesh parted from the bones, and that then the bones should be wrapt up in a bull's hide and carried at the head of the host". Not thus, however, could a portion of the old man's spirit descend upon his son. Edward II was a feeble king and a poor fighter, and with the passing of the "Hammer of the Scots" (as men had called his father) luck turned against the English, and slowly but surely Robert Bruce came by his own.

With much secret aid from the French, the Scots

began to forge ahead, and, one by one, through exploits of marvellous daring, they won their chief strongholds back. A party of thirty scaled the rock of Edinburgh Castle, using ladders on a starless night. The men of the Black Douglas, with black cloaks over their armour, seized Roxburgh Hold while the garrison was drunk. In Stirling alone the English held out, and, when in 1314 Edward II marched northward to relieve it, Bruce moved down to meet him with a force which was now no longer insignificant. He posted it, not many miles south of the city, behind the marshy bottom of the Bannock Burn—a strong position, which he further fortified with “pottes,” shallow pits, that is, filled with sharp stakes and covered up with brushwood. In point of numbers, the Scots were indeed outmatched by three to one; but, thanks to bad handling and the narrow front, the English superiority was wasted, and when their first line, plunging in the marsh and spiked upon the stakes, succeeded in making contact with the enemy, the result was a deadlock. Fiercely as they fought, the van could not advance, but retire they would not, or give the reserves their chance. The archers could not use their bows by reason of the press, or, if they did, they ran a risk of wounding friend as well as foe. The reserves, counting nearly half the host, stood idle and helpless in the bog. In such a situation men are easily scared; and when some Scottish camp followers burst out of a wood upon their flank, waving a tartan to counterfeit a standard, shouting and blowing horns, the English mistook this crude diversion for a fresh attack. The rear faltered and fled, and before long the entire host was streaming back to England in a desperate rout. No English army ever suffered a bloodier defeat, and it set the final seal on Edward’s failure. The Scots, crossing the border “to plunder and to ravish,” put terror and despair into his heart. Peace was made. Scotland was freed, and Robert Bruce reigned at Edinburgh as her undisputed King.

In no small degree the English failure in Scotland was due to disaffection and turbulence at home. Barons would still be barons, if they got the chance; and even Edward I himself had found it difficult to curb them. Once, when having resolved to lead an expedition against France, he told them they must either go with him or hang, they had answered defiantly they would do neither, nor in point of fact did they. Where the father had failed, the son was little likely to succeed; and under that futile fop, the second Edward, the barons' self-assertion grew apace. They took the government altogether out of the King's hands and entrusted it to a council which they called the Lords Ordainers. They made a dead set at his various favourites, notably at the vain and worthless Earl, Piers Gaveston. Three times this man was exiled by the barons, and three times the fond King brought him back. On his third and final reappearance he was openly attacked, made a prisoner, and beheaded. Edward was helpless: once, indeed, he rounded on his enemies and got rid of his ambitious uncle, Thomas of Lancaster. But this show of spirit did not last, and it was not long before he himself suffered a similar fate. He was driven west in ignominious flight, caught, formally deposed, and (with the connivance of his faithless queen) informally despatched in the keep of Berkeley Castle in 1327. His death was no loss to England. He had dragged the name of the Plantagenets down into the dust. It was only redeemed by the boyish heir who now succeeded him, and who was destined to raise it once again to a high pinnacle of glory. The next thirty years were splendid with the pomp and chivalry of the third Edward's foreign wars; and, just as the coming triumphs over France were to give England a new sense of her own greatness and a new pride in the prowess of her King, so equally they were to banish (if only for a season) the mean jealousies and fruitless quarrels of his father's reign.

CHAPTER XIV

THE ENGLISH ARMY IN FRANCE

I

ACROSS the waters of the Channel, where English interests were still great and were yearly growing greater, there stood a more powerful and more worthy foe than either Scots or Welsh. France, since Philip Augustus had united her and made her a nation, had gone from strength to strength. She was now at the zenith of her fortunes, her towns and merchants prosperous, her knights the flower of chivalry, her name and influence in Europe second to none. She and England were, of course, old rivals, and there had seldom been peace between them long; but with this rapid growth of power on either hand there came a new clash of interests and ambitions; and the long-drawn tedious feud broke suddenly into a fierce decisive struggle, a struggle which was to settle the quarrel of two centuries by a century of fighting. Since Hastings the Conqueror's successors had never wholly lost their Continental heritage; and the English king had always ruled with one foot, as it were, upon French soil. The Hundred Years' War was now to determine, not whether he should maintain that footing, but whether he should win all France or lose it all.

The causes of the clash were various. Philip VI, the ruling King of France, had wide ambitions, and at more points than one he was already treading on our toes. Like most of his predecessors, he was planning to drive

us out of Aquitaine, where, despite John's loss of Normandy and the northern provinces, we still held on. Northward, too, over Flanders, Philip's power was spreading, so that its Count was already his vassal, and its towns, though more independent, were slowly being drawn into the toils. To England, Flanders meant even more than did Aquitaine itself, for the Flemings bought and wove the wool which was grown on English sheep-farms. For our traders, therefore, no less than for the citizens of Ghent and Bruges, it was vital that the ports should be kept open to our shipping and the market remain free of any interference from the King of France. Flanders then was a second point where English interests were seriously endangered. Last, and of all perhaps most galling to our pride, King Philip (in this, too, following his predecessors) had a large finger in the Scottish pie. Edward I had failed to conquer Bruce, chiefly owing to the assistance which he got from France; and now, when Bruce had died and his countrymen (badly out-fought by Edward's grandson at the battle of Halidon Hill) were forced to accept a second Balliol on the throne, it was King Philip who gave harbourage to Bruce's son and helped him to return and drive the usurper out. Here again, then, we had a long score to wipe out against the French; all the more since it was becoming evident that with this powerful foreign backing the rebellious north could never permanently be quelled and that the real key to the conquest of Scotland lay on the battlefields of France.

Thus in Aquitaine, in Flanders, and on her own Scottish border, England could not be blind to the French challenge. The gage had been thrown down; the lists were ready for the tournament of the nations; and it only needed that a champion should appear upon our side and take the challenge up. No fitter champion could have been found than in the person of the third Edward. He was young (his age was but four and twenty when in 1337 the first blows were struck in

France), and he had all the strength and recklessness of his years. He was a born fighter and commander, if not a skilful strategist; and, although there was nothing he would not sacrifice to his own selfish ambitions, no expense he would not lavish upon his personal extravagance, yet the glamour of his victories were soon to make of him the nation's hero; he was hailed as the type of chivalry and the model of what an English king should be. Edward was not one who did anything by halves; and it was like the impetuous and headstrong youth to have startled France, and no doubt England too, with a claim without precedent in history. He, the King of England, claimed also to be rightful King of France. The facts (since there was some shadow of right upon his side) were these. This Philip of whom we have been speaking, and who in 1328 had succeeded to the old King Charles IV, was not actually Charles' nearest living relative. He was only a first cousin, and the awkward point was this, that Charles' sister (his brothers, like himself, had all died heirless) had been married to the late King of England, and her son was none other than Edward III himself. A nephew's claim is stronger than a cousin's, and Edward might perhaps have become King of France had he not happened already to be King of England too. This was a fatal bar in the eyes of the French themselves, and, searching about for some argument to use against him, they raked up the ancient Salic Law, which forbade inheritance through female blood, and they denied that he could claim a single rood of France in his mother's right. But, legal or illegal, Edward was resolved, when strong enough, to push this claim of his by force of arms. In 1346 he was ready, and, boldly quartering his royal arms with the white lilies of France, he landed on the Norman coast with an army some thirty thousand strong.

No army ever won more stirring victory or brought more credit to this country than did Edward's host. Its feats were so brilliant and the part it played in history

so momentous, that, before relating what it did, we may well pause to consider how it was raised, equipped, and trained.

In part at least this army of Edward's may be said to have been a "conscript" army. Men were called to the colours town by town and shire by shire; their names taken from the roll of citizens. But the Commissioners of Array (as the recruiting officers were called) were able to select the best and fittest, and many of the chosen were doubtless glad enough to go for soldiers. Besides the prospect of travel and adventure, good pay was offered them,¹ 3d. a day for archers, which was the equivalent of an ordinary labourer's wage, 6d. a day for horse archers, which was as much as even a skilled workman got. Some, who did not hanker for the delights of battle, paid substitutes to take their place: the rest of the money was found out of the taxes voted to the King. Along with these honest English yokels, Tom, Dick and Harry from the farmyard and the workshop, was a large admixture of volunteers or hired professional soldiers. Contingents of these were raised by individual barons or free-lance captains under contract with the King, who paid them so much money down for the force they brought into the field. More and more, as the campaigns dragged on, Edward relied on this method of recruiting, and in the later stages of the war, these Free Companies of mercenary soldiers became something of a problem, hiring out their services as best might suit them, and making the war an opportunity for plunder and rapine. Last, we must not forget the nobility itself, princes, barons, even bishops of the Church, knights, all of them fighting in full mail, who in time past had been the decisive factor in every battlefield, and who were still in a sense the core of every army. Yet, for all their prowess and importance, the days were gone when this aristocracy did the whole business of fighting the King's

¹ But not always received.

battles, leaving the humbler folk to tend the sheep and speed the plough at home. Edward's army was no mere retinue of feudal lordlings, trained in the pomp and etiquette of chivalry. It was a national host: each hamlet and each borough contributed its men. Archery practice upon village greens did more than any tournament to pave its way towards victory; and the credit and pride of its success sent a thrill through the whole nation, such as never previously had been felt when a Richard or a Henry was winning his personal triumphs with a lordly company of earls and barons at his back.

Concerning the armour and weapons of these men, it is worth while here to say a word, if for no other reason, because the opening of the Hundred Years' War witnessed a new development of great importance. Since Hastings, armour, like tactics, had changed but little, and for nearly three centuries every knight had ridden into battle clad in complete mail, whether fashioned of interwoven links or of small metal discs strung close together.¹ His equipment was as follows: body shirt and breeches, both of mail, with a mail cap or coif for head and neck; knee-caps and elbow pieces of stiff leather, boiled and moulded into shape; under the mail thick padded garments to break the blow, which else might have dealt grievous bruises through the yielding surface of the mail; and over all a linen surcoat reaching below the knee, and first, perhaps, adopted in the Holy Land to keep the sun's rays off the metal. The knight carried a large sword and a small shield, but he was first and foremost a lancer, and the tilting match was not merely a pastime but an exercise for battle. In the field or at the lists he wore over his head a cumbrous metal helm, either tapered to a peak or (in later years) flat-topped like an inverted jar. This

¹ This type, known as banded mail, is often shown on monumental brasses of the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. The discs, strung on a narrow string of leather, seem to have lain flat side by side, each overlapping the disc next it. Probably these strings of discs were sewn lightly on to some leather garment underneath. In early Norman times, too, a species of scaled armour seems to have been worn.

so far enveloped his head that he could view the battle



Time of De Montfort, showing Mail Shirt and Hose: and Leather Knee-caps, with Surcoat of Linen: Shield: and Helm behind head, attached to waist by chain.

Time of Black Prince, showing Mail Neck-piece: Mail Shirt under Plate Cuirass and Leather Jupon with Plate covering to Arms and Legs: Dagger for dispatch of foe.

Time of Henry V, showing complete Plate armour: often (as here) with Mail Shirt beneath: but no over-garment: Crested Helm henceforward used in Tilting only, not in Battle.

From Ashdown's *British and Foreign Arms and Armour* (T. C. & E. C. Jack).

only through a narrow slit in front, and was thus greatly at the mercy of attacks from flank or rear. On the helm

he wore a crest or emblem, much needed in actual battle to distinguish knight from knight and friend from foe.

Such was the military equipment of the knights who fought in the Crusades and in the civil wars of Henry III. With the first half of the fourteenth century, however, a change crept in. As the armourer's craft progressed, it became possible to forge metal plates, which, without adding intolerably to the armour's weight, replaced the knee-joints and elbow-caps of moulded leather. From this beginning plate armour was gradually introduced, until, by the middle of the century, at the height of the French War, it became the chief covering of the knight. His legs and arms were entirely encased in plate; under a close-fitting shirt or "jupon" he wore a steel cuirass; and only round the neck, the groin, and the arm-pits, where plate could not easily be adapted to the quick movement of the limbs, was any mail displayed. Within another hundred years it had dropped out altogether from the knight's equipment, and he rode to battle encased from head to foot in complete plate, cleverly jointed, and its curving contours so ingeniously contrived that a blow of lance or arrow would glance off and nowhere find a purchase.

It is an axiom of warfare that the defence follows and adapts itself to improved weapons of offence; and to this rule the introduction of plate armour was no exception. It came in as an answer, and a necessary answer, to the bow; for, as is obvious enough, the arrow, which might pierce or penetrate between the links of a mail suit, would glance off harmless from the smooth surface of the plate, and the importance of wearing this more adequate protection naturally increased as Archery became more deadly. Bows were of three types: first, there was the Short-bow, used at Hastings, and both before as after; a weapon not more than 4 feet long, its string drawn to the breast and discharging an arrow to no considerable range. Second was the Arbalest, or Cross-bow, the string of which was drawn back into position by a small winch

attached to the haft of the centre piece. The cross-bow discharged a short bolt about 18 inches long to a distance of 200 yards, but its great drawback was the length of time required for winding up the gear, and the rate of discharge was of necessity comparatively slow. Yet on the Continent, as we shall see, the cross-bow was still the fashionable arm. The Long-bow, which eventually out-fought it, was a purely English weapon, or, rather, there is good reason to suppose that it was borrowed by us from the Welshmen in the course of the border wars. It was made of elm, ash or hazel, and was about the height of a man from tip to tip. Its string was drawn to the ear, not to the breast. Its shaft, plumed with feathers, measured a yard. Its range was anything up to 300 paces, and, since good marksmanship had been deliberately fostered by long practice on the village butts, the accuracy of fire was nothing short of marvellous. It would pierce armour and kill at 200 yards, and the normal rate of discharge was as much as twelve shots a minute. This extraordinary weapon was, as we have said, at the time confined to England: the scientific use of it had been developed during the Scottish wars, and along with its employment a new method of tactics had been evolved, which was to play a decisive part in the coming French campaign.

We are, in fact, arriving at a new chapter in the art of war. Hastings (as was said at the time) marked the beginning of an epoch, establishing the supremacy of horsemen over foot. That tradition had held the field for two centuries and more: it was the tradition upon which the Crusades were fought and the English Civil Wars: at Lewes and at Evesham, Simon on the one part, and Prince Edward on the other, had led mounted knights. It was this tradition which still held vogue upon the Continent. There at least the feudal knight was everything. Almost of necessity a rich or noble man himself, or in the employment of such, he regarded warfare as the special privilege of his class, an opportunity for the display of his

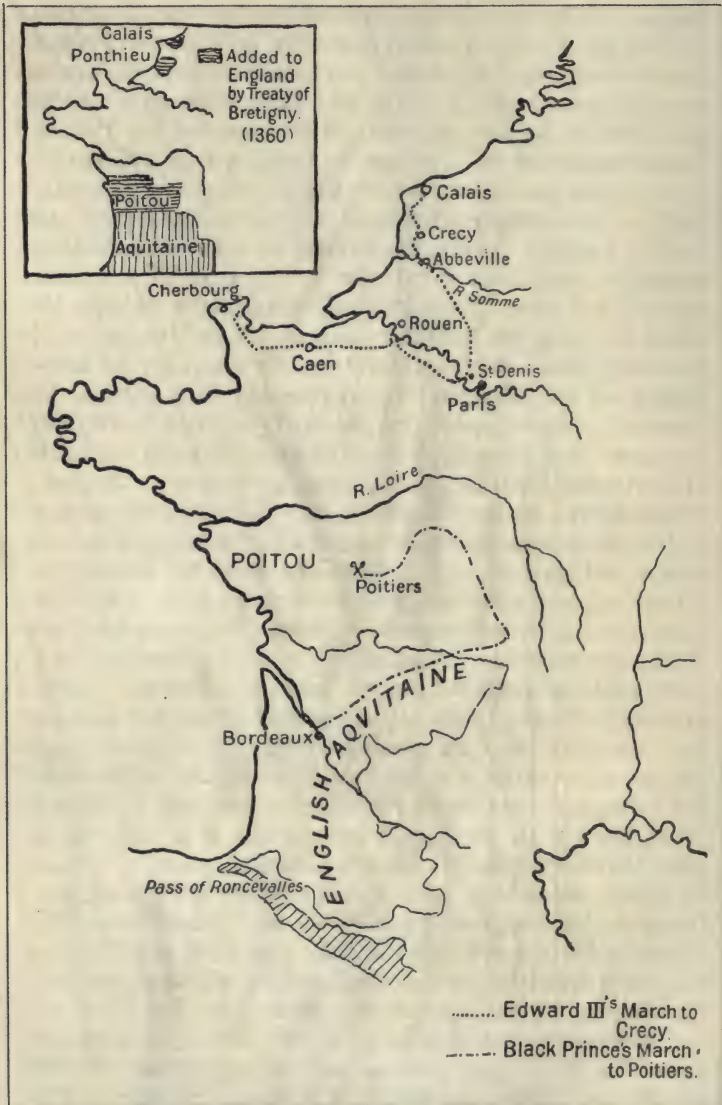
own peculiar prowess. Chivalry no doubt produced brave men, but it was more often than not a hindrance to good tactics. French knights, too, often dashed about the battle-field in quest of a worthy foe to meet their lance and swell the honour of their arms, but taking little heed of the larger movements of the battle, or of the part assigned to the more humble foot-soldier and archer, whom they, as great lords, despised. Very differently had English knights now learned the art of war. They fought as members of an organised united host. They co-operated with the archers, who were thrown forward on front or flank and allowed to prepare the way like the guns in modern war. Above all, they had learnt the all-important lesson that, with this co-operation of long-range bow-fire, dismounted knights were more valuable than knights on horseback. Sudden ground, a well-directed missile, or any of a dozen such accidents lay in wait for the man who depended wholly upon his extremely vulnerable mount. The English knight, therefore, preferred to send his charger to the rear and trust his legs. For a defensive fight at least, there is no doubt that he was right. Halidon Hill (and it was not alone) had proved as much. The verdict of Hastings had in short been utterly reversed, and the Frenchmen did not know it. They still had unbounded faith in the invincibility of their horsemanship. They counted Englishmen (as Petrarch says) "the most timid of barbarians," and little did they guess what a rude surprise for them Edward III had now in store.

II

The campaign of 1346, which Edward led in person, was not in point of fact the first of the War. There had been border fighting in Aquitaine; Edward himself had fought a battle in Flanders seven years before; and off Sluys the English fleet had won a notable victory at sea. Nevertheless, it was with the landing of Edward at La Hogue on 22nd July, 1346, that the real business at last

began. Why the King chose to disembark his troops on hostile soil (for Normandy, of course, had been in French hands since John) is not too clear to us ; perhaps it was not so very clear to him. He might have been expected to go direct to Aquitaine, where at the moment the French were pressing hard. Perhaps he thought that a diversion in the north would best relieve this pressure on the south. Perhaps he already meditated a sudden dash on Paris itself. Perhaps, finally, the adverse winds determined his somewhat impatient mind ; for in any case Edward was more of a fighter than a general. He had a reckless instinct for doing the bold thing, irrespective of the accepted rules of strategy, and certainly in this campaign he committed all the blunders it was possible for a general to commit. Once landed, he made no sign of haste, but wandered in a leisurely, aimless manner through the fields of Normandy, harrying and burning as he went. Arrived before Rouen, he found the bridges broken and the passage of the Seine impracticable. Instead of settling down to secure and garrison what towns he held, he now determined to plunge yet deeper into France, and, as though to render all retreat impossible, he actually sent his fleet of transports home. Then at last he set his face definitely eastwards and marched for the capital of France. Such dilatory tactics had naturally allowed the French to muster their reserves, and an immense army of 100,000 men was encamped at St. Denis awaiting his arrival. Edward's force was quite inadequate to offer battle ; and he turned (once more with what rash speculation it is difficult to guess) towards Flanders and the Channel coast. Perhaps he hoped something from the Flemings who were just rising in his support ; perhaps he had some notion of effecting his retreat safely by the Channel ports. The real truth was that he was heading direct into a trap and courting by his audacity an irretrievable disaster.

The French host was close upon his rear, and almost ahead of him upon his eastern flank, when Edward struck the lower reaches of the river Somme. He



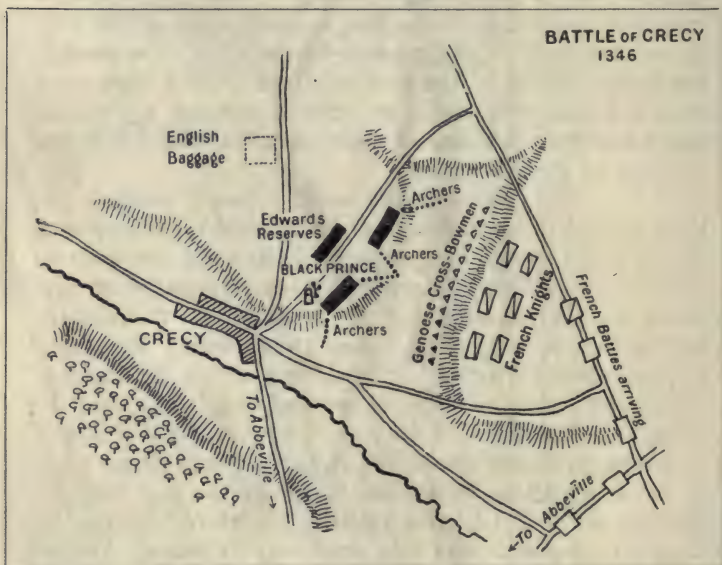
MAP TO ILLUSTRATE THE FIRST PART OF THE HUNDRED YEARS' WAR.

counted on crossing near Abbeville and making his way northward up the coast ; but what was his dismay when he discovered that the local French militia was before him. The bridges were broken ; the fords strongly held. There was no passage for him to the north. The sea was on his left. The main French host in overpowering numbers was closing in behind and on his right. Nothing, it seemed, could save him, when as by a miracle fortune offered him a desperate chance. Near the Somme mouth Edward learnt of a ford passable only at low tide. It was but lightly held, as it so happened, and he pushed his troops across in the nick of time. Once they were over, the tide rose, and the French coming up behind stood impotent, baulked of their prey like Pharaoh at the crossing of the Red Sea.

During that day and the next, Edward pushed on ; then, with that fine audacity which marked his movements through the whole campaign, he halted his troops near the village of Crecy, faced about, and prepared to give battle to his pursuers. Next morning he dismounted his knights, sending their horses to the rear, and formed of them three "battles," or divisions, which he disposed as follows. At the head of a sloping hill-side near the village he posted two—the right under the young Prince of Wales, to history better known as the Black Prince ; and he set a projecting wedge of archers in the gap between the two as well as on the flanks. The third "battle" he kept in reserve under his personal command, himself mounting a neighbouring windmill to get better observation of the field. It was the morning of 26th August.

At the very hour when the English were taking their stations at Crecy, the French host, ignorant of their whereabouts and careless in the excitement of pursuit, was streaming up the northward road from the crossings of the Somme. Towards evening, as the bell of Crecy church tolled vespers, the vanguard sighted the English host quietly expecting them upon its hill. The foremost French knights, hot in their enthusiasm, barely drew

rein; even had they been willing to retire, the pressure of their companions hurrying up the roads behind them made it impossible. Their King's order for a halt was never heard or never heeded, and they were committed to a battle almost before they knew it, without scarcely pause for preparation or thought for tactical alignment. They outnumbered the English by perhaps three to one, and with proper handling the day indeed must have been



theirs. Yet they fought as a rabble, and the battle was no sooner joined than it was lost.

Nevertheless, some show of order was at first observed. Genoese cross-bowmen were sent forward to play upon the English ranks, but, as they drew on, the storm with which the sky had long been threatening, broke, thus complicating their task. While the English kept their weapons dry, the rain beat on the Genoese, wetting their bow-strings, and the low sun bursting from the clouds

blinded their aim. The first volley fell short of the English line by perhaps a score of yards. Very different was the answer: the English long-bowmen took one pace forward, then poured such deadly hail upon the Genoese that their ranks were shattered and they turned. Falling back upon the cavalry, they caused fresh confusion in the already disordered host. The French knights, despising them for cowards and traitors, cut at them as they came, tried to head them back, then, bursting through, themselves set their horses at the hill. Down came the arrow-shower once more, like a modern-day barrage of artillery, "nailing helmet to head," and piercing arms and legs clean through. The havoc this time was indescribable. The horses (still at this date armourless) went down pell-mell under the bolts. Others from behind stumbled on the fallen: the onset was checked dead. Meanwhile the English archers continued to pour their volleys into the struggling mass. Hardly an arrow missed its mark, and hardly a single Frenchman won through to reach the English line. It was simple butchery. Yet, as often as fresh reinforcements came hurrying up along the Abbeville road, they renewed the insane attempt, and the butchery was repeated. Twilight fell, yet through the gathering dusk the spasmodic disconnected charges still went on. At times, indeed, they succeeded in pressing to where the English "battles" stood. Once the Black Prince, hard put to it to beat them back, appealed to his father for reserves. "Let the boy win his spurs," replied Edward, and sent but thirty men. His confidence was justified; the dismounted men-at-arms were more than a match for the French cavalry, and, as at Waterloo, the English squares held firm under the shock. With darkness (or, as some say, with midnight) the charges at length ceased: the French host was no more, and, when next morning the English resumed their northward march along the coast, they left from ten to twenty thousand enemy dead upon the field. Their own losses were a few dozen bowmen, forty men-at-arms, and two knights.

By 4th September Calais was reached, and the army, reinforced and revictualled from England, sat down to besiege the city. Eleven months later to a day the inhabitants surrendered, Calais became an English town, and continued to be an English town till it was lost in Mary's reign. During two centuries this Gibraltar of the English Channel gave us indisputable command of the narrow seas ; and what was more to Edward's immediate purpose, it secured us free access to the Flemish ports and uninterrupted passage for our precious wool to the buyers of Bruges and Ghent. Yet this solid material outcome of the victory was by no means chief among its fruits. The fame of what Englishmen had done resounded throughout Europe ; and, while giving to this country a new importance in the world, it implanted in our own people a new and unalterable conviction, proudly cherished through perhaps five centuries, that, man for man upon the field of battle, one English soldier was worth at least three French.

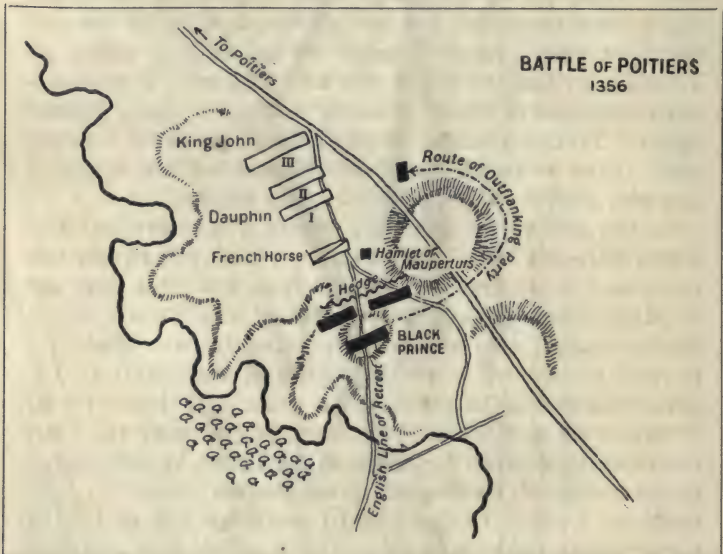
By Crecy the English interests northward had been well secured : it had also served for the time being to divert attention from the south ; yet to maintain our hold there still needed our best efforts, and, when serious hostilities began once more, Aquitaine was the scene of the action. Crecy had been followed by a nine years' lull. The terrible ravages of the Black Death in 1349 had crippled England. The same year Philip of France had died and handed the crown to his less worthy son, King John. But in 1355 the Black Prince, now a full-grown man, went out to Aquitaine. He took up his quarters at Bordeaux, where he spent what time he was not raiding over the border into France, in hunting, feasting, holding tourneys and Round Tables, and in general bringing the fashions of chivalry up to date. About this illustrious warrior, as about perhaps none else, the splendour of mediæval romance has gathered. His life (as Froissart tells of it) was spent amid the gaiety of high-spirited adventurers, in an atmosphere of heroic deeds, the

blaze of armorial pageantry, nodding plumes and golden trappings. War was to him more game than science. In the lists or on the field he was the soul of valour and of courteous etiquette. When on return from Crecy his father instituted the noble order of the Garter, he was the first to bind upon his leg the emblem which vowed honour and homage to the gentler sex. Yet such was the mixture of his character and the narrow limits of his chivalric ideals that, during his forays into France, no barbarian could have exceeded his brutalities; and, when he and his host had passed through some smiling valley of Touraine or Languedoc, it was said that even the inhabitants themselves could scarcely recognise their homes again. To this paragon of knighthood, peasants were no better than so much dirt, battle-fodder for the exploits and glorification of great princes like himself.

In the autumn of 1356 the Prince was returning from a raid through the Poitou country that lay between the Loire and Aquitaine. A French host was after him, led by King John himself, and presently the Prince found himself caught near the ancient walled town of Poitiers. It was a case of retreating without the spoils of his adventure or not at all, and he refused to leave them. A day or so was spent in fruitless parley, and then, on the morning of 19th September, the Prince made a move to get away. The French cavalry were down on him upon the instant, forcing him to recall his van and fight it out. The position held by the English was the line of a quickset hedge, running along a ridge of rising ground, and the French, to come at it, were forced to attack uphill through muddy lanes and over sodden ground further obstructed by rows of straggling vines.

As at Crecy, their numbers, though perhaps three times superior, never told. They came up against the narrow frontage, bunched in three successive "battles," each ranged behind the other; and this time (except for the advance party of horsemen) they attacked on foot. This they did, partly by reason of the broken ground,

partly at least in imitation of the English tactics of ten years before. But they had strangely mistaken the moral of that fight. The chief merit of dismounted men lay in a defensive battle. For knights top-heavy with their casing of plate armour to struggle several furlongs over sticky ground and at the end of it engage in battle with a desperate enemy was more than human strength could stand. Before the quick volleys of the long-bows



and the skilful sword-play of the English knights, the first battle broke. The second, out of heart at its discomfiture, fled also—a monstrous stroke of luck. But the day was not yet won. King John, with the third and by far the largest battle still at his disposal, could even now count as many men as could the Prince, and not without confidence he led forward these fresh and untouched troops against the spent defenders of the thorn hedge. The moment was critical, but the Black Prince,

staking all, called up his last reserve of three hundred knights, left the shelter of the hedge, and launched his whole force downhill to meet this last assault. The clash of contact was heard on the Poitiers walls, seven miles away, and for a while the issue wavered, till a tiny English band, sent by a devious route to take the Frenchmen in the rear, struck home and clinched the day. While the rest fled, King John and many nobles still fought on and were taken prisoners where they stood. The Prince, generous in victory as gallant on the field, entertained his royal captive to supper in his tent, waiting on his needs with his own hands. He could afford to be generous; for in the person of King John he held the trump card for a successful peace.

In 1360, the Treaty of Bretigny closed the first and most creditable phase of the Hundred Years' War. It is true that Edward thereby abandoned the claim to the French throne; but substantial gains were his. Two important provinces were ceded to him by the French: firstly, the county of Ponthieu, just south of Calais, and the scene of his first great victory in France; and secondly, the frontiers of English Aquitaine were extended northward to the banks of the Loire by the surrender of Poitou, where the other triumph had been won. Yet the real fruit of Crecy and Poitiers was glory and not lands. A fickle thing is glory; and, though the Treaty of Bretigny marked the summit of England's fortunes, it marked also the beginning of a swift decline.

This agreement between monarchs brought no peace between the borders. Bands of mercenary soldiers, lacking other occupation, kept up the game, plundering defenceless peasants, holding prisoners to ransom, and fighting one another when they met. These "free companies" became a fashion. Notable captains led them, spreading wide the fame and terror of their arms. Kings winked at what went on, and even princes joined the sport and purchased the services of these ruffian bands. Anxious to secure the throne of Castile for some

scoundrelly ally, the Black Prince (now Governor of Aquitaine) marched with his brother John of Gaunt across the Pyrenees. Making his way by Roncesvalles (the famous pass where Roland and Oliver did battle with the Moors) he won a resounding victory beyond. But such victories were dearly bought: slowly England's strength was being sapped, and, as little by little the two nations drifted once again into open war, the French rallied to redeem their honour and win back their lands. They had learnt a lesson from their defeat: invaded, they now no longer offered battle in the field, but clung to their walled fastnesses and towns. Their wily Marshal, du Guesclin, showed himself one too many even for the Black Prince himself, and it was under the humiliation of a failing cause that this greatest of English warriors drew slowly to his end. When in 1376, one year before his father, death carried him away, he had lived long enough to see his life's work all undone. Of the whole English territory in France, only Calais and a narrow strip of seaboard round Bordeaux remained intact. Courteous to the end, the Prince called his followers to his bedside and begged their pardon for any wrong that he had done. It was doubtless freely given; yet a very different answer might the great Prince have had from the homeless villagers of Southern France. The harvest of such royal knight-errantry as his is bitter-sweet. His life was spent upon a doubtful cause; and, dying, he left behind him waste, want, and misery beyond power of human reckoning—and a name.

CHAPTER XV

THE FIGHT AGAINST POVERTY AND IGNORANCE

I

IN the panorama of a nation's history the splendid figures of great princes riding to their wars are apt, as a rule, to loom disproportionately large. There have been times, however, when some accident of fate has plucked the more humble folk from the dim background of their unobtrusive drudgery, and has thrust them forward as it were to the very footlights of the stage. And so it was now. The fifty years of Edward III, so brilliant on the rolls of military fame, were years of crisis at home, years of unsettlement among the least accounted of his subjects. During three reigns already the little men of England had been slowly lifting up their heads, and now, while their king was busy fighting on the stricken fields of France, they too were busy doing battle with other enemies and in another cause. That cause was the cause of liberty against oppression. Their enemies were two: poverty was one, and ignorance the other.

Since the days of the Conquest and before, the life of the country-side had taken (as we have seen) a more or less settled shape. The local magnate not merely owned the land; in a certain sense, he owned also most of the men who lived upon it. Under the strong ties of an immemorial and still unquestioned custom, these men were bound to serve, honour, and obey him as their feudal lord. They *belonged* to his manor or estate, might not

quit it under penalties of law, could not, if they would, neglect their tale of weekly labour—one day or two, or even three out of the seven, being claimed and rendered as his feudal due. Yet time stands still for no man; and, since we last spoke of them, the peasants have greatly changed, and changed in at least two ways. First, many “villeins,” or tied labourers, have now bought their liberty outright and are become freemen, free to dispose of their labour as they choose, free to move about from place to place. Others again, less fortunate than these, have made a bargain with their lord, and, instead of the part-time work they rendered hitherto, now pay him a sum of money or its equivalent in kind. This second class is thus free of its enforced labour, but still tied to the manor and not free to move. The arrangement suits the master no less than it suits the serf: he has found by long experience that part-time labourers are little use for shepherding his flocks; he has found, too, that a ploughman ploughs much better if he works for an honest wage, and not simply because he must. So my lord is by no means sorry to take Hodge’s rent in lieu of Hodge’s labour, and with the proceeds of that rent he makes shift to hire a ploughman or a shepherd, it may be some wandering fellow who is free to take service where he will, or it may be even Hodge himself. In whichever case, the scheme works well. The wages asked are reasonably low and the income from the “rents” is adequate to meet them. The men work harder; the manor is better tilled; the landlord thrives. Like the Rich Fool in the Gospel, he chuckles at his wealth and multiplies his barns. Then, when he, like the Rich Fool, expects it least, the catastrophe occurs.

In the year of grace 1349, there came travelling westwards across Europe, from Italy to France, and from France again to England, a devastating plague. Men called it the Black Death: it was a form of epidemic strongly resembling the Bubonic Plague still prevalent in India. It began with a swelling in the

armpits, high fever, violent spasms, and vomiting of blood. Black spots broke out over the body (whence the illness took its name). Death was almost inevitable, and it was fearfully swift. "Many," says the chronicler, "being attacked in the morning were carried out of this world's affairs by noon." In many parts there were no living left to bury those who died. Record of the mortality in some monastic houses has come down: at Hevringland Priory all the inmates died, at St. Albans just four-fifths. Of the entire population of the country it is thought one-third must have perished. Whole villages stood empty; flocks were shepherdless; fallows went untilled. The result for my lord of the manor is obvious enough: where was he to find stout fellows now to hire?

To say labour was scarce is far below the mark: in parts it was not to be had for love or money; and, according to the law of supply and demand (a law which to ourselves the experience of the war has now made so familiar), the inevitable happened. The rate of wages soared. When a master offered the customary pay, the free labourer said, "Thank you for nothing," and was off to find a better job elsewhere. Landowners were competing to secure his services, and he could get almost anything he asked. Even with the tied villein-tenants, the outlook was little better. When, to meet his increased wage-bill, the landowner endeavoured to put up the rents, they positively went "on strike"; some, though by law forbidden to quit their home estate, decamped and sought a market for their services elsewhere. Thus was my lord caught, as it were, between two fires: he could find neither men to hire nor income to pay them with. But luckily (or rather, as it turned out, unluckily) for him, the landowner was still politically a very powerful man. Parliament, both Commons and Lords alike, was almost wholly composed of landowners; and, with a short-sighted futility, which might serve as a warning to all reactionary and biassed legislators, the

members determined to hurry to the rescue of their threatened class. They passed a law—known as the Labourers' Statute—ordaining that all wages should remain exactly what they were before the plague. They even attempted further to fix prices, just as modern governments have tried to do. They might as well have tried to stop the wind from blowing. The peasants snapped their fingers at the regulation. The landowners themselves, finding that labour was unprocurable and that harvests would not wait, simply evaded it. Parliament repeated the statute, increased the penalties, even proposed to punish its breach with death. In vain; wages still went up, and up they stayed, and not all the King's horses and all the King's men could have brought them down again.¹

Rural England was still in this unquiet and revolutionary condition when the year of Edward's jubilee and death approached. The peasants, well-fed and prosperous as never heretofore, were spirited and defiant. They resented interference with their new-won liberties, and listened eagerly to schemes for winning more. Agitators (as always at such times) appeared. Soldiers home from the French wars talked big in village taverns and fostered the growing discontent. Priests in the pulpit took the people's side. One in particular, a priest of Kent, John Ball by name, propounded doctrines of a new and startling kind. All men were equal, he declared, sprung as were all alike from the same parents, Adam and Eve. Society as it stood was rotten. That the rich man should parade in his velvet and his ermine, while the poor man shivered in his threadbare frieze, was clean against nature, justice, and God's law. It lay with the folk themselves to set this right, to level all distinctions between poverty and riches, lord and serf,

¹ As is to be expected, the effects of the Black Death varied considerably in different parts of the country. Recent study of manorial records shows that in some places great changes had already taken place, and that in others not even the Black Death itself produced any immediate result.

and to have all things in common like the early Christian saints. So talked this socialist of the fourteenth century; and very soon his gospel of equality caught hold. The watchword of the movement became the doggerel rhyme:—

When Adam delved and Eve span,
Who was then the gentleman?

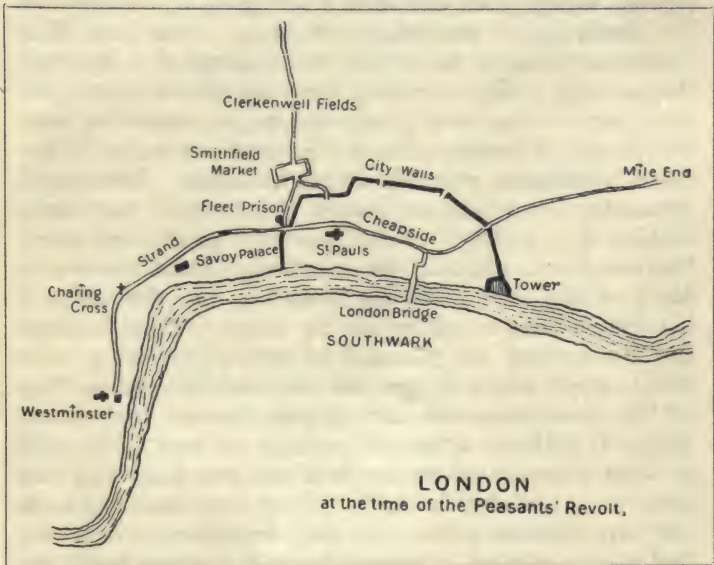
Wycliffe, the theologian (of whom more shall be told anon) said something much in the same strain, and, though he was misinterpreted, his authority was quoted in John Ball's support. Thus did religious zeal and a blind but honest instinct for reform swell the courage of the malcontents. A secret league, called the Great Society, sprang up to link the centres of intrigue. Dark hints and messages passed to and fro between town and country-side. "John Schep biddeth you beware of guile in the borough and stand together in God's name." "John Ball greeteth you well all and doth you to understand that he hath rungen your bell." Such sayings, whatever their meaning, were laid to heart. The train was ready for the great explosion. It needed now but some sudden spark to fire it.

As the long reign of Edward drew to a close, the days were dark with the shadow of military failure and heavy with the burden of its cost. Men will pay with good grace for victory, but never for defeat; and to raise fresh money for the painful wars in France became at every step more difficult. In the year of Edward's death a "poll" tax was levied, taking so much "per head" from all the population. The new King, Richard, the Black Prince's son, was young and ill-advised; and three years later the unpopular levy was repeated—a shilling per head from every family in England; and, though the rich in each district were bidden help their poorer neighbours, yet for the humblest couple the minimum was 4d.—the equivalent of two days' wages in the time before the Plague. The tax was bitterly resented; the people's blood was up; one more act of

brutality, and patience would burst its bounds. The tax in the first instance was very carelessly collected, and the Government, dissatisfied with the results, ordered the collectors on their rounds again. The villagers mistook this visitation for a second tax, and in a moment they were up in arms. Essex was first; Kent followed a few days after, and Canterbury was overrun with revolutionary mobs. Risings in the north and west were more slow and less effectual, but the home counties were quickly in a blaze. There was no standing army, no regular police, and the upper classes were forced to take refuge in the woods. The Lord Chief Justice was caught in his flight and murdered. Halls were burnt and looted, monasteries attacked. But, amid all their violence, one strange conviction possessed the rebels' mind. Their wrongs, so they believed, would all be righted, if once they could reach the ear of the young boy who wore the crown. The revolt had started in the last week of May; by June the 12th, John Ball, Wat Tyler, and a great host of Kentish men were gathered on Blackheath, intent to press upon the King the abolition of both serfdom and landlords at a blow. The men of Essex under Jack Straw were round London to the north. Richard and his ministers were trapped and helpless.

The City of London, as it then was, lay in a narrow semicircle north of the Thames, stretching between the Temple and the Tower. It was linked to the southern bank by a single bridge; and by this the rebels crossed through the friendly collusion of the Alderman on guard. On Thursday, 13th June, the narrow ways of the winding cobbled streets were thronged with roving bands of hungry, wide-eyed countrymen. They were soon joined by the City 'prentices, who had grievances of their own, and by the City roughs, eager, as ever, for a brawl. Together they made their way to the Savoy Palace near the Strand. It belonged to John of Gaunt, the Black Prince's brother, uncle to the King, and the best hated

man in all the land. The Palace was soon in flames. On to the gaols of Marshalsea, Westminster and Fleet, where doors were broken in and prisoners set at large. There remained the Tower, where were the King himself, and with him his Treasurer, his Chancellor the Archbishop, and other members of his court. These men the mob regarded as the chief source of late oppressions; and on the Friday the mob gathered round the fortress, clamouring for their blood. Richard was but a child,



and, though his physical courage was extreme, its moral counterpart was always lacking in him. He left the shelter of the Tower himself to hold a parley with the ringleaders, but while he was absent he allowed his soldiers to let in the mob. A hideous massacre ensued. A priest who chanced to be the friend of John of Gaunt was torn in pieces on the spot. The Archbishop, who was discovered in the chapel, celebrating the mass, was hurried from the altar and beheaded

on Tower Hill. The Treasurer died with him; and their heads were posted over London Bridge. Thus was the blunder of the poll-tax most signally avenged.

But the play was not yet played out. The promises given by Richard to their leaders had not availed to disperse or pacify the mob. A fresh meeting was fixed for the morrow. It was to be held at Smithfield market, outside the northern walls. Here Richard, fresh from Westminster, where he had gone to pray at the Confessor's shrine, rode out with a company of courtiers on the morning of Saturday the 15th. And here Wat Tyler met him at the rebels' head, insolent in bearing, flushed with pride. Leaving the mob behind him, Tyler rode over to the royal group and began his parley with the King. Presently one of the courtiers, stung by the fellow's rudeness, struck him from his horse. The crowd, mistaking what was up, raised the cry that they were making him a knight. But soon the truth was clear: the body was seen, and for one long instant the fate of Richard, the lives of all his following, and the safety of his realm hung trembling in the scales. Then Richard did the bravest act recorded of an English king. He was fourteen years of age, but in those days the children of the great were old and capable beyond their years. Richard, without a tremor or sign of hesitation, rode straight across to where the mob was standing, and said simply, "I am your leader". They were false words (as the sequel was to prove), but they were brave words too, and they prevailed. Setting himself at their head, the boy led out the cowed and awe-struck peasants till they came to the Clerkenwell Fields. Here they were surrounded by armed bands of loyal burgers; they gave themselves up and were sent home.

The rebellion was over, and the rebels even fancied they had won. They little knew the man in whom their confidence was placed. In his first parley with their leaders, Richard had promised them two things, to abolish serfdom altogether, and to fix the landlord's rent

dues at a reasonable sum (4d. an acre). The tone he now took, when fulfilment of these promises was asked, was very different. "Serfs you are: serfs you shall remain"; and already the orders had been given for a terrible revenge. The new Chief Justice was sent upon his rounds. Peasants were everywhere arrested, tried, hung, quartered, disembowelled by dozens at a time. Some were identified as murderers and dragged off to London city, there to suffer on the actual scene of their misdeeds. John Ball himself was caught and put to death. It would be unfair to lay the whole burden of the blame on a boy of Richard's years, but to acquit him altogether is impossible. At the very least he had gone back upon his word.

Thus the Peasants' Rising seemed for the moment to have failed. But this was hardly true. Serfdom indeed continued. But so did the bold and independent spirit of the serfs, and by slow degrees they gathered the reward of their persistence. In 1390 the Statute of Labourers was altered: the rate of wages was no longer fixed, but left to the discretion of the local courts. Landlords were frightened, and they began to see that free labour paid better in the end than forced. Bit by bit they yielded to the serfs and gave them their liberty, till by the end of the next century the great mass of the English peasantry was free. The yeoman farmer, working his own small acres, multiplied and thrived: his class was soon the backbone of the nation's strength. The villagers as a whole became much what they were till yesterday, farm-hands, working for a pittance, still much dependent on the landowner or squire, but no longer at any rate his slaves. Thus easily and early did the folk of England break off their feudal bonds. The Peasants' Rising rang the death-knell to a tyranny which long survived in other and less happy lands, and which after a long submission drove even the docile peasantry of France to the bloody Revolution of the eighteenth century.

II

It is an axiom of progress that liberty and knowledge must go hand in hand. The most down-trodden of folk are almost invariably the ignorant; and, before men can act for themselves, they must first have learnt to think for themselves. Now, though in mediæval England the great majority of men were quite illiterate, unable to read or write, or even sign their names, yet it must by no means be supposed that learning was altogether neglected. Knowledge of one sort or another was always in very great request. Clerks who could draw up documents, write records, keep accounts, were a necessity to all great households; and to become a clerk, as we have seen, was the first step up the ladder of promotion. But to become a "clerk" (as we also must remember) was simply another term for becoming a "cleric". Learning and religion were in those days inseparable; and, however lightly a clerk's vows were regarded, they none the less were vows. In short, the instrument of education was in the Church's hands. She was the great schoolmistress of Europe; and for the mediæval student to take her mark, the tonsure, on his head, was as natural and as necessary as for the modern undergraduate to don the gown.

The earliest schools of which we hear were kept by monks or by cathedral clergy; and in almost every monastery or cathedral some members were told off to teach the boys. But by and by in many towns small independent schools sprang up where grammar and good behaviour were inculcated by an usher and his rod. These "Grammar Schools" were open to boys of every class, and cobblers and cowherds, as well as merchants and the like, found admission for their sons. After the Peasants' Rising an attempt was made to exclude the sons of villeins from the schools; but the ban is in itself another proof that even among the poorest a "clerkly" education was in some request. Happily, at the very

time of this ungenerous measure, learning was reinforced in an important way. Since the Black Death, from which the clergy suffered more than any other class, there had been a sore scarcity of priests; and the need of finding some new remedy was borne in on no less a man than William of Wykeham, the Chancellor of the realm. As Bishop of Winchester, he undertook to found a school there, in which poor men's sons might be trained up to the priesthood, or at least to godly learning. No foundation on so complete a scale had ever before been attempted. Wykeham endowed his college with a large complement of lands, the rents from which were to cover all expenses. He provided for his seventy scholars in a regal fashion. Hall and chapel, court and cloisters fit for the sons of kings; and, to round off his work, he built another college up at Oxford whither the boys might go to finish their studies to the end. Wykeham, moreover, was not alone in his munificence, nor unique in his educational enthusiasm. The University of Oxford, now upwards of three centuries old, had quite lately been endowed with other such colleges as his. Edward I's Chancellor, Walter Merton by name, had already founded Merton College, and Peterhouse at Cambridge had been established not long before.¹ In fact, just as in former ages pious men or conscience-stricken kings had built a monastery, or given money to the Church, so now it became the fashion with the rich to endow a school or found an Oxford College.² The Universities were thronged with students who could be counted by their thousands. Never perhaps was education more esteemed, and seldom had more thought or money been expended on it.

Directly, or indirectly, all this from first to last was the

¹ Previous to the foundation of these colleges, the University students had lived in lodgings and hostels, shifting for themselves as best they could.

² This was the more encouraged by the fact that Edward I, seeing how much property and land the Church had already absorbed, had forbidden the practice of leaving gifts of this sort to the Church (Act of Mortmain).

work of the Mother Church. All men who taught in schools or colleges held orders. Most of the undergraduates were "clerks". Wykeham's scholars took the tonsure. Even the school itself, though not a monastery, was planned and regulated on monastic lines. No woman, not even the laundress, was admitted to the precincts. The Bible was read out during meal-times. The chapel services were both numerous and long. Education, in short, however wide its scope, was a religious system still. Sad to say, this had a fatal and paralysing influence. Studies, it is true, were not by any means confined to the Bible and theology. The curriculum was liberal. Mathematics, astronomy, and a queer sort of wizardry called natural science, found their place beside philosophy and Latin. But for all that, these studies were, broadly speaking, dead: they were a stiff academic exercise; there was no true spirit of inquiry, no honest search for truth. Men simply accepted the theories and principles which they were taught, derived for the most part from the works of Aristotle, the great philosopher of Ancient Greece. Next to the Church herself, Aristotle was their one infallible authority; and more than half their time and three-quarters of their energy were spent in conning and interpreting what he had said. They learnt by this method to quibble and split straws extremely well; but they did not learn to think, and, what is worse, the Church did not intend that they should do so. For, to disclose the truth, the Church was a tyrant mistress. Her chief principle—and the main pillar of her strength—lay in the comfortable doctrine, that, whatever happened, and whatever men might say, *she* must invariably be right. Friar Bacon, the pioneer of English scientists, was clapped into prison because his theories and discoveries happened not to suit the Church, just as Galileo, the Italian, at a much later date, was tortured by the Inquisition for holding the highly unbiblical idea that the earth moved round the sun. On religious matters, more especially, was all independent thinking barred. The

only attitude of mind to satisfy the Church was an attitude of orthodox credulity. Superstitions of the grossest sort were deliberately encouraged, and impossible things were asserted and believed about saintly visions, holy relics, and the nature of Heaven or Hell, and woe betide the rash misguided man who harboured doubts. Of all the tenets of the Christian creed, as it then was, perhaps the most central and most popular was the doctrine of the Mass. The Mass was held to be a miracle, no less, though it took place every day. The Wine and Bread, once touched by the consecrating priest, became, as if by magic, the actual Blood and Body of our Lord. This theory of Transubstantiation, as they called it, was accepted without question. And who, in point of fact, would wish to question it? Certainly not the men of thought and learning, who were themselves the children and servants of the Church, and who knew better than to cast doubt on an authority from which after all their own personal influence was drawn. Like the Pharisees of old, they held the key of knowledge, and they were fully determined that no one else should touch it. Certainly, they gave the ignorant laity small chance. Of the Bible itself the common folk knew nothing at first hand. A bishop's special licence was required before a layman could so much as read it: even then it was in Latin, for only small portions, such as the Psalms, had as yet been rendered into English. The services, and, above all, the mass, were recited in the same unintelligible language; and Christ's teaching, if it ever reached the folk at all, came to them through the priest, and meant whatever the priest desired that it should mean. The fact is, there were things in the Bible which did not exactly fit the theories of the Church; and to have men's attention called to them would have been highly inconvenient. Laymen, therefore, were given to understand that their duty in the matter was to listen and obey, but on no account to do any thinking for themselves.

Towards such a pass the Church had long been drifting ;

and she, who had once done so much for the cause of enlightenment and progress, now bid fair to stifle progress for all time. But her power and influence were not to last; already the seeds of decay were visible; she was rotting at the core. Her higher ministers (though simple parish priests still did good work) were often selfish, callous and indulgent; her monks had grown fat and idle; even the friars, for all their early promise, were now no better than the rest. Theirs was perhaps the saddest case of all. They had come over, full of the noble teaching and self-sacrificing zeal of St. Francis and St. Dominic, nearly two centuries before. They had gone through England, penniless, barefoot, begging their way, like the Apostles sent out by our Lord; and as they went, they preached on village greens and carried comfort to the poor and sick. Now all was changed: the friar, as Chaucer tells of him in the fourteenth century, was a wanton merry fellow, haunting taverns, ogling girls and making a good livelihood by "pardons" which he obligingly dispensed for cash. The friar's degradation was a type of what was coming over the Church. The great fabric was crumbling. Even the Papacy itself was in dispute. For a time there were two popes: one at Rome, the other at Avignon in South France. Both claimed the authority of Peter, but there was hardly room for both in Peter's chair. Men could believe in one supreme head, one spiritual dictator, but they found it difficult, however much they tried, to put implicit faith in two, the more especially as the two did not agree. The Great Schism was healed again in the year 1418; but then the harm was done. The Pope's supremacy was never what it had been; the confidence of Europe had been shaken; the Reformation was in sight.

Meanwhile, in the England of King Edward's day, feeling against the Papacy was running high. For one thing there was no more expensive luxury than obedience to the Bishop of Rome. At a time when every spare penny was needed to support the wars in France,

here was the Holy Father drawing a perpetual tribute from the English Church's funds, and claiming even more than what he got. Here he was, again, appointing foreign favourites to fat posts in English sees, and therefrom, we may be sure, sucking no small advantage. Eager to have a finger in our ecclesiastical affairs, he was for ever encouraging the English clergy to appeal against the judgment of their own superiors to himself. To a people of growing independence such meddling, grasping tactics were intolerable; and Edward III had passed two laws to bring them to an end. One stopped the "Provisors," or letters of appointment, whereby the Pope was wont to slip his nominees into English benefices without the sanction of the King. The other, called the Statute of Praemunire, forbade the English clergy, on whatever grounds, to make appeal to Rome. The Statutes, however, were none too rigidly enforced; the scandals still went on, feeling grew bitter, and the time had clearly come for some one to speak out.

The protest, when it came, was bold and strong. It came from an Oxford scholar, John Wycliffe by name, and Master of Balliol College. Englishmen had never been scrupulous to spare the feelings of the Pope. From William Rufus down to Edward III, a stout resistance had been offered to his claims; but always—be it noted—to his claims of temporal power or political authority. What nobody as yet had ever dared was to challenge his spiritual pretensions, his claim to be the inspired mouth-piece of Almighty God, with a perfect right to regulate the consciences and to dictate the religious beliefs of Englishmen. In this claim even the most bitter opponents of the Papacy had acquiesced; to challenge it would have been regarded as heresy in the last degree; and in that case Wycliffe was a heretic. What others only dared to think, he said without disguise. He denied that the Church could have any head but Christ: the Pope was quite superfluous. He denounced (like Luther after him) all sales of pardon and indulgences for

money ; and (most shocking perhaps of all) he declared that Transubstantiation was a hoax. Wycliffe was a bold man, or he would never have uttered such opinions to the world, but, better still, he had the strength of his convictions. Though bitterly attacked on every hand, he held stubbornly to all that he had said. Luckily he had many supporters and even some powerful friends ; and when, as King Edward lay a-dying, they called Wycliffe to stand his trial in the Lady Chapel of Old St. Paul's, excitement grew intense. The Londoners as a whole were on his side ; so too was John of Gaunt, anxious to curry favour with the mob at a time when any day might dawn upon a vacant throne. Scarcely had the trial at St. Paul's begun, when it ended in a violent scene. John of Gaunt, who was present in Wycliffe's interest, threatened the Bishop of London and swore he would drag him out of the church by the hair of his head. Hearing this, the mob who had crowded in to watch proceedings, rushed to the rescue. A free fight ensued, and in the confusion Wycliffe was carried off by his supporters to a place of safety. Once more, in 1382, he was attacked for his views about the mass. He was not this time summoned to appear in person, but a council of clerics sat to review his crimes. Things looked black : John of Gaunt had turned against him ; the Peasants' Rising had done his cause small good ; the council was firmly resolved to pin his errors down. They were in the act of pronouncing his views to be heretical, when a violent earthquake shook the house : pinnacles and stones came toppling down ; the clerics leapt up in panic from their seats. This startling omen was hailed by Wycliffe's friends as a sign of God's approval. At the very least it somewhat took the sting out of the Church's condemnation. Nothing was done. Wycliffe was left in peace ; and two years later he died quietly in his country parsonage at Lutterworth in Leicestershire.

Had this great thinker's work been confined to the mere expression of theological opinions, we should hear

of him perhaps merely as an obscure though enlightened heretic without much claim to fame. But he did more than this. Just as he had stood out for English liberty against the Papal rule, so also he stood out as a champion of the English poor. He denounced the tyranny of landlords, more especially that of the bishops, priors, and abbots, whose treatment of their serfs and tenants was the most crying scandal of the time. He even urged that Parliament should strip the Church of her enormous lands and wealth. But open violence he greatly disapproved: he never urged and he had no sympathy with the Peasants' Rising. It was by other means than these that he wished to improve the peasants' lot—by delivering them from the grip of priestcraft and superstition, by giving them true knowledge of Christ's life and teaching—in a word, by educating their souls. To this end he set about the task of translating the Bible into English that those who knew no Latin might read it for themselves. It was the first complete translation; for even Alfred's version (in the long forgotten Anglo-Saxon) had only covered parts. Copies were made, by hand, of course, since printing was not invented; but, even so, large numbers must have existed; for at least a hundred still survive to-day. Then, too, Wycliffe gathered round him, and sent as missionaries among the folk, a body of Poor Preachers. These simple men were genuine and saintly characters. Like the first friars, they renounced all worldly wealth. In many ways they bore a strong resemblance to the Puritans of later times, making it their habit never to use an oath, preaching not in the pomp of brodered vestments, but in simple russet gowns, preferring a simple service in the open air to an elaborate and pretentious ritual before some painted shrine. Men called them "Lollards"—"wastrels," as we should say—and generally poked fun at them. But, although their numbers were not great, they were very popular in many parts, more especially in Leicestershire and London. Even men of rank took up their cause:

one, Sir John Oldcastle, a knight of Kent, and a friend of young Prince Hal, suffered with his life. His name became a byword and a butt for jokes; and Shakespeare, with scant justice (for he was a pious man), took him as a model for his ribald wine-bibbing character, John Falstaff. By and by, as the Lollard movement grew (and it even gathered strength after its founder's death), the authorities took fright. It had already been ordained that Wycliffe's Bibles should be burnt; and it was now determined to burn his preachers too. In 1401 an act was passed, "de haeretico comburendo," "for burning heretics," and a brutal persecution was begun. A few Lollards, but not many, had the courage to go to the stake for their opinions; some remained in hiding; but on the whole the cruel measure had the desired effect. The rot in the Church was temporarily stayed, and Wycliffe's cause had, to all appearances, lost.

But, as with the Peasants' Rising, failure was only on the surface. Deep down in men's minds a new force was set in motion, a force compelling them to throw off their blindfold allegiance to a despotic creed, and to seek the truth with their own eyes. Wycliffe and his Lollards had sown the hidden seed which, more than a century later, was to rise a towering tree, in the Reformation of a Protestant England. The growth was slow, as perhaps all such things must be; but the magic of the Pope's authority was doomed when the first word of honest doubt was spoken. For in that doubt was contained the most powerful of all solvents, Truth. The shackles began to loosen: the human spirit was struggling to be free again. The voice of Wycliffe had broken the spell.

CHAPTER XVI

THE RISE OF THE HOUSE OF LANCASTER AND THE FINAL BOUT WITH FRANCE

I

OF all the years of the fourteenth century, now drawing to its close amid turmoil and distraction, the worst was assuredly the last. It witnessed the overthrow of England's "anointed king". It saw the murderer and usurper triumphant on his throne. And its evil influence cast over the whole century that followed the blight of civil war. Henceforward, except when fighting abroad to win the crown of France, the kings of England were fighting to secure their own at home: men lost their sense of loyalty and came to regard successful treason as a respectable substitute for right. Moreover, the sources of revolution had now shifted. The principal enemies of peace were no longer the ordinary barons such as had troubled the Conqueror or John. More to be feared and infinitely more powerful was a new element of discord, the restless ambition of the Princes of the Blood Royal. There were many now who could boast that privilege; and, when once the precedent was set, there was to be no lack of pretenders to the throne. But the first family to set it, the first also to achieve success, was the House of Lancaster.

The desire to secure rich earldoms for his younger sons, however short-sighted a policy (as the sequel proved), was not an unnatural policy for an English

king. Provide for them he felt he must ; and, if the heiress to three counties went a-begging, it was hardly an opportunity to miss : certainly Edward III, with his many sons to settle, was not the man who could afford to miss it. His third son, John of Gaunt, he had accordingly betrothed to the Lady Blanche of Lancaster. By right of marriage Gaunt had become the Duke, and the title carried with it the estates. But it was an evil day for England when the great Duchy of the north passed into these hands. Gaunt was a born intriguer, and he used his power solely for his own selfish ends. During the last sad years of his father Edward he was occupied in scheming for the crown. Edward's best chancellor, William of Wykeham, he attacked and threw into disgrace. He took up Wycliffe's cry against the Church, supposing it would gain him public favour, and dropped it again when he found that it did not. With his brother, the Black Prince, Gaunt never quarrelled openly ; and when his brother's son, the young Richard, became King, he gave his nephew some measure of support. But his loyalty was never above suspicion, and dark stories were current of his plots to assassinate the King. Men learnt, in short, to loathe and fear the great Duke of Lancaster ; and, though Gaunt himself never dared to come out into the open, those fears were not misplaced. The realisation of Gaunt's sinister designs found ample fulfilment in his son.

Henry of Bolingbroke, Gaunt's son and heir, was not a whit behind his father in ambition. He too had married the heiress to a great estate, gaining thereby half the lands of Hereford ; and such influence as this position gave him he employed against his cousin, the young King. In 1388, when Richard, now turned twenty, was beginning to assert his own authority, Bolingbroke and other discontented earls, calling themselves the Lords Appellant, raised a large force of their retainers and marched upon the capital. They browbeat Richard, drove all his friends from office, and took

the control into their own hands. To all seeming the party of Bolingbroke won a complete and easy triumph; but they did not know the King. Early next year he quietly informed them that being now of age he was old enough to manage his own affairs and meant to do so. He appointed fresh ministers of his own choice, brought back William of Wykeham into office, and for eight years ruled with tactful moderation. The conspiracy of the "Lords Appellant" he appeared to have forgotten; he even treated some of them with favour. It was mere play-acting: Richard had not forgotten and he did not forgive. He was only biding his time; and, when he struck, he struck hard. He murdered, beheaded, exiled, or imprisoned all of his early foes—excepting two. Those two were Thomas Mowbray and Henry Bolingbroke. Still treated with every mark of honour—promoted one to be the Duke of Norfolk, the other to be Duke of Hereford—they were lulled into a sense of false security. Then the blow fell. In 1398 Richard persuaded Bolingbroke to charge Mowbray with high treason, arranged to bring the issue to the test of arms, confronted the two in the lists at Coventry, and then, before the duel was begun, cried halt to it and gave sentence on them both. Mowbray was exiled for life. Bolingbroke was banned the country for ten years; and it became his turn now to meditate revenge.

The next year his father, old John of Gaunt, died; and Bolingbroke, now Duke of Lancaster in his own right, decided that his exile had lasted long enough. Choosing the moment when Richard was away in Ireland, he landed on the Yorkshire coast. The Percies of Northumberland and other north-country earls soon joined him. Rebellion spread, and when Richard, who was long stormbound in an Irish port, set foot once more within the boundaries of his kingdom, it was only to find it was no longer his. He was caught wandering aimlessly between the castles of the west, sent a prisoner to Pontefract, and there murdered by an unknown hand.

Such was Bolingbroke's revenge, and he occupied his dead cousin's throne with the title of Henry IV.

"Had Zimri peace that slew his master?" The crown sits uneasily on a usurper's head, and he seldom prospers long in his ill-gotten power. With what measure he has meted, it may be measured to him again, and he must ever fear to suffer his own victim's fate. Henry IV was clearly a usurper for all his royal descent; and through all the days of his short, unhappy reign, the usurper's curse was his. Rebel after rebel rose against him, and he was allowed little rest. The first to take arms were the loyal friends of Richard, who still refused to credit the story of his death. Henry, however, was nothing if not prompt. He caught the conspirators and killed them without trial. He caused it to be put about that Richard had starved himself to death in prison: the body itself he had transported from Pontefract to London, and set on public view in old St. Paul's. His explanation, however, carried little weight; many declared that the body thus exposed was not the King's, and for long it was actually believed that Richard had escaped to Scotland, and there lay in hiding. Impostors appeared to keep the belief alive; and first the Welsh under Owen of Glendower, then the Scots under the Earl Douglas, took up the dead King's cause. Henry was sore beset; and to fill the cup of his adversity it needed now but the desertion of his friends. Soon his friends, too, turned against him.

Chief among those who had helped him to the throne were the Earl Percy of Northumberland, and Harry Hotspur, his high-spirited, ambitious son. True to the cause they had chosen, the Percies now rallied to Henry and gathered their forces against his enemies. They met Douglas and his Scots at Homildon Hill, defeated them, and made Douglas and many other nobles prisoner. Then Henry did a very foolish thing. Being in straits for money, and anxious to secure the prisoners' ransom for himself, he claimed them as his own. It

was a fatal step: he had sadly misjudged the extent of his authority; and in offending the Percies he was estranging the very men who were least likely to brook such treatment from one who owed his crown to them. No part of England maintained so strong a sense of independence as the north. Since the times when Danes had settled there in Anglo-Saxon days, it had held itself much aloof. The strongest opposition to the Conqueror had been beyond the Humber; and even as late as the Reformation the northern folk were not by any means inclined to accept their orders from the south.¹ This spirit of defiance was now awakened at the insult offered by King Henry. The Percies turned against him. They released their prisoner, the Earl Douglas, summoned a Scottish host to their aid, and marched south to join forces with the Welsh Glendower. But Henry was too quick for them: he hastily threw his army across their road, met them at Shrewsbury and, after a bloody battle, defeated them severely. Hotspur was killed, Douglas captured, and, though Owen Glendower drew back into Wales, there to defy subjection all his life, the worst of the peril was over. After a second and feebler rising, the rebellion flickered out.

Though Shrewsbury Field secured the crown to Henry, it secured him little else. He was not long to enjoy rule: a wasting leprosy was on him, and his days were numbered. But the battle had served at any rate to disclose the talents of a fit successor. Young "Prince Hal," who had there first won his spurs, was never the idle dissipated scapegrace which Shakespeare makes of him. The tale of how he tried on his father's crown in the royal bed-chamber has no support in fact. His friend, John Oldcastle, the notorious Falstaff of the plays, was, as we have seen, a pious adherent of the Lollard movement.

¹ The Pilgrimage of Grace (1536) was undertaken by the northerners as a protest against the Protestant movement of the South. It showed the conservative and independent spirit of North England in a strong light.

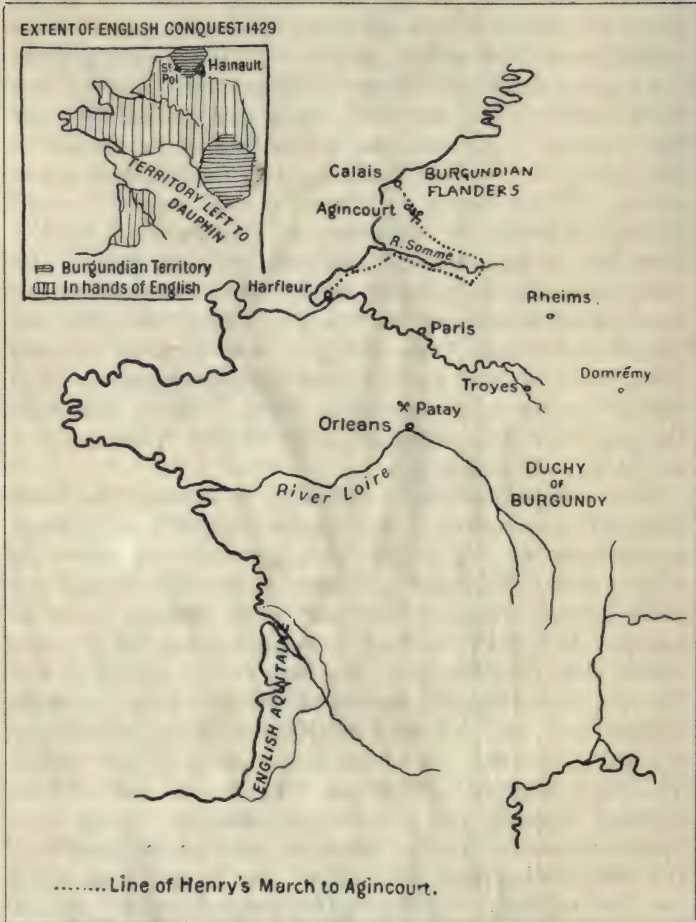
The utmost we can safely say is that Henry IV was jealous of his son and firmly refused to abdicate on his behalf. It was not a wise decision, and the country breathed more freely when Henry of Lancaster slept with his fathers and Henry of Monmouth reigned in his stead. For he certainly had done "that which was evil in the sight of the Lord".

II

Henry V, the second Lancastrian, was a far finer figure than the first. He possessed his father's spirit without his father's vices; and he did much to make Englishmen forget the crime which had first raised his family upon a stolen throne. His rule was firm and conscientious from the start. He did much to restore the unity and welfare of the distracted country. Above all, he diverted the warlike energies of his more restless and rebellious subjects into a more wholesome and patriotic channel. By a skilful but unscrupulous move of calculated policy, he revived the smouldering war with France, and both for himself and his successor he secured domestic peace by focussing attention on campaigns beyond the sea. The moment for renewing the attack could not have been better chosen. The power of France was on the wane: she had fallen on evil days, and her people were split from end to end by a bitter feud. Jealousy had sprung up between her two great princes, the Duke of Orleans in the west and Jean sans Peur, the Duke of Burgundy, who held sway over Flanders and north-eastern France. Jean sans Peur had procured the murder of his rival and the people took up the quarrel of its chiefs. While the citizens of Paris had risen and rioted in the murderer's support, the leading nobles had rallied to the victim's son. So the feud between "Burgundians" and "Orleanists" ran on (much to the advantage, as we shall see, of the English invader); nor was there anyone in France to check it. The great King, Charles the Wise, he who had driven back Edward's armies on the sea, was dead.

In his place reigned one who was rightly nicknamed Charles the Mad. Every summer he went out of his mind, and every winter recovered his wits again; meanwhile his subjects, acting as they listed, were engaged in cutting one another's throats. His son the Dauphin was a high-spirited boy, but too young and foolish to unite the country. At home he was naturally the leader of the Orleanist or noble faction. His foreign policy was crude. When Henry V, intent on war, revived the old claim of Edward to the crown of France, the Dauphin tried first to buy him off and then insulted him. The story goes that a basket of tennis balls was sent by the hand of his messenger to Henry, a jesting hint that for one of such tender years ball-play was far more suitable than war. It was an ill-timed pleasantry, more than enough to stir a Lancastrian's blood. Henry answered the challenge by landing an army on the Norman coast in the summer of 1415.

The campaign which followed is among the most astonishing in history. In its main outline it was almost a repetition of the march to Crecy, but the crowning victory was in this case still more remarkable in that the odds against which it was won were perhaps twice as heavy. Even at the outset it was not a very large force which Henry landed near Harfleur at the mouth of the Seine. Ten thousand men were the very most he could muster, and the reduction of Harfleur—his preliminary objective—caused a serious diminution of his ranks. The siege occupied six weeks. There was much bitter fighting through the hot summer weather; fever and dysentery made havoc of the host; and by the time that the place was carried and Henry free to move upon his way, he had lost a full third of what men he had. Nevertheless it was still a solid and well-found contingent. Henry was no reckless adventurer like the royal knight-errant who made the wild march to Crecy. Calais was now English, and, when he struck up through Picardy, he knew whither he was moving. His men were all



MAP TO ILLUSTRATE SECOND PART OF HUNDRED YEARS' WAR.

trained soldiers. His preparations had been extraordinarily complete; every knight was provided with three spare chargers in reserve; carts were collected for the transport; smiths were in attendance. Even artillery of a sort was there; for the uses of gunpowder, discovered first by the "scientist" Friar Bacon, were beginning to be understood, and some monstrous cannon, useful at any rate in sieges, made now perhaps for the first time their appearance alongside English troops.¹ It is small wonder that the Frenchmen, remembering Crecy, hesitated to engage in open battle. Though they had composed their private differences for the time being and collected an enormous host, perhaps six times the English numbers, yet when Henry turned his face northwards and began his march on Calais, their generalissimo, the Constable, refused to fight. As the English advanced along the coast, he hung upon their flank. Even when they were checked at the line of the river Somme and forced to turn inland to find a ford, the opportunity was never used. It was not till Henry had come within two days' march of Calais that the Constable's reluctance was at last overruled. Then the French army cut in between the English and their goal, and facing southward stood astride the Calais road near Agincourt. It was 24th October and the eve of St. Crispin's day. The night was stormy, and as the Englishmen, worn out by long marching and drenched with the downpour, bivouacked among the apple-orchards of Maisoncelles, many there must have felt some sinking of the heart. But the perilous position had no terrors for King Henry; and the lines that Shakespeare has put into his mouth reflect truly his cheery confidence:—

If we are marked to die, we are enow,
To do our country loss; and if to live,
The fewer men the greater share of honour.
God's will, I pray thee wish not one man more.

¹ Certain small field pieces are said, however, to have been used at Crecy.

Next morning he took the field with the same cool courage against a force beside which his little army was a handful. By bad management, however, the French had "bunched" their host between two woods, and, as at Crecy and Poitiers, their numbers scarcely told. As usual the French attacked, while the English stood on their defence. Their archers, protected behind a row of pointed stakes, mowed down the enemy knights, as they came plunging and slipping over the greasy sodden ground. A small body hidden in the woods played upon the Frenchmen's flanks, and, failing to break the English line, they faltered. The English bowmen's arrows were now expended, but they had done their work; seizing axes and weighted mallets in their hands, they followed with the knights and dashed out to the attack. Right through the first and second line this onslaught carried: the third "battle" turned, began to scatter, and then partly rallied. For the moment the fight was critical, and Henry, fancying an attack was threatening on his rear, ordered the slaughter of the prisoners he had taken. Hundreds were butchered where they stood; but the precaution was needless. The third "battle" showed no further stomach for the fight, and with its dispersal Henry was left victor of the field. His triumph was indeed complete. He left the Constable among the slain, and, more important, he held among the prisoners the Duke of Orleans himself. Even the folk at home were quick to recognise the overwhelming nature of his victory. On his return from Calais he received a great ovation. The houses of London were draped with curtains; triumphal arches were erected, and a sky blue canopy, painted with clouds, and topped by angel figures, was stretched above the streets. Maidens danced him a welcome at the bridge. The mayor and aldermen came out to meet him, and the crowds joyfully acclaimed him as "King of England and of France".

Henry was not indeed the King of France as yet; but the crown was very soon to be well within his grasp.

Yet it was not to the prowess of his arms that he owed this new success. Rather it was due to the fatal disunion of the enemy and the old insensate quarrel between Burgundy and Orleans. In 1418 Henry was over in France again, reducing one by one the strongholds of Normandy, when an event happened which was destined to deliver the country into his hands almost without a blow. Jean sans Peur, the Duke of Burgundy, had hitherto been content to play a waiting game: he had neither openly deserted the national cause, nor yet wholeheartedly supported it; he had sent troops to Agincourt, but he had not gone himself; he had winked at Henry's expedition to Normandy; yet now he viewed its success with some alarm. The fall of Rouen decided him. He resolved to throw in his lot with the patriot party of the Orleanists, who, since the capture of their Duke, regarded the Dauphin as their natural head. At Montreuil, on the upper reaches of the Seine, Burgundy arranged to meet the Dauphin and patch the quarrel up. The two princes, each with a small body of their friends, advanced into the centre of the bridge to parley. Their other retainers were standing back at some distance along the riverside, when on a sudden they saw a scuffle among the group upon the bridge. Shouts were raised and a blow struck, and when the Dauphin and his friends came hurrying back, Jean sans Peur was left lying on the roadway dead. That Jean was himself a murderer must not be forgotten; however treacherously killed he was but paying blood for blood; yet nothing can in reality atone for the tragic blunder of this crime. It meant that all hopes of French unity were shattered, and, what was worse, it meant an immediate alliance between the Burgundian faction and the enemies of France. The son of the murdered Duke, bent only on revenge, threw his whole weight upon the side of Henry. The effect was immediate. The national resistance collapsed. Paris was open to the English, and in 1420 a treaty was signed at Troyes by which the Dauphin was

to be disinherited and cut off from his father's throne; Henry himself was not only to marry the mad King's daughter, but also to become heir to the mad King's crown. Resistance to the combined strength of England and Burgundy was obviously useless, and the Dauphin fled to the loyal provinces of the Loire. That year Henry entered the capital in triumph as France's prospective king.

III

He was never destined himself to wear the crown in Paris, for his death occurred two months before that of the mad King. It remained for his son, then a baby in arms, eventually to wear it; and sure enough, when nine years later he reached the mature age of ten, Henry VI was actually crowned in the Cathedral of Notre Dame; but in the course of those nine years much had happened. Fortune's wheel had by then turned once again, and that coronation, when it came, was a hollow triumph. For during the interval the English had lost the game. Their opportunities had been thrown away; they had roused the old French spirit to defiance, and France had struggled to her feet. The tale of her recovery is the most romantic in her history, for it was all the doing of a girl.

On the child-king's accession France lay prostrate and at the conqueror's mercy: John, Duke of Bedford, the King's uncle, was ruling in Paris as his regent, and under Bedford's lead the English were pushing westward; Maine and Touraine were already theirs; the Dauphin was over the Loire, leaving Orleans to its fate. If that stronghold fell, it opened the whole Loire valley to the English; and the siege was now drawing into its seventh month. At this moment there appeared at the Dauphin's court a young peasant girl, some seventeen years of age, in man's attire. Hers was a strange story—though not uncharacteristic of that superstitious age—a story of mysterious lights seen hovering by the well-head near

her home, of heavenly voices speaking in her ear and summoning her to be the saviour of her country, of visions in which St. Michel and St. Catherine appeared to strengthen her resolve. From her native place at Domrémi on the borders of Champagne she had travelled across France to bring the Prince this divine message of encouragement and to set herself at the head of the faltering armies of France. Her words were received at first with incredulity, till, rounding upon one rude scoffer, she had warned him to prepare for instant death. Within a few hours the fellow had fallen into a river and was drowned, and after that the girl was treated with increased respect. Her promise to see the Dauphin safely crowned aroused the hopes even of that languid prince; and eventually she was dispatched to succour the hard pressed defenders of Orleans. The appearance of Jeanne d'Arc within the city worked like magic on the spirits of the French. Her undoubted gift of second sight stood her in good stead, and her discovery (at the prompting of a dream) of St. Catherine's sword buried behind the high altar of the Church, gave her an authority to which all bowed. The garrison rallied bravely, and, with the girl in white armour at their head, they flung back the English from their lines. Jeanne's courage was infectious: she took part in every battle, bearing a charmed life; weapons, it seemed, could not wound her, and when the besiegers at length gave up the struggle and retired, they vowed that they had been beaten by a witch. And the "witch" gave them no rest; as they retired northwards, she caught them at Patay, and once more scattering them by a dashing charge, she entered Troyes. So low were the invaders now reduced in spirit and in numbers, that even the Dauphin emerged from his retreat and, under Jeanne's escort, ventured as far as Rheims, the ancient "hallowing place" of the French kings. There, in enemy's country, no more than eighty miles from Paris, where Bedford and the English lay powerless to prevent it, he received at length

the crown of France, with the Maid standing by. But with that the Maid's successes ended. She was captured next year by some Burgundian soldiers, and brought to trial at Rouen for black magic. After long cross-questioning about her "voices," and under the threat at any rate of torture, she was forced to recant all her professions and admit her divine mission to be a hoax. Then she was condemned to death and burnt at the stake in the market-place of Rouen. Her judges were mainly Frenchmen; but from first to last it was the English who prompted, as it was the English who carried out, her execution. Yet they knew in their heart of hearts that they were wrong. "We are lost," cried one of the soldiers present at the execution, "for we have burnt a saint." His words were prophetic. The English never again recovered their ascendancy.

For, though the Maid was dead, the spirit she had aroused in France lived on. The national resistance was now stiffening; nobles and commons, townsfolk and peasants, were beginning to unite, and all now hinged upon the attitude of the Duke of Burgundy. With Burgundy as an ally, the English hold on France might possibly have been retained; without him, the English cause was doomed. The motives of his attachment were the purely selfish motives of revenge; and he would stand by Henry no longer than suited his own book. It needed but one false step—a trifling lack of tact on Bedford's part—to break the bond which held him; and Burgundy's help, which had been won through the accident of a murder, was lost again through the accident of a marriage. It was part of the policy of these times (abroad no less than at home) to secure estates and cement alliances by the intermarriage of great families. Among the other French nobles whose support the Duke of Bedford coveted was the Count of St. Pol, and with this end in view he had married the Count's sister.¹

¹ Humphrey of Gloucester (who was Regent in England as Bedford was in France, and who like Bedford was an uncle of the King) had

This step, seemingly so innocuous, gave great offence to the Duke of Burgundy. St. Pol lay just upon his borders, and he was every whit as anxious as was Bedford to make its count subservient to himself. He saw in this marriage, therefore, an attempt to defeat his plans. His attitude towards England altered; his friendship cooled; and before long he had actually gone over to the side of the Dauphin and the rest of France. With that all English hopes of final victory vanished. Already in 1431, when the little Henry had received the crown in Paris, the coronation had been palpably a farce; for Henry was no more master of France than he was master of the Pacific Isles. And now, within a few months of Burgundy's desertion, he ceased to be master even of the capital itself. Paris passed with the rest of France into the hands of its lawful King—formerly the Dauphin and now Charles VII. The only foothold remaining to the English was Normandy, and to Normandy they clung tenaciously for another ten years or more. Richard, Duke of York (who assumed the command in France on Bedford's death, and of whom we shall hear again), resisted stoutly all the incursions of the French, and at one time it seemed as if Normandy might have remained ours at the cost of surrendering our other claims. A truce to that effect was even signed by Henry's ministers, who wished for peace; but by the bungling of these same ministers a fresh provocation was offered to the French. They took the excuse gladly, gathered their armies, swept us first from Rouen, then from Caen, and finally in 1450 overwhelmed our army at Formigny. The game was up; our other ports were surrendered; our garrisons captured or withdrawn. Even Bordeaux fell, never hitherto abandoned since Henry II had it from his wife; and by 1453, except for

recently committed a similar indiscretion. He had married a princess of Hainault, which, like St. Pol, adjoined Burgundian territory, and also, like St. Pol, was coveted by the Duke.

the Calais garrison, the last English soldier had quitted the soil of France.

The Hundred Years' War was over. The dreams of conquest had miserably failed, and the claim to the French throne, which Edward III had invented and Henry V revived, was now for ever abandoned. Permanent peace between the two rival countries was, of course, impossible: it was not to be expected. Many a war remained for us to wage with our "sweet enemy," and during the eighteenth century alone, the long series of struggles, which ended at Waterloo, stretched over a century or more. But that struggle was for colonial, not for domestic conquest. The prizes were Calcutta and Quebec, not Paris or Orleans. Henceforward, by a sort of mutual understanding, each nation was to possess its own native soil unchallenged; and England remaining England, and France France, each went its different way.

And, indeed, those ways were widely different. France used the next half century to nurse her strength and consolidate her power. Charles VII, once so feeble as the Dauphin, proved a strong king. He organised a national army, suppressing free companies and feudal bands. He aimed at concentrating all power in his own hands and centralising the Government of France, as Henry II had long ago done in England. And what Charles VII began was continued and completed by his son, Louis XI. That astute and able monarch spread his web spider-wise over the whole length and breadth of the land. The great feudal provinces—even Burgundy among them—were drawn into his toils. All were made to feel his power, and in the long run all came to bless it. For Louis restored prosperity to the towns and cultivation to the fields. He encouraged industries, revived markets, instituted fairs, and improved the high roads and the means of transit; so that under his rule France grew young again, and, throwing off the fatal influences of her old disunion, stepped once more into the forefront of the nations.

England in the second half of the fifteenth century presents another picture of a less happy sort. Endless dissensions racked her; and it seemed as though she was sickening of the very malady from which France had just recovered. Princes quarrelled and the leading nobility took sides, ranging themselves under this leader or that. The crown was the centre of dispute, and the royal power changed hands with a bewildering rapidity. Henry VI, when he became of age to rule, had not the character to hold the realm together; and he, the third Lancastrian, was made to suffer bitterly for the fatal precedent the first had set. When Henry Bolingbroke dethroned King Richard, he had pointed the way to successful usurpation, and now under his feeble grandson the experiment was to be repeated. Failure abroad was followed by anarchy at home; and the Hundred Years' War was barely over when the Wars of the Roses began.

CHAPTER XVII

THE RISE OF THE HOUSE OF YORK

I

THE loss of Normandy was perhaps no great misfortune to King Henry VI. To hold down a conquered country is never an easy or a pleasant task; and Henry's whole strength would very soon be needed to meet troubles nearer home. Nevertheless, failure begets failure, and Henry's coming troubles were in a sense directly due to the collapse of his armies in France. For some forty years or more the people of England had been buoyed up by the enticing dreams of conquest. The thrill of Agincourt and the early success of Henry V had served at any rate to keep them quiet, if not perhaps contented. But now that the dream was shattered and the excitement over, there followed the inevitable relapse. Discontent grew rife; men looked for a scapegoat, and blame naturally fell upon the king's favourite ministers who had been so ready to conclude the shameful, though necessary, peace. There were many eager to denounce them, but the chief spokesman of the discontent was the former commander of the army in Normandy, Richard, Duke of York.

It was an evil day for King Henry when this royal cousin turned against him; for Richard was something more than an opponent: he was a rival to the throne. He too could trace his pedigree to Edward III, so that, if the royal blood flowed in the Lancastrian line, it flowed in York's no less. The sons of Edward III had

been four in number. The Black Prince, Lionel, John of Gaunt, and Edmund—this was the order of their birth. Through the murder of King Richard, the Black Prince's son, the throne had gone to Gaunt's line, the three Lancastrian Henries, and the third was even now upon it. But the families of Lionel and of Edmund had in neither case died out: on the contrary, they had eventually been linked by an intermarriage, and the son of that marriage was none other than Richard, Duke of York. Now, which of the two had a better title to the throne—Richard, as the descendant of these two brothers, or the King, as descendant of their middle brother, Gaunt—might have been a nice question for dispute; but in point of character, at least, there could be no question whatsoever. The Duke was infinitely the better man.

For Henry VI was in truth but a poor creature.¹ His father, we must remember, had married the daughter of the mad French king; and Henry, as the child of that marriage, had inherited the fatal taint, and, with increasing years, the trouble grew. His case was very similar to his grandfather's. Normally sane, though always weak and moody, he fell at intervals into a sort of melancholy madness. When in 1453 he was thus seized, he became quite helpless: he could neither speak nor recognise his friends. He suffered unutterable things at the hands of the royal physicians; was poulticed and shaved, drugged and bled, till it was enough indeed to drive him mad; and mad he still remained. Incapable of government, he needed a regent. One man was obvious: all pointed to the Duke of York, and the Duke of York took the post. The Duke was a moderate man. He expected to get the crown on Henry's death, and with that certainty in prospect he would have been well content to wait, but that this very year an event

¹ It should, perhaps, be said to Henry's credit that he followed in Wykeham's steps by founding a school and a college—Eton and King's College, Cambridge.

occurred which was a deathblow to all his hopes. The queen, hitherto childless, gave birth to a son and heir: York saw that, wait as he might, he could never now be king. The future lay in his own hands, and the sooner he struck the better. Even had he himself been loth to act, there were those who urged him on. Chief among these was the great Earl of Warwick, head of the Neville family—the most powerful in all England. There was royal blood among the Nevilles, and their property was immense. By a series of prudent matches, this house had gathered to itself, like some great snowball, a fabulous number of honours, titles, and estates. So it came about that Richard Neville, besides being Earl of Warwick, was Earl also of Newburgh and Aumarle, Baron of Stanley and Hanslape, Lord of Glamorgan and Morgannoc. He held the De Spenser lands in Wales and the Beauchamp lands in Gloucester; and his manors, scattered through a score of counties, numbered 150 at the least. To have such a man for friend meant more than a whole host of armed retainers; and Warwick was ready to back York through thick and thin.

Against such a combination, King Henry, in his half-demented state, seemed helpless as a child. Yet nothing is more astounding in the years which followed than the dogged obstinacy with which his cause was fought. Defeated, his armies rallied and won back lost ground. Driven into exile, he invariably managed to return: and nothing but his death could permanently rob him of the throne. The true cause of this extraordinary resilience was the brave and determined spirit of Margaret, his queen. Nothing could suppress or daunt that wonderful woman. Despair had no meaning for her; and no sooner was she beaten than she plotted to turn the tables once again. Yet her very qualities carried their curse along with them. She would stick at nothing to attain her ends. The extremest measures of intimidation and revenge, plunder and devastation, sack of towns and brutal executions, were a part of the game she played; and it was

her outrageous conduct of the war more than anything else which undid again the Lancastrians' brief successes as soon as they were won. Three times, as we shall see, the Yorkist claimant was driven out of power, and three times again he was enabled to return, because England could not tolerate the violence of his foes.

The first of these occasions was in 1459. York, Warwick, and their friends had risen in open rebellion against the King, but without success. Their army had been scattered. York had fled to Ireland, Warwick to Calais; but their exile did not last, and their best ally was the savage temper of the Queen. She could use no moderation in her victory: she had Midland boroughs plundered and London burghers hanged for having favoured York, and such conduct soon roused the south against her. Feeling was high when Warwick, seizing the chance, came back from Calais. London and the southerners rallied to him. He beat the royalists at Northampton, drove the Queen into ignominious flight, and made a prisoner of the King. York was brought back from Ireland, and, Warwick forbidding him to take the crown, he became Regent once again.

But this first Lancastrian failure was only the prelude to a fiercer struggle. Though the south and east had turned against the Queen, the north and west were still faithful to her cause. There, among the powerful border earls, she gathered fresh troops, and, before many months were out, she was on the warpath again. Her forces caught the main enemy at Wakefield, and crushed them utterly. Many Yorkist leaders fell, and, what is more important, the Duke Richard himself was left dead on the field. The Lancastrian army, flushed by this success, swept down towards London. At St. Albans they met Warwick and scattered his army too. The capital seemed already within their grasp: the gates were actually open for surrender; but, while they dallied, a fresh enemy appeared upon the scene. York himself was dead, but his young son, Edward, was alive, and he it was, not Margaret

or King Henry, who, in the nick of time, slipped through the open gates. The Lancastrians, disappointed, withdrew to the north, plundering, burning, and rousing bitter hatred as they went. Edward followed at their heels, gathering support from the outraged Midlanders; and, when his army came up with the enemy at Towton near York, it was in a mood for fierce revenge. There, upon a bleak hill-top in driving snow, was fought as bitter and bloody a fight as English battlefield has ever witnessed. The Lancastrian chiefs were slaughtered almost to a man. The King and Queen fled to Scotland; and the young Edward, now Duke of York in his dead father's stead, was free to take the crown. His father in a like case had held his hand. But there was no such scruple in the son, and the second act of this bewildering drama closed upon his coronation as King Edward IV.

The third act opened with a scene which did little credit to the King thus newly crowned. Warwick, now called the King-maker, was busy in the north and west, reducing all to order, winning back one by one Lancastrian fortresses, completing the work of victory. And, meanwhile, the young man for whom he laboured, and on whom in very fact he had bestowed the crown, was idling away his time in feasting and hunting and the pleasures of the Court. There is small wonder that the two friends soon fell out. The rift was caused by Edward's imprudent selection of his queen. The young King was now secretly afraid of the great King-maker, and, anxious to secure some counterpoise to Warwick's influence, he married the daughter of another English earl. Warwick was furious that he had not been consulted; he too had daughters of his own, and, if Edward's wife was to be an English lady, his was the premier claim. The breach thus caused soon widened. Warwick fell into disgrace, plotted, revolted, and, failing to hold his own, went over to the enemy's camp. He and Queen Margaret together succeeded in driving Edward out, and for a few months replaced the miserable Henry once more

upon the throne. So, for the third time, the Lancastrians were in power again ; but this was their last success, and it was brief. Over in France, whither he had fled, Edward had found men and money to support his cause. In 1471 he was back again. He beat the Lancastrians decisively at Barnet, where fell their new ally, Warwick the King-maker. He beat what remained of them again at Tewkesbury, where he made a prisoner of the Queen. The old King Henry, whom he had caught at London, he determined to remove, and got his brother, Richard of Gloucester, to perform the deed. The House of Lancaster being thus practically extinct, Edward could breathe more freely ; and with this last murder the blood-letting was ended. And it was time. Never has civil war been waged in England in so pitiless a fashion, and in the universal butchery both parties had borne its share. There is not much to choose between them. It was by murder that the Lancastrian family had risen to the throne, and it was the murderous spirit in which they waged the war that effectually ruined their chances of success. But, whatever may be said for the early leaders of the rival house, its later record is very far from clean ; and for the ugliest crimes of mean treachery or sinister intrigue we must look to these two Yorkist brothers, King Edward and Richard of Gloucester.

We need not dwell long upon their story. The twelve years still remaining to Edward were by contrast uneventful, and, for his subjects at any rate, not unhappy. There was no more killing, for there was no one left to kill. Taxation was light, for the King had plenty, having stripped the Lancastrians bare. Edward lived almost wholly for his pleasures, and, as years went on, sank deeper and deeper into debauchery and vice. Occasionally he would bestir himself : once to offer a futile challenge to the King of France, and again when he grew suspicious of his brother George, Duke of Clarence. That young man's fate was quickly settled : he was thrown into the Tower and there, according to the popular though doubtful

story, drowned by his own choice in a butt of Malmsey wine. For the rest, Edward left the chief conduct of affairs to his younger brother above-mentioned, Richard, Duke of Gloucester. Gloucester bears perhaps the most evil name in English history: he is Shakespeare's worst villain; and tradition has made of him a hideous hump-backed dwarf. He was certainly brave, and held some reputation as a fighter. He was with equal certainty a bad, unwholesome man; and when Edward died, worn out by self-indulgence, and left behind him two sons, mere boys, under the protection of the Queen their mother, there were signs of something more than a merely friendly interest in the ominous attentions of their wicked uncle.

The Queen (it was she whose marriage with Edward had given the King-maker so much offence) was no match for the wiles of Richard of Gloucester. The younger of her boys she managed to keep beside her. But the elder boy, to whom the crown rightfully belonged, was taken under Gloucester's wing; and, pending the summons of Parliament which should declare his nephew King, Gloucester assumed the task of governing as his Regent. This was in April; and Richard did not long delay his second stroke. In June, before a gathering of the Privy Council, he boldly accused the Queen of witchcraft—declared she had been practising Black Arts upon him; and as a proof of the charge he unbared his withered left arm, a deformity which all knew to have existed since his childhood. Then without more ado he demanded the punishment of the Queen and her supporters. At a signal armed men entered: the Queen's friends on the Council were arrested, and one at least was beheaded on the spot. The Queen herself, who had taken sanctuary at Westminster with her younger son, was compelled to give him up, and the lad was housed in the Tower along with his elder brother, whom public opinion still fondly regarded as the King. As, however, the day fixed for the Coronation Parliament approached, the plot began to

thicken. A sermon was preached at St. Paul's cross by one of the Duke's men in which the legality of the Queen's marriage with King Edward was openly called in question. This paved the way; and when, a few days later, Parliament assembled, Gloucester's trump card was played. Declaring that the aforesaid marriage had been improperly performed, in an unconsecrated place, and without due authority of Church, he swore that the Queen's son had no right whatever to the throne of England, and claimed it for himself. London at the time was packed with armed Yorkist soldiery: Parliament, cowed into submission, uttered no word of protest, and Richard of Gloucester had his way. He was accepted, and received the crown with the title of Richard III. Yet, even so, some sense of insecurity remained; and one night in the August of that year the two young Princes disappeared mysteriously from their cell. The secret of their fate was well kept, and nobody but Richard and their gaolers knew what had become of them. Two centuries later some masons working in the Tower discovered the two skeletons buried beneath a staircase. So the crime was proved; yet, even in Richard's own day, there was not a man who doubted for a moment that the guilt was his.

Richard reaped as he had sowed; and his reign of two short years was a series of misfortunes. First one friend and then another turned against him. Plots and conspiracies abounded. His only son died and left him heirless; and then, to complete the tale, his wife died also, and men declared that he had poisoned her. Richard denied the charge and, by whatever means he could, endeavoured to stem the rising disaffection. He punished ruthlessly, and one Wiltshire gentleman was hanged for writing a humorous rhyme about the King. But these efforts were in vain: nobody loved him, and there was one at hand in whose power it lay to bring relief to the distracted country, and to heal in his own person the fatal feud which had so long divided England

between Lancaster and York. Henry V's French wife had married at her husband's death a Welsh earl, Owen Tudor. Their son in turn married a Lancastrian lady; and so it came about that their grandson, bearing, too, the familiar Lancastrian name of Henry, was now the last survivor of the House of Gaunt. But that was not all, for this Henry Tudor was betrothed to a Yorkist lady, sister of the two princes murdered in the Tower. By such a marriage he was destined, as it were, to merge the two rival Houses into one and to display the White Rose and the Red Rose quartered side by side upon his arms. Henry Tudor was now in exile, but in 1485 he reappeared. Landing in Wales, he drew the Welshmen to him for his Tudor blood, and with a force, small indeed but eager, confronted King Richard's host at Bosworth Field. Numbers, however, counted little on that day. Many of Richard's supposed allies never fought. A rout set in, and, seeing all was lost, Richard—a brave man to the end—plunged into the *mêlée* and was killed. After the fight his battered crown was discovered hanging on a thorn bush. They carried it to the victorious leader, and placing it on his head, proclaimed him Henry VII.

II

So ended the terrible and futile struggle of the Roses, terrible because of the passions it aroused, and because the atrocities to which it led surpassed in horror those of all civil wars before or since; futile because no principle of nationality or creed or class was here at stake. It was not even, as were the early wars, an effort of the baronage to curb the pretensions of the King. Its leaders on either side were mere self-seekers, royal princelings or ambitious earls, overswollen with pride of wealth or lust of power; and the only useful outcome of their fierce encounter was that by mutual slaughter they rid the country of much of their dangerous power. The Tudors reigned more securely because the old feudal nobility had thus

committed political suicide upon the field of battle.¹ Nor was there here any such question of privilege or freedom as brought on the war against King Charles I. The country as a whole was apathetic, and looked on with little interest at the quarrel, seeing nothing to be gained by an exchange of crowns. As for the soldiers who fought the battles of the Roses, they were not even the feudal liegemen of the party chiefs. They were mercenary "retainers," hired, like the Free Companies in the French wars, by individual captains. They fought upon condition of receiving food and clothing, a little pay perhaps, and, in the more distant prospect, plunder. The nobler instincts of even local patriotism and loyalty were lost; and the sole concern which the normal Englishman displayed throughout the struggle was to keep out of it. No single town cared enough for either party to stand a siege on its behalf. When on one or two occasions there were genuine outbursts of national excitement, these were due to anger at the Lancastrian excesses: and Towton was simply the revenge of the more civilised southerners upon the freebooters from the north. Apart from that the townsfolk and country folk meddled little in the fighting, and went their ways to buy or sell, plough their fields or weave their wool, as though nothing much was happening. The truth is, that Englishmen were beginning at last to live their lives in their own way, and to be proudly independent of the authority of their chiefs: they had taken a step forward out of the feudal age.

The fifteenth century, indeed, saw many important changes spread over the country-side. Feudalism was fast perishing: the Black Death and the Peasants' Rising had killed it. The old-fashioned "manor" over which the local "lord" was petty king, commanding the allegiance, ordering the very lives of all who held land from

¹ At the accession of Henry VII, so many peers were either minors or in exile that some historians have been led into supposing the actual number of the peerage to have been diminished by the wars. This was not the case.

him, was soon to be a thing of the past. Instead of the "tied" villein, we now find the free labourer working for a wage, and directly dependent upon no man. The more prosperous of them had become yeoman farmers, owning their miniature estates, and passing them down by legal right from the father to the son. The number of such small holdings was increasing; and this fact of itself brought in a change which was to transform the very aspect of the landscape. Hitherto, each villager, whether he villein or freeman, had held possession only over scattered strips of tillage, a hide in this corner and a hide in that. There was a sort of justice and equality in such a distribution which made not a little for good-fellowship: and in the working of the strips there had been much mutual give and take among the villagers. They would lend a hand to carry each other's harvest, and borrow a neighbour's horse to cart their hay. As often as not, there would be a "village plough," which went the round from one man's strip to another's; and equally there was "Common Land" on the outskirts of the tillage which was free to all, and on which every villager could graze his beasts at will. We must imagine the country therefore as one endless rolling plain—such a plain as may nowadays still be seen upon the Continent—bare of hedges, fences, and suchlike obstacles, resembling rather the chequer of an allotment garden, plot beside plot, and strip by strip, though on a much larger scale. During the fifteenth century, however, all this began to change. The independent yeoman, priding himself upon his newly-won independence, would prefer a little compact farm to these scattered unmanageable strips. He therefore endeavoured to mass his fields together; bought an odd corner from a neighbour here, exchanged an outlying strip for one more central, "borrowed" a little maybe from the Common Land. And then, to mark the boundaries of his small estate, he would set up a fence or plant a hedge; and very soon his neighbour did the same; the habit of demarcation grew; so country hedges

began to bristle forth over the whole length and breadth of England, and the country, as the term is, was gradually "enclosed".

There was further one manifest advantage in this "enclosure" system. Since the Black Death had rendered labour scarce, it had become more popular than ever to keep sheep and cattle, simply because it took fewer men to supervise the grazing than to till the land. Now, as men soon saw, nothing was easier than to hedge or fence a field, put cattle into it, and leave them to themselves. This tempted all landowners, rich and poor alike, to set aside a portion of their land as pasture: they were even tempted to do more than this and to encroach upon the Common Land; so, as time went on, and especially under the Tudors, pieces of that, too, were similarly "enclosed" by those who perhaps had little right to do so. Sheep-farming became increasingly the fashion. The trade in wool grew with it; and, as was natural, the manufacture of cloth, left hitherto to the Flemings of Ghent or Bruges, became a staple industry in many English towns. England was in fact beginning to develop along new lines. No longer content to be in the main an agricultural country, she was to take a special pride in the skill of her craftsmen and the wealth of her great merchants. She was to gain a new prosperity and strength from her power to turn out goods, and so at last to earn her honourable title—honourable, though Napoleon himself first bestowed it with a sneer—as a nation of shop-keepers.

Shop-keepers naturally congregate together; trade and industries mean towns, and already long years before this our English towns had been growing in size, number and importance. They were of many sorts: there were the harbour towns like Bristol and Southampton, and the famous Cinque Ports (which were really more than five) on the Kent and Sussex coast, Hythe, Romney, Hastings, Sandwich, Dover, Winchelsea and Rye. There were old historic capitals, like Winchester and

York; there were towns that had gathered round a fortress, like Nottingham and Derby; others, like Bury St. Edmunds, that sprang up in the neighbourhood of some great monastic house. Finally, with the growth of trade, many of the old towns, as well as many new ones, took on a fresh importance, becoming centres of manufacture or barter. Lancashire coal-pits were not then dreamt of; and the south being ahead of the north in skill and enterprise, the towns there were more plentiful and prosperous. Again, the growth of the weaving industry, of which mention was made above, had, too, a remarkable effect on various districts. Norfolk and Suffolk in the east, and the Cotswold country in the west, were the chief centres of this industry (as Yorkshire and Lancashire are the chief industrial centres of to-day); and, while an ancient capital like Norwich very naturally became the central market for such goods, other smaller towns, where weavers gathered, multiplied and thrived. How great was their prosperity we may shrewdly guess when we consider the fine churches their citizens erected, often ten times too big for the inhabitants to-day, and when we consider the stately fabric of the town-halls and private mansions which merchants and wool-staplers built for their own use.

Each of these towns had its individual history, more lively and eventful than the slow-paced humdrum development of the country-side. In quite early days most of them had secured their "freedom" and evolved a constitution of their own. The right to trade, the conditions of their taxation, the privilege of managing their own affairs had been defined for them by a "Charter," purchased or extorted from the King. Each town would have its mayor, its aldermen (or elders), its officers of police, its bailiffs, beadles, town-crier, and town-clerk. Interference, whether from the King or others, was much resented by the citizens of these "free" towns; and often they had a hard fight of it to hold their own against the pretensions of some local magnate, were he a power-

ful earl or, scarcely less powerful, a bishop of the Church. In the long run, however, their efforts were in general rewarded by success, and in one way or another the townsfolk developed strong organisations for the protection of their interests. Each craft or trade, for example, was organised into what we should call a "Society" or "Union," but known in the Middle Ages by the name of Guild. A Guild would perhaps originally be formed to provide a common chest or fund out of which the members might be maintained if they fell sick, or given a decent funeral if they died. Gradually, however, the Guild began to take under its care the whole organisation of the handicraft or trade in which its members were employed. This was comparatively easy, because the members of a trade were in those days accustomed to hang close together. Often they would be grouped in a single street or quarter of the town. Shoe Lane, for instance, would be occupied by the cobblers; Bread Street, by the bakers; and so forth; and in most of our old towns street names betraying such an origin still survive. Thanks to this contiguity the craftsmen's Guilds, when they arose, were able to form a compact united group and to exercise a strict control over their members. Their first concern, as with the Trades' Unions of to-day, was to protect the interests of the group. The Cobblers' Guild, since it would include all the cobblers in the town, was able to regulate the sale of boots and shoes, to see that a fair price was asked and paid for them, and to see that no single cobbler should attempt to undersell his fellows. Equally was the Guild in duty bound to uphold the honour of the trade by preventing bad workmanship and by punishing attempts to cheat. Strict rules were made against adulteration, such as that of the London pewterers' in 1348, "No one shall make privily vessels of lead or of false alloy for sending out of the City to fairs, etc.; but let the things be shown that be so sent to the wardens before they go out". To the same intent

great care was taken that nobody should set up as a pewterer or cobbler, or whatever it might be, until he were adequately trained and could do full credit to the trade. "No journeyman," says the rule of the cutlers, "who has not served his apprenticeship in the City, or otherwise served seven years in the City in such a trade, shall be admitted to the work, if he have not first been tried by the overseers to ascertain how much he is deserving to take." The terms of apprenticeship were very strict, and until a boy or man had signed his indenture to a master, paid his fee, and served his time, he was not entitled to do business on his own. All this was, of course, much to the advantage of the buying public, who were hereby secured against the sale of shoddy or inferior goods. But there were also times when the Guilds were tempted to put up the prices to an unfair level, thus compelling the citizens to take measures for their self-defence. So we find the Mayor very frequently—and in rarer cases even the King himself—intervening to fix the rate of prices at a reasonable standard. Under Henry II the weight of the farthing loaf was fixed by law. John took similar action regarding ale. This led, of course, to numerous disputes, and there were attempts to evade the law. Sometimes the bakers would go on strike; sometimes a tradesman would attempt to profiteer. Cases, set on record, have come down to us. "The wife of Hildy, the poulterer," says one, "was committed to prison for that, against the proclamation of the Mayor, she had sold four wood-cocks for 20 pence"; and she was only released upon an express promise to amend her ways. Other "tricks of the trade" were punished in less pleasant fashion. One, Robert Porter, who, knowing that the loaf he sold was under weight, had "fraudulently inserted a piece of iron weighing about 6 ounces with intent to make the said loaf weigh more, to the deceit of the people," was put in pillory with his hands and head stuck through the holes

in a board, and "the said loaf and piece of iron was hung round his neck".

Besides such differences between Guildsmen and the town authorities, there was often, very naturally, a clash of interest between Guild and Guild, which led to jealousies, disputes, and even open fighting. Not that such disputes were on a large scale, or in any way similar to the disputes which now arise between employers and Trade Unions. In the first place, the employers themselves were in those days members of the Guild, and often worked as master-craftsmen side by side with their employees and apprentices, so that there was seldom anything but loyalty and good fellowship between the master and the man. In the second place, the operation of the Guild was confined to its native town: there were few or no dealings between the craft guilds of one town and another. So disputes, when they arose, concerned the inhabitants of the place alone, and were settled by the local authorities with an eye to the interests of their own small community. So it is that some modern writers have thought that this was the Golden Age of trade and industry, an age when men had not yet learnt the suicidal violence and distrust of modern competition, and when all were ready to cooperate in a common patriotism to their native town, sinking their private differences for the good of their neighbours and their fellow-citizens.

Nevertheless, there was one class of Guild which was very apt to tyrannise over the rest. These were the Guilds of Merchants, naturally the most powerful, partly because they were the richest, partly because by birth and station their members were mostly influential men. It was not uncommon, therefore, for these Merchant Guilds to take the control of the town government altogether into their hands. Men have always looked to the wealthy for a lead; and the merchants could often get themselves elected aldermen for life and so monopolise

the corporation. Even short of that they could easily find the means to bring the others to their way of thinking. As traders, they invariably would have the whip-hand of the humbler artisan. Their Guilds, at any rate, if not the others, were in touch with traders in neighbouring towns, and even in foreign countries. They could act in concert, and arrange together what prices should be paid to the craftsmen for their goods. This was often a lower price than was altogether fair, and the craftsmen not unnaturally resented the great merchants' greed. At the time of the Peasants' Rising, a stand of some sort was made against them, and many unpopular merchants shared the tragic fate which befel some landowners at the peasants' hands.

Yet, in the long run, even the Merchant Guilds were no enemies to freedom; and the towns had always showed a stubborn resistance to tyranny and wrong, whether under Henry III, when they took de Montfort's side, or in the Wars of the Roses, when they refused to tolerate the behaviour of the Queen; and these powerful companies played, on the whole, a creditable part in the making of our history. They were not afraid to stand out against the King over questions of privilege or taxation; and they could command a hearing by their money, by their influence, and, if need were, by something more. As time went on, they too had armed; they had formed military contingents of their own; they kept a whole armoury of weapons stored against emergencies in the Guild Hall; and when, in due course, the day came to strike a blow for liberty against the King's oppression, they were ready. It was the towns that were the undoing of Charles Stuart: and their strength, which was so decisive, was not, we may be sure, built up in a day or a year. While the peasants were still struggling to shake off the yoke of Feudalism, and be quit of their lords and masters, the towns had long since learnt to bow their necks to no man, but to manage their own affairs. The love of liberty grows with the use of it; and it was this

long experience in self-government that bred in the citizens and Guildsmen¹ that unique spirit of sturdy independence which has laid the foundations of our English democracy.

Meanwhile, when Henry VII ascended the throne, town and country alike desired nothing so much as peace—peace abroad and peace at home. Henry gave them both; and in the quiet years that followed the English people were slowly building up, by steady workmanship and a widening trade, the wealth and prosperity which were to lift them again into the forefront of the nations under the strong rule of the House of Tudor.

¹ By the beginning of the seventeenth century the Guilds had in point of fact decayed and almost vanished; but the towns' spirit of independence was the same.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE MIDDLE AGES

THE Middle Ages are over and done with ; but who shall say that they are understood? No history book can do more than trace a bare outline and lift, as it were, but a corner of the curtain. It can record the facts, set down the outstanding names, and catalogue the dates ; but how little can it conjure up the living spirit of past ages or reveal to our eyes the true character of those who lived in them. Such and such words, we may tell ourselves, King Henry spoke. Here, we may say, the Archbishop fell and died. But how these men thought and felt, the ground of their faith and their antagonism, the actual workings of their inner mind, all these remain conjecture. There is but one key wherewith to unlock the secrets of the past. We can read the thoughts of former generations only in those material records which they themselves have left behind. Their minds must be interpreted for us by direct study of their art, their songs, their writings, of the architecture of their houses and their churches, the ritual of their religious services, the arms they fought with, the furniture they used, even the fashion of the clothes they wore—things upon which, while perhaps they thought it least, they set the indelible impress of their very selves.

If then we are to have any true understanding of the Middle Ages, we must seek it thus at first hand ; and, though the men of those days were not perhaps great writers, we shall turn most naturally to the few books

which remain to us from them. Now chronicles, it must be confessed, are for the most part musty reading, being written, as a rule, in the crabbed style of degenerate monkish Latin; but to this rule there are exceptions. One such is Froissart, the courtly French wanderer who spent his life in the service of many royal masters (the Black Prince himself among them), and to whom we owe the history of our own glorious wars with France. Gay, genial, gossiping Froissart is none of your dull conscientious chroniclers; he dwells with an inimitable gusto on every detail which may take his fancy, whether it be that cave in Ireland known as St. Patrick's Purgatory, into which, when men descended, "a certain hot vapour rose against them and strake so into their heads that they were fain to sit down on the stairs which were of stone; and after they had sat there a season, they had great desire to sleep and slept there all night"; or were it again the volume of his works which he showed the King of England, "fair illumined and written, and covered with crimson velvet, with ten buttons of silver and gilt, and roses of gold in the midst, with two great clasps gilt, richly wrought". Froissart looked at the works of man and nature with a true poet's eye: every line of him breathes with the reckless jollity of a world still young and ardent. A well fought battle fills him with "pleasure and delight," and all war's horrors are redeemed for him by the beauty and romance of mediæval knighthood. His book is the true knight's testament; he is the high-priest of perfect chivalry; and it was not for nothing that he was born a native of the most chivalrous of countries, France.

Yet England, too, produced her Froissart, fit also to immortalise his country's spirit in a great romance. Malory was his name, and his book the "Mort d' Arthur". The legend of the Round Table is not indeed history proper; but, if in this beautiful fairy-tale of gallantry and love Malory has somewhat transfigured and ennobled the ideals of his time, he was only therein following and

perfecting a tradition already centuries old. The story had been often told by Geoffrey of Monmouth and many others when Malory retold it in his own matchless fifteenth-century prose; but he lifted it on to a higher plane and surrounded it with an undying glamour. The very titles of the chapters call us, as Andrew Lang has said, into the region of romance: "How Sir Launcelot came to the Chapel Perilous and gat there of a dead corpse a piece of cloth and a sword"; "How the damsel and Beaumains came to the siege and to the sycamore tree, and there Beaumains blew a horn and then the Knight of the Red Lands came to fight him". But though such words sound like a summons to an elfin and outlandish world, yet Malory is no dreamer: his tales are simple, strong, and real, more manly than Tennyson's somewhat sentimental Idylls, more true to life than the fanciful allegories of Spenser's "Faerie Queen". They take us straight to the heart of the middle ages and reveal to us, as nothing else can, the best and noblest side of an age which conceived the beautiful ideal of Christian chivalry.

But not all Frenchmen or Englishmen could be knight errants; and there are the humbler folk to think of. To complete the picture and appreciate the character of the normal citizen, we must look elsewhere than to Malory or Froissart. Happily, we shall not look in vain. In 1400, the very year when Malory was born, there died one who was great in poetry as he in prose. Geoffrey Chaucer, though himself a soldier in the French wars of Edward III and at all times a special favourite at the Court, was not one who confined his pen to the deeds of lords and princes or to knightly tales of war. He was what no Frenchman perhaps could then have been, a natural democrat—one who moved on easy terms of familiarity among men of every class, and who was as much at home in a wayside tavern as in the company of the great. Chaucer was hail-fellow-well-met with all and sundry, and in his "Tales of the Canterbury Pilgrims"

he has brought together as mixed a company as ever gathered round the table of an inn. Knight and miller, parson and peasant, prioress and doctor, cook and merchant and ship's captain all take their drinks together, make their pilgrimage together, and tell their various tales together, as though distinctions of class or privilege or wealth did not exist. We to-day can scarcely imagine such complete unconsciousness of any social barrier; but Chaucer brings home to us, as no one else can do, what men meant in the Middle Ages when they made boast of English "freedom". Of the characters to which his prologue introduces us, some are good folk, many somewhat blasphemous, a few downright bad; but all alike breathe the self-same spirit—a sturdy independence that knows neither how to truckle nor how to condescend, and a bluff good-natured geniality that accepts a fellow-man at his true worth. About the life and manners of these various folk there is much evidence to be gleaned from Chaucer's racy sketches. He is a shrewd, though kindly, judge of human character. He apportions praise and blame with an even hand—blame to the friar, a wanton merry fellow, too easy by half with the "pardons" he dispenses; praise to the poor honest parson, model, if ever man was, of what a priest should be:—

He waited after no pomp and reverence,
Nor maked him a spicéd conscience,
But Christés love, and His apostles twelve,
He taughte, and first he followed it himselfe.

The prioress, too, is a worthy and delightfully human character. She kept "small hounds," to which she was devotedly attached; and her table manners were so good that they call forth special note:—

At meate well y-taught was she withal
She let no morsel from her lippes fall.
Nor wet her fingers in her sauce deep.
Well could she carry a morsel and well keep
That no droppe ne fell upon her breaste. . . .
Her over-lippe wiped she so clean
That in her cuppe was no farthing seen
Of grease. . . .

The monk also kept his hounds; but of him it is less easy to approve:—

. . . he was a pricasour aright: [hunter]
 Grey-hounds he had, as swift as fowl in flight;
 Of priking and of hunting for the hare [hard riding]
 Was all his lust; for no cost would he spare.

But Chaucer was a man of broad sympathies and he is slow to condemn. He appreciates all sides of human character. He cannot forbear from dwelling with obvious admiration upon the miller's great brute strength:—

Full big he was of brawn and eke of bones;
 That proved well, for over all ther he cam,
 At wrestling he would have alway the ram.
 He was short-shouldered, broad, a thick knarre [churl]
 There was no door that he nolde heave of harre [hinge]
 Or break it at a running with his head.

And equally we may detect in him a kindly fellow-feeling for the poor "clerk" of Oxenford:—

For him was liefer have at his bed's head
 Twenty books clad in black and red,
 Of Aristotle and his philosophy,
 Than robes rich or fiddle or gay psaltry.

But however minute and faithful the detail of these pictures, perhaps the chief impression which we get from them is general rather than particular. We seem to see in bold true outline the Englishman as he was known to the men of Chaucer's day, the Englishman who fought at the battles of Crecy and Poitiers, who listened to John Ball's revolutionary sermons and perhaps read John Wycliffe's Bible on the sly, yet lost his head over neither. He was a queer mixture then, as always, free and easy in his manners, yet not without a certain inbred courtesy, a voracious feeder, but, as host, generous to a fault, a great talker too, humorous, coarse, and witty by turns, a trifle sentimental in his passions, but a shrewd hard-headed man of business when need was, possessing on the whole an even temper, unlimited pluck, a taste for fine clothes, and an undisguised conviction of his own importance. There may have been

happier and more prosperous times than his, but, despite all the changes and chances of that stirring age, it was unmistakably a proud and a merry England of which Chaucer wrote.

But from chronicles and poems it is time to turn to monuments more durable and scarcely (if read aright) less significant than they. The buildings of the period have also their tale to tell. Mediæval castles, it is true, are mostly laid in ruins; and it must take something of a student's eye to reconstruct their fallen fabric and call up in imagination the battles which were waged under their walls. But the churches still stand, and from these we may learn much of the people's character, which books can hardly tell. Architecture is an index of men's aspirations and ideals: and the history of religious architecture is nothing less than a mirror of our national development. First comes the period of the Norman rule, and for a hundred years or more after the Conquest England is filled with the massive masonry of those Norman churches which still stand so proud and firmly rooted to the present day—type of the men themselves who set them up—semicircular arches supported on thick sturdy pillars and roughly hewn with half-barbarous zigzag patterns round their edge; walls of immense solidity, pierced with narrow-mouthed, round-headed windows like the loopholes in a fort; above all, and dominating all, the square, squat central tower, more fitted, one would say, to cap a fortress than a church. So four generations of a fighting race built to God's glory, and then towards the close of the twelfth century there comes a change; just when the true English spirit is beginning to struggle up against its Norman masters and Magna Charta is already within sight, architecture blossoms out into a novel and startling phase. In place of the low, round Norman arch, we behold a new miracle in stone, soaring to a point, propped on columns so delicate and fragile as to appear inadequate for its support did it not rather seem to spring and grow therefrom

as branches from a tree rather than to rest upon them with a downward weight. Light airy carvings (strange contrast to the clumsy Norman axe-work) now cluster round the head-stones of each pillar, and flowery bosses begin to decorate the arching vault. From narrow slits the windows grow into a vast field of glass, in the upper part of which stone or marble mullions meet and intertwine in daring patterns of elaborate tracery. Towers rise to a height no Norman dreamt of, and carry spires yet higher. So men built during the years when the true English spirit was in the first vigour of its birth; and who, looking upon their work, shall say that we are an unimaginative race?

Two centuries, or barely two, pass thus; and then about the time of the Black Death and Edward's wars another change comes sharp. It is as though a sudden soberness had fallen on the masons. The fantastic tracery of the windows ceases, and in its place the lines of the mullions are carried perpendicularly upwards until they meet the arch. A strict rectangular precision supersedes the former riot of the builder's fancy; and windows appear (in Ruskin's unkind phrase) like gridirons converted into stone. This is the third phase, and it is the last; for it continues until Reformation days, when the classical Art of the Renaissance brings other ideas into the builder's mind and he harks back to the models of ancient Greece and Rome. This perpendicular architecture is often majestic, but it is stereotyped to the border of monotony; and is it, we may ask, a mere coincidence that we find the building of this fifteenth century to be like its history, a trifle dull? Had something—the French wars, for instance—dulled the keen edge of the nation's vigour? In any case the epoch which witnessed the final failure of our arms abroad and the futile tragedy of the civil wars at home, created little that was new in politics or art. It was a period of temporary exhaustion, during which the nation rested before embarking upon yet bolder enterprise.

But the Church is, after all, a religious monument; and before all else it is the secret of the people's spiritual life that we should seek to discover there. It is no easy task, for we must not forget that between the Middle Ages and ourselves lies the Protestant Reformation. English religious life has been transformed, and in the process it has largely transformed the churches too. If, therefore, we are fully to appreciate the inner workings of the mediæval mind, we must endeavour, not merely to recall the purposes and uses to which its buildings were once put, but also to imagine the very different appearance these buildings once bore. Our English churches suffered terribly at the reformer's hands. The stained glass windows, which told the Bible story in plain pictorial language to the unlettered folk, have in large measure been destroyed, and the dim interior no longer glows with the gorgeous blues and crimsons fashioned by an art which we have long since lost. The frescoed walls, serving a like purpose, have been white-washed over. The richly painted shrines, the numerous altars lit with candles and draped with splendid hangings, the images of saints, the life-size crucifix which in every parish church stood poised under the chancel arch—all these are gone; and it is only through some knowledge of those countries where the Roman Catholic religion still holds sway that we can call up before our eyes the solemn and elaborate splendour of our mediæval churches and cathedrals. Then again, if we would picture them as they truly were, we must repeople them with monks and clergy, gathered in the chancel stalls morning and evening and in the watches of the night, to hear mass said, recite a litany, or chant the Psalms in Latin. We must rouse the marble bishop from his slumber on the carven tomb, and send him marching round the aisles and cloister at the head of a procession decked out in all the finery of tunicles and copes and carrying aloft some sacred relic or the painted image of a saint. Nor will the church be empty of the common folk. Here will

come, daily perhaps although the visit be but short, the ploughman returning from the field, the scrivener fresh from his office, the craftsman from his forge. Some come to recite their tale of "Pater Nosters" counted out upon a string of beads; some to confide the secret of their sins to a priest concealed in the Confessional; others would gather in groups round one of the many altars, listening to the celebration of the mass and warned when to bow the knee or cross the breast by the tinkling of a bell which marks for illiterate worshippers the more solemn and important moments of the Latin liturgy. All this is past: these scenes have vanished and the old ritual is forgotten. But the churches which witnessed them are still the same. Their stones speak to us for the men who fashioned them and set them up; and in them we may read the evidence of a simple piety and childlike faith, a piety and faith which saw fit to lavish upon its minsters and cathedrals ten times the labour expended upon private dwellings, and which knew no better use for the noblest and fairest of man's handiwork than to dedicate it to the honour and glory of Almighty God.

And we may say more than that. The spirit in which these mighty works were undertaken and completed was typical of the whole character of mediæval England. Just as the men who planned those vaults or carved those pillars laboured in sheer delight and love of their own art, making things beautiful almost without knowing how or why they did so,¹ proceeding often at haphazard and without settled plan, leaving to the fancy of the individual mason the designing of a capital or the moulding of an arch, so in every phase of mediæval life we may trace a similar reliance upon instinct. These men were like children, following unconsciously where natural impulse led them, living, as it were, in the passing mo-

¹Nowadays, the only things which we create in this unconscious spirit, are engines and machines, which are often beautiful though the makers themselves are hardly aware of the fact.

ment, and seldom thinking things out with the logic of pure reason. And, as is the case in children, their characters were queerly mixed. Slaves to the prompting of the moment's whim, they could be grave and gay, austere pious or flippantly irreverent almost at one and the same time. See in the choir-stalls of the church how the monkish carver would give rein to his humorous fancy in designing some caricature of a fellow-monk or some grotesque figure which to ourselves would now seem oddly out of place—a frog committing suicide, a master chastising an unruly boy, or a fox disguised in gown and hood, preaching to an audience of unsuspecting geese; yet the monk was not for that, we may be sure, less solemn or less earnest in his prayers. We know, too, how in their religious festivals the men of those days acted Bible scenes with a much more humorous licence than modern taste would now permit. These "mysteries," as the plays were called, were a queer blend of farce and religious sentiment. Disputes between Noah and his wife were a familiar source of merriment, and the lady's indignation, when she discovered her husband to have been engaged for a thousand years upon the Ark without her knowledge, was a never-failing jest. We should think it odd to see the Bethlehem shepherds figuring as a set of coarse buffoons, and odder still perhaps to witness that extraordinary scene in which a little man dressed up in red would caper and roll across the stage to counterfeit the blood of Abel calling for vengeance upon Cain. But such things were quite in keeping with the mediæval character. Whatever men did they most thoroughly enjoyed. They threw their souls into both work and play with a rollicking abandon, so that in their enjoyment they utterly forgot themselves and became unconscious of propriety and prudence. They were like children playing at a game.

For all their miseries and hardships (and these were certainly not few) there can be no doubt that the men of those days knew how to be happy when they might.

Hear what Froissart writes about a picnic-party of his youth, and ask yourself how many among modern folk would find an equal relish in the fairness of a spring-time landscape and the delicacies provided for the feast. "In the first days of jolly May . . . God! how fair was the season. The air was clear and windless and serene, and the nightingales sang aloud, rejoicing us with their melody. Clear and fresh was the morn, and we came to a thorn bush all white with blossom; lance-high it stood with fair green shade beneath. Then said one 'Lo! a place made for our pleasant repose; here let us break our fast!' Then with one accord we brought forth the meats: pasties, hams, wines and bake-meats and venison packed in heath." To read these lines is to feel that the Middle Ages were indeed the spring-time of the world.

Yet after spring comes summer; and after the child man. The Middle Ages were only a stage—and a natural inevitable stage—in humanity's development. When the barbarians, breaking across Europe, split up for ever the great imperial system by which Rome had held the world together, it was as though the human race had been released from the strict though kindly bondage of a nurse. Men were set free to behave exactly as they pleased, without laws to be regarded or punishment to be feared. Might was right. Each petty ruler was a law unto himself, bullying his subjects and preying on his neighbours by the right of his own might. Each tiny group of people formed its own customs, followed its natural instinct, and lived life in its own way. So the world, as children will, ran wild. Yet sooner or later the day must come when the child must go to school; and little by little the peoples began to realise the need for discipline. The need brought forth the men, and the institutions. Kings like the Conqueror and Henry II were the peoples' schoolmasters. They established some rule and order; they curbed individual licence; they taught obedience to a common law. Still greater perhaps was the part played by the mediæval Church. She was forever preaching

the principles of humanity and justice. She condemned slavery ; she tried to check the barbarous customs of the duel and ordeal ; even wars came in part to be regulated according to her rules. Even as early as the eleventh century she procured that hostilities should often cease at certain seasons of the year. From the beginning of Advent to the week after Epiphany and from the beginning of Lent to the end of Easter week a "Truce of God" was frequently proclaimed though not so frequently observed upon the Continent. It is not too much to say that the Church invented chivalry ; and in spiritual matters she established a hold over the mind of Europe which served to tame and civilise even the most barbarous among peoples. Europe, as the Church of Rome conceived it, was a single unity, bound together by a common obedience to her universal law. Europe was not for her a collection of separate independent States, but Christendom one and indivisible, a single whole. It was a fine ideal, like the modern League of Nations ; but the Church was playing for high stakes and the Church lost. The political discipline of kings proved in the end a stronger force than the spiritual discipline of popes ; and, as the Middle Ages are drawing to a close, we see that the bonds of national allegiance are being drawn more tightly : the claims of the State are beginning to outweigh the claims of the mother Church. Englishmen are conscious that they must stand together by their King, even if it means defiance to the Pope. Frenchmen, too, under the long discipline of their desperate war with England are knit by closer ties. In other words, England and France are now, in a true sense, nations. That is the real achievement of the Middle Ages. A thousand years have passed since the collapse of Rome and it has taken all those years to bring back Europe to a state of settled government. But it has been done : men can once more go their ways with something like reliance upon law and justice ; they can live their lives securely by right of their citizenship in an organised community.

But, though civilisation was thus recovered, peace was not. Europe was no longer one as she had been under the rule of Rome. She was now many nations, and no sooner were the birth-throes ended from which these nationalities emerged than a new struggle was fated to begin—a struggle between the nations for the dominion of the world.

But the Church did not give up the battle. She had never relinquished her intention to dominate the world, and she still clung jealously to the outworn forms of her authority. Yet, struggle as she might, that authority was now upon the wane. In England especially, but not in England alone, her hold was loosening. For Europe was soon to outgrow the age of schooling. The child in due course becomes the man, and when that time arrives he will kick against the discipline which hampers his free development. He will no longer accept what he is told with the trusting credulity of childhood. He will question the authority of his masters, and desire to think and judge for himself, and claim the liberty, which is manhood's privilege, of living life in his own way. And so it was with Europe. Men's eyes were opening; and the English people above all were beginning to dispute Rome's right to keep their consciences and lead them in the way that they should go. Even as early as Wycliffe, doubts had been raised concerning the doctrine of the mass, the sale of indulgences, and the whole theology of the Papacy; and, although they had not yet come out into the open, there were plenty of Wycliffes in England now. It needed but a little more learning, a little more thought, a little more courage, and England would be ripe for the Reformation. She would break with Rome for ever. Germany, at Luther's bidding, was preparing to do the same. The Netherlands were moving that way too. Elsewhere, indeed, the process of enlightenment was to be of slower growth; and Rome was still to maintain her hold in Spain, in Italy, and (despite the Huguenots) in France. So Christendom was doomed to fall asunder.

A great religious cleavage was to divide the nations, as it were, into two hostile camps—Protestants upon one side, Catholics on the other. Thus to the coming struggle for dominion was to be added this further bitterness of a religious feud. Wars were to be fought in a new and harsher spirit. A terrible earnestness entered into men's spirits which drove them on to strange and awful deeds. There were horrors enough set to the record of the Middle Ages; but they were as nothing compared with the tortures, burnings, and executions by which the Spanish Inquisition sought to recover the Netherlands for Rome. Mediæval kings went often to war with their neighbours and mediæval barons conspired against the throne. But seldom indeed did either stoop so low as to the dastardly intrigues, the subornation of assassins, even the employment of infernal instruments, whereby the Catholic monarchs and their agents sought to overthrow their enemies in the name of God. Passions were aroused and perplexities were felt from which mankind had hitherto been free; and looking back over the centuries we may well ask ourselves to which the greater happiness belonged—to this new age, vexed by the poignant questionings of individual consciences, and torn by the world-discord of a religious antagonism, or to the old age, so far removed and so different from our own, in which men rested composedly their single-hearted faith upon a superstitious, but still unquestioned creed. "Where ignorance is bliss 'tis folly to be wise." Yet the quest of fuller truth and wider knowledge beckoned the world on. It is always so. Natural development cannot be stayed; and, as surely as the child must come to man's estate, so the human mind must grow. Only, with maturity came also more perilous decisions, deeper doubts, and yet more searching pains. It is the paradox and mystery of Progress.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

EXTERNAL.	KINGS.	A.D.	INTERNAL.
	Claudius	50	} ROMAN OCCUPATION.
		100	
	Hadrian	150	
		200	
		250	
		300	
		350	
Barbarians overrun Roman Empire		400	
		450	} ANGLO-SAXON CONQUEST.
		500	
		550	
		600	
	Edwin	650	} NORTHUMBRIAN SUPREMACY.
		700	
		750	
Charlemagne, Emperor of Western Europe	Offa	800	} MERCIAN SUPREMACY.
	Egbert	850	} WESSEX SUPREME.
	Alfred	900	
	Edward Athelstan	950	
	Edgar Ethelred	1000	} WESSEX AND DANES DIVIDE ENGLAND.
	Cnut Confessor		} DANISH KINGS.

	EXTERNAL.	KINGS.	A.D.	INTERNAL.		
Crusades	Normandy ruled jointly with England	William I	1050	NORMANS SUPPRESS ENGLISH.		
		William II	1100			
		Henry I	1150			
		Stephen				
	Western France inherited by Henry II	Henry II				
		Western France lost by John	Richard		1200	
	100 Years' War	Partial victory of Edward III	John		1250	Magna Carta.
			Henry IV			RISE OF ENGLISH NATION.
		Northern France won by Henry V	Edward I		1300	Birth of Parliament.
			Edward II			
Northern France lost by Henry VI		Edward III	1350	RISE OF LOWER CLASSES.		
		Richard II	1400	Black Death.		
		Henry IV		Wycliffe.		
		Henry V		LANCASTRIAN USURPATION.		
		Henry VI	1450	WARS OF ROSES. Rise and fall of YORKISTS.		
		Edward IV				
	Richard III					
	Henry VII	1500				

I. [1000 B.C.-A.D. 60]

I. Early Inhabitants

- (a) From 1000 B.C. onwards the island was invaded by successive waves of Celtic tribes, *fair, tall*, and akin in speech and customs to the Celtic Gauls.
- (b) Mingling with a *short, dark* race of earlier inhabitants, these formed the British type: and gave its name to Britain.
- (c) They lived by agriculture and trade in tin, etc.: were taught by Druids to worship the sun at *Stonehenge* and elsewhere: lived in scattered villages under tribal chiefs.

II. Caesar's Invasion

- 55 B.C. (i) *Julius Caesar*, after conquering Gaul, makes a brief reconnaissance of Britain.
- 54 B.C. (ii) Lands a larger army at *Deal*: defeats Britons at *River Stour*: opposed on Thames by *Caswallon* (Cassivellaunus), King of *Catuvellauni*: but forces passage at *Brentford*.
- (iii) Imposes light terms (tribute, etc.) and returns to Gaul.

[Interval of nearly a century.]

III. Permanent Occupation

- (i) **Conquest.**
A.D. 43 Under Emperor *Claudius*, *Aulus Plautius* defeats Britons in Essex, and drives *Caractacus*, King of *Catuvellauni*, into Wales.
- (ii) **Occupation.**
Caractacus captured: Western frontier line formed by forts at *Isca*, *Uriconium*, and *Deva*: roads begun: colony of discharged soldiers founded at *Camulodunum*: trade centre at *Verulamium*.
- (iii) **Revolt and Subjection.**
A.D. 61 *Suetonius Paulinus* attacks *Mona* as being Druids' centre. Meanwhile *Iceni* under *Boadicea* rise and sack *Verulamium*, etc.: but are defeated by *Paulinus*.

Britain thus finally subdued.

Special Subject: Westward movement of barbarians.

II. [A.D. 80-600]

I. ROME'S DOUBLE TASK : (A) To secure northern frontier, (B) To civilise inhabitants.

A. Northern Frontier

- 78 (i) *Agricola*, as governor, subdues *Brigantes* : pushes into Scotland : defeats *Caledonii* near *Firth of Tay* : but withdraws to line of *Solway Firth* and *River Tyne*.
- 120 (ii) Emperor *Hadrian* builds turf wall from *Tyne* to *Solway*, nearly 80 miles long, garrisoned by legions.
- 140 (iii) Under *Antoninus* attempt made to hold line of *Firth of Forth* and *Clyde* : but again a withdrawal follows to *Hadrian's line* : wall rebuilt in stone.

B. Civilisation

- (a) Towns : schools : Roman dress and speech : and (later) Christianity.
- (b) Roads to military bases (see Map).
- (c) Britons lose vigour and power of self-defence.

II. FALL OF ROME AND COMING OF ANGLO-SAXONS

- 407 (i) Last Roman legion called elsewhere to meet attacks of *Visigoths*.
- 449 (ii) *Picts* from Scotland and *Scots* from Ireland plunder and return home.
- (iii) *Futes* under *Hengist* and *Horsa* settle in *Kent*.
- 450-550 (iv) *Angles* and *Saxons* settle in *Sus-sex* : *Wes-sex* : *Es-sex* : *East Anglia* : and last, *Northumbria*. [*N.B.*—More fertile country occupied first.]
- (v) Britons driven into *Wales*, *Cornwall*, and *Strathclyde* : and by battles of *Deorham* (577) and *Chester* (613) these remnants are cut off from each other.
- N.B.*—The Anglo-Saxons take few prisoners : destroy towns : and blot out Roman civilisation and Christianity.

Special Subject : Survival of Roman institutions and speech on the Continent.

III. [A.D. 600-850]

THE THREE GREAT KINGDOMS: Northumbria, Mercia, Wessex.

[N.B.—Political unity based on supremacy of one kingdom is aided by Religious Unity.]

POLITICAL

A. Northumbrian Supremacy

[c. 620 onwards]

597

- c. 620 (i) *Edwin* founds Edinburgh: takes Anglesey and becomes Bretwalda over most of Britain.
 (ii) Edwin beaten and killed by *Penda of Mercia*.
 (iii) But Edwin's successors regain supremacy and hold it till 685.

RELIGIOUS

A. Conversion from Rome

- (i) Pope *Gregory* sends *St. Augustine* who converts Aethelbert of Kent.
 (ii) *Paulinus* converts *Edwin* of Northumbria.
 (iii) But Northumbria, overrun by heathen *Mercia*, gives up Christianity.

B. Conversion from Irish Celts

- (i) Celts turn to Scotland in preference to barbarous Saxons and found monastery at *Iona*.
 (ii) From here, at invitation of Edwin's successor, *Aidan* founds *Lindisfarne* monastery. Northumbria reconverted and *Mercia* follows.

Quarrel and Union of the Churches

- (i) Jealousy between "Roman" Church in South and "Celtic" Church in North.
 (ii) At Conference of *Whitby* King *Oswy* of Northumbria decides for Rome, and union is attained.
 (iii) *Theodore of Tarsus*, appointed Archbishop, organises the Sees, etc.

664

B. Mercian Supremacy

[c. 720 onwards]

- (i) Under Christian kings *Mercia* rises and overcomes *Wessex*.
 c. 780 (ii) Greatest king is *Offa*, contemporary of Charlemagne, and builder of dyke against Welsh.

C. Supremacy of Wessex

[c. 820 onwards]

- 825 (i) *Egbert* of *Wessex* defeats *Mercia* at *Ellandun*.
 (ii) Becoming *Bretwalda* gives whole country name of *Angleland* or *ENGLAND*.

Special Subject: Character of Anglo-Saxons and their institutions.

IV. [850-900]

ALFRED AND THE DANISH INVASIONS

A. Before Alfred

- c. 800 (i) Danes or "Northmen," aroused by Charlemagne's attack, begin to scour the seas.
 (ii) Make descents on England, Mediterranean countries, and Normandy, where they later settle.
 c. 870 (iii) They overrun Northumbria, E. Anglia, and even cross Thames into Wessex.

B. Alfred's Reign (871-900)

- 871 (i) On his accession Alfred buys Danes out of Wessex.
 876 (ii) Danes by surprise attack seize *Wareham*, but escape by treachery.
 878 (iii) Breaking truce again, Danes fortify camp at *Chippenham* and scour Wessex.
 878 (iv) Alfred flees to *Athelney*: rallies forces and defeats Danes at *Ethandun*.
 „ (v) *Guthrum* accepts baptism and by Treaty of *Wedmore* divides England with Alfred.
 892 (vi) Fresh host under *Hastings*, invading from France, caught at River *Lee* and fleet captured.

C. Alfred's Reforms

- (i) *Military* forces in towns : builds fleet : improves army by increasing number of Thegns (body-guard) and working Fyrd (militia) in relays.
 (ii) *Civil and Religious*.
 (a) Organises royal expedition.
 (b) Collects and encourages advisers, scholars, and craftsmen.
 (c) Stimulates education by founding schools and translating Latin books into Anglo-Saxon (begins Anglo-Saxon Chronicle).
 (d) Issues Code of Laws, fixing fines, etc.
 (e) Plans monasteries at Winchester and Athelney for monks under strict Benedictine rule.

Special Subject : Alfred's character and greatness.

V. SAXONS, DANES AND NORMANS [900-1065]

A. Period of Saxon Ascendancy [100 years]

- 925 (i) Alfred's son, *Edward the Elder*, recovers Danelaw.
 937 (ii) *Athelstan* defeats rebellious Danes, aided by Scots and Irish Vikings, at *Brunanburgh*.
 959- (iii) *Edgar*, guided by Archbishop *Dunstan*, unites Danes and Saxons and
 975 becomes overlord of whole country.
 (iv) *Ethelred*, attacked by *Olaf Trygvasson* and *Sweyn*, King of Denmark, buys them off with "Danegeld": but provokes fresh invasion by massacring Danish settlers on *St. Brice's Day*.
 1002
 1011 (v) *Sweyn* is offered the crown and *Ethelred* flees.

B. Period of Danish Kings [40 years]

- 1016 (i) On *Sweyn's* death crown given to his son *Cnut* in preference to to *Ethelred's* son *Edmund Ironside*.
 1035 (ii) *Cnut* rules Denmark and England strongly, uniting Danes and Saxons by fair treatment.
 1042 (iii) His two sons proving feeble, Witan offers crown to *Ethelred's* son *Edward the Confessor*.

C. Period of Saxon Recovery and Norman Intrigue [25 years]

- (i) The *Confessor*, thanks to his Norman mother and long sojourn abroad, encourages Norman favourites.
 (ii) *William Duke of Normandy* plans to be accepted as the *Confessor's* heir.
 (iii) Norman intrigues opposed by *Godwin Earl of Wessex*, who controls East Anglia and S.W. Midlands through his sons and marries his daughter to the *Confessor*.
 1051 (iv) *Godwin* exiled for refusing to punish murder of Norman knights at Dover.
 1052 (v) *Godwin* returns: on his death all chief earldoms (except *Mercia*, which is under *Edwin* and *Morcar*) go to his sons: *Wessex* to *Harold*: *E. Anglia* to *Leofwine* and *Gurth*: *Northumbria* to *Tostig*.

Special Subject: The origin and growth of Feudalism.

VI. HASTINGS

A Possible Claimants to Confessor's Throne

- (i) *Edgar the Atheling*, best legal claim as member of Edmund Ironside's family : but a boy.
- (ii) *Harold Godwinson*, brother-in-law of Confessor—foremost man in England : but *not* of royal blood.
- (iii) *William of Normandy*, first cousin to Confessor (through Confessor's Norman mother).

N.B.—The Confessor's promise of crown and Harold's oath of fealty gave him a show of right which was recognised by the Pope.

B. Events of 1066

- 5th Jan., 1066 (i) Confessor dies : Harold, though accepted by Witan and crowned, is not sure of support for his "usurpation".
- (ii) William prepares invasion.
- (iii) Meanwhile Tostig, Harold's brother, being driven out of his earldom by Northumbrians, is returning with fleet and army of Hardrada, King of Norway.

C. Harold's Marches

- 21st September, *Thursday* : Tostig and Hardrada, having beaten northern levies, occupy York ; on following *Monday* Harold, coming up from south, annihilates them at *Stamford Bridge*.
- 28th September, *Thursday* : William lands at *Pevensey*. On following *Monday* news reaches Harold at *York*.
- 5th October, *Thursday* : Harold on eve of reaching London (200 miles covered between Monday and Friday), where he refits, but does not await levies of *Edwin* and *Morcar*.
- 12th October, *Thursday* : Harold leaves London and covers sixty miles to *Senlac* by Friday night.
- 1066 14th October, *Saturday* : William, marching from coastal base at *Hastings*, attacks Saxons at *Senlac*.

D. The Battle

[N.B.—Saxons = old style **Infantry** : mailed House Carles and raw ill-armed Fyrd. Norman's chief arm **Cavalry** of mailed knights.]

I. Unsuccessful Norman attacks.

- (a) Though preceded by archers and infantry, Norman knights fail to break Saxon line (behind *palisade* ?).
- (b) Fyrd on Saxon right pursue downhill and are badly mauled.
- (c) Normans renew attack, but by mid-afternoon make no impression.

II. William's two ruses.

- (a) By feigning flight Normans draw out Fyrd and destroy them.
- (b) Archers shake House Carles by aiming arrows high.
- (c) On Harold's death, House Carles round standard dispersed in utter rout.

1066 Christmas day, William crowned at Westminster.

VII. THE CONQUEROR AND HIS SUBJECTS

A. Saxons

[N.B.—All landowners deprived of lands: but some (e.g. those absent from Hastings) reinstated.]

Revolts

- 1067 (i) *Southwest* revolts during William's absence in Normandy: *Exeter* surrenders on his return.
- 1068 (ii) *Midlands* revolt, but soon collapse: Edwin and Morcar made prisoner.
- 1069 (iii) *Northumberland* rises (with aid of King of Denmark) under Saxon Earl *Waltheof*: all country north of Humber laid waste by William.
- 1071 (iv) *Hereward the Wake* holds out in Ely fens: but is betrayed by monks.

B. Normans

[N.B.—Normans, etc., who have come over as volunteers with William, rewarded with lands: but they are strictly controlled by various measures.]

- (i) Each man's *estates* scattered through various counties (except Earldoms on Welsh border and Durham on Scots border).
- (ii) *Castles* not to be built without leave: strongest castles (e.g. Tower of London) kept in William's hands.
- (iii) *New feudal oath* exacted (first at Salisbury in 1086) whereby every man in England owes fealty *directly* to the King.
- (iv) *Domesday* survey made to give details of every man's property for purposes of taxation, etc.
- (v) Speedy but merciful suppression of revolt; when Earls of Hereford and Norfolk combined with Saxon *Waltheof*, the Normans were not executed, the Saxon was.
- 1087 William dies.

— *Special Subjects*: Character of Anglo-Saxons and Normans; Character of William I.

VIII. THE CONQUEROR'S SONS:

Robert; William Rufus (1087-1100); Henry I (1100-1135)

	Normandy	England	Church
1087	Robert inherits Dukedom.	Rufus succeeds and crushes revolt of <i>Odo</i> , Earl of Kent, by calling out Saxons.	Death of Pope <i>Gregory VII</i> (<i>Hildebrand</i>).
1089			
1091	Robert, after selling Côtentin to Henry, is forced to cede part of Normandy to Rufus.	Rufus defeats Scots and fixes frontier at Solway.	Archbishopric of Canterbury falls vacant.
1093			
1096	Robert sells rest of lands to Rufus and goes on First Crusade.		Anselm appointed Archbishop; quarrels with Rufus about lands and feudal homage.
1100		Death of William Rufus.	Anselm at Rome consulting Pope.
1100	Robert returning makes bid for English throne, but is bought off by Henry.	Henry I seizes throne: issues Charter and conciliates Saxons by wedding Saxon princess. Henry crushes <i>Robert of Bellême</i> with aid of Saxons. [Henry reforms Law: stricter penalties. King's court as model for local courts.] Henry's only son drowned on <i>White Ship</i> .	Henry crowned in Anselm's absence: Anselm on his return denounces coronation and refuses homage. Anselm leaves country again.
1102			
1106	Henry defeats Robert at <i>Tenchebrai</i> and takes over Normandy.		Compromise of Bec. (i) Bishops to do homage to King for lands; (ii) but to receive spiritual authority from Rome.
1120			
1135			

Special Subjects: Characters of the three brothers; Power of the Pope and importance of the Church.

IX. FROM ANARCHY TO ORDER

I. CLAIMANTS TO THRONE ON DEATH OF HENRY I

- (i) Matilda, daughter of Henry I, now married to *Geoffrey Count of Anjou*, and mother of an infant son (afterwards Henry II).
- (ii) Stephen of Blois, son of the Conqueror's daughter, accepted as an easy-going king.

II. THE ANARCHY [1135 to 1154]

1135 A. Stephen Crowned, Matilda Plots his Overthrow

Revolts.

- 1137 (i) On Matilda's behalf *David King of Scotland* invades North: but defeated by Archbishop of York at *Northallerton* (Battle of the Standard).
- 1137 (ii) *Robert Earl of Gloucester*, Matilda's half-brother, raises the West in revolt.
- 1139 (iii) By imprisoning two bishops Stephen alienates the Church and his brother *Henry Bishop of Winchester*.
- 1141 Soon after Matilda's landing Stephen defeated and captured at *Lincoln*.

B. Matilda's Misuse of Victory

- 1141 (i) Matilda accepted as ruler, though not given title of queen.
- (ii) Matilda arouses Londoners by high-handed measures.
- (iii) Robert of Gloucester captured and only freed by *Stephen's* liberation.

C. The Coming of Henry

- 1153 Henry, Matilda's son, now of age, comes to England: and by *Treaty of Wallingford* receives share of Stephen's power and promise of succession.

III. HENRY II [1154]

A. His Domains

As Stephen's heir inherits **England**.

As grandson of Henry I (Matilda's father): **Normandy and Maine**.

As son of Geoffrey (Matilda's husband): **Anjou and Touraine**.

As husband of Eleanor of Aquitaine: **Aquitaine**.

- 1166 Also acquires **Brittany** by marrying his son to heiress.

B. His Reforms

[Keynote = one law for all and all power centred on king.]

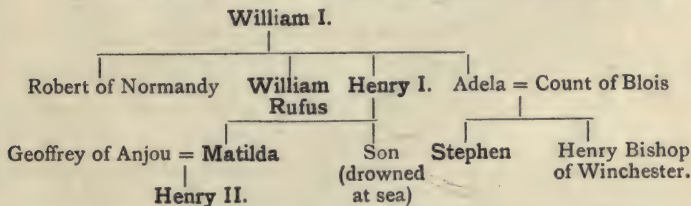
- (i) *Taxation*: merchants and town-dwellers to pay as well as landowners.
- (ii) *Military Service* to King demanded of all free men (Assize of Arms, 1181).
- (iii) *Local Law Courts* standardised by
 - (a) Model of King's Court.
 - (b) Travelling Judges of Assize.
 - (c) *Furies* to decide whether case should come before judges [Ordeal and Compurgation still linger].

C. His Quarrel with Becket

- 1162 (i) Wishing to bring "clerics" under civil law, appoints his Chancellor Becket to Canterbury.
- 1164 (ii) By *Constitutions of Clarendon*, a "cleric" convicted in church courts is afterwards to be tried and punished in lay courts.
- (iii) Becket denounces Constitutions at Northampton and departs to Pope.
- (iv) In Becket's absence Henry has his son crowned in advance by other Bishops.
- 1170 (v) Becket on his return angers Henry by excommunication of offending Bishops and is murdered.
- (vi) Outcry of public causes Henry to withdraw Constitutions of Clarendon.

D. Troubles of Last Years

- 1171 (i) *Irish wars* to back up Earl of Pembroke (Strongbow): Henry crosses to Ireland and receives homage of chiefs.
- (ii) *His sons' Revolt in France*.
- 1173 (a) His sons Henry and Richard, egged on by Queen Eleanor, rebel, but are suppressed.
- 1187 (b) Richard, backed by **Philip Augustus** of France, forces Henry to humiliating peace. John also implicated. Henry dies, 1189.



Special Subjects : Henry's character ; His Constitutional machinery ; His Legal system.

X. RICHARD COEUR DE LION (1189-1199)

CRUSADES

A. Seizure and Loss of Jerusalem by Turks

- (i) Since 635 Jerusalem in hands of Arabs, who encourage Christian pilgrims.
- 1076 (ii) Turks capture Jerusalem, obstructing and maltreating pilgrims.
- (iii) *Peter the Hermit* raises volunteers in France.
- (iv) *Pope Urban* holds Council at *Clermont* and declares Holy War.
- 1096-9 (v) **First Crusade.** Jerusalem retaken and *Godfrey de Bouillon* made king.

B. Recapture of Jerusalem by Turks

- (i) Kingdom of Jerusalem passes to *Princes of Anjou* (kinsmen of Henry II).
- 1147 (ii) Encroachment of Turks barely checked by **Second Crusade.**
- 1187 (iii) Turks under *Saladin* defeat Angevin king near *Tiberias* and retake Jerusalem.

C. Failure of Christians to Win Jerusalem Back

- 1189 (i) **Third Crusade** organised by *Richard* of England, *Philip Augustus* of France, *Frederic Barbarossa*, Emperor of Germany.
- (ii) Emperor drowned on march: *Richard* and *Philip Augustus* quarrel *en route*.
- (iii) Campaign.
- (a) *Acre*, already besieged by Christians, taken on *Richard's* arrival.
- (b) *Philip Augustus* goes home to plot against *Richard*.
- 1191 (c) *Richard*, marching down coast to *Jaffa*, dogged by *Saladin*, whom he defeats at *Arsouf*.
- (d) From *Jaffa*, *Richard* marches via *Askalon* on Jerusalem, but is forced to turn back and winter at *Jaffa*.
- 1192 (e) In spring, comes again within sight of Jerusalem, but unable to advance.
- (iv) Treats with *Saladin* for truce: on voyage home is driven on to Adriatic coast: caught by *Leopold*, Duke of Austria; and held to ransom by Emperor of Germany.

D. Subsequent Crusades

- 1249 (i) Many attempts at recapture of Jerusalem fail: the most famous and (1249 and 1270) made by *Louis IX of France* (St. Louis).
- 1270 (ii) Jerusalem remains in Turkish hands till 1917.

Special Subjects: Growing English unity, speech, character, etc.; Condition of country and town; Monasteries; Barons and chivalry.

XI. LOSS OF FRANCE AND MAGNA CHARTA

A. Richard's Rule in England (1189-1199)

- 1189 (i) On departure leaves England in charge of the Chancellor, *William Longchamp, Bishop of Ely*.
 (ii) Prince *John* drives out Longchamp and plots with Philip Augustus to filch Richard's territory.
 1194 (iii) Richard on return crushes John's rebellion.
 1199 (iv) After four years of frontier warfare against Philip Augustus is killed at *Chaluz*.

B. John's loss of French Provinces

- 1199 (i) **Anjou, Touraine, and Maine** fall away: all disgusted at John's murder of his rival, young *Arthur*.
 1204 (ii) *Château Gaillard*, key-fortress of Seine, captured by French and so **Normandy** lost.
 1214 (iii) Alliance between John and German Emperor ruined by Emperor's defeat at *Bouvines*.
N.B.—**Aquitaine** alone remains to England.

C. Quarrel with the Pope

- 1205 (i) Quarrel about appointment of Archbishop: Pope nominates *Langton*.
 1208 (ii) John refusing Langton, Pope lays *Interdict* on England.
 1213 (iii) Pope prompts Philip Augustus to reduce John to submission.
 (iv) John submits, paying tribute to Pope and accepting Langton.

D. Barons' Revolt

- (i) Barons, exasperated by taxation to finance French wars, find a leader in *Langton*.
 1214 (ii) Meeting at *Bury St. Edmunds*: barons propose to bind John to Charter of Henry I.
 1215 (iii) Barons raise army and force John to sign Magna Charta at *Runnymede*.
 1215 (iv) Committee of twenty-five barons to supervise John, and, when he resists, crown offered to Prince Louis of France, who lands in south.
 1216 John dies at Newark.

Special Subjects: Siege of *Château Gaillard*; Main provisions of Magna Charta and their meaning; Barons' service and taxation liabilities.

XII. HENRY III (1216-1272)

A. Henry's Boyhood

- (i) Henry III, aged nine; William Marshall, Earl of Pembroke, acts as Regent.
- (ii) Prince Louis of France expelled from London by :—
 - (a) Defeat of French knights by Earl Marshall at *Lincoln*.
 - (b) *Hubert de Burgh's* defeat of reinforcing fleet off Thames.
- 1227 (iii) Henry assumes government and after five years disgraces de Burgh, Earl Marshall's successor.

B. Thirty Years of Misrule (1227-1257)

- (i) Foreign favourites of Henry :—
 - (a) Henry marries *Eleanor of Provence* and gives English posts to her uncles.
 - (b) To please Pope introduces foreign priests.
- (ii) Rise of national feeling :—
 - (a) Anti-alien riots at Oxford and elsewhere.
 - (b) *Grosseteste*, Bishop of Lincoln, denounces Henry's subservience to Pope.
 - (c) His friend, *Simon de Montfort*, becomes champion of "England for the English".
- (iii) Revolt against the foreigners :—
 - 1257 (a) Henry promises money to help Pope in winning *Sicily* from German Emperor.
 - (b) Barons, exasperated, demand dismissal of foreign favourites.
 - 1258 (c) By *Provisions of Oxford* fifteen barons, including Simon, to supervise Henry's government.

C. De Montfort's National Policy

[N.B.—Backed by townsmen, but only by part of baronage.]

- (i) Simon, wishful to remedy wrongs of lower classes, quarrels with selfish colleagues and leaves England.
- 1261 (ii) Henry goes back on promises: raises army against barons: Simon returns.
- 1263 (iii) Arbitration of French King (*Mise of Amiens*) rejected by Simon.
- 1264 (iv) Simon defeats and captures Henry and Prince Edward at *Lewes*.
- 1265 (v) Simon virtual King for one year: attempts (a) to form a constitutional government limiting King's authority, (b) to form a parliament representing all classes.

D. De Montfort's Fall

- (i) Prince Edward escapes from captivity and joins *Gloucester*, who has deserted Simon.
- (ii) Simon caught west of Severn and finds passage at *Worcester* barred.
- (iii) While prince makes diversion against Simon's son at *Kenilworth*, Simon crosses Severn to *Evesham*.
- 1265 (iv) Three armies, converging on him, defeat and kill him at *Evesham*.
- 1272 Henry dies.

Special Subjects: Dissatisfaction among the commoners; Campaign of *Evesham*.

XIII. EDWARD I (1272-1307) AND EDWARD II (1307-1327)

A. Edward I and Parliament

- (i) Edward adopts De Montfort's principle of consulting people through Parliament *when he needs taxes*.
- 1295 (ii) After various experiments summons **Model Parliament**, consisting of (a) *Lords*, viz. leading Barons and Bishops; (b) *Church*, viz. representatives of lesser clergy; (c) *Commons*, viz. men chosen by sheriffs, two per borough and two per shire.
- (iii) These three estates deliberate and vote taxes *separately*.
[N.B.—The clergy presently desert Parliament and hold *Convocation* independently.]
- (iv) Parliaments bargain for *redress of grievances* (e.g. of Forest Laws, 1301) as a condition of voting taxes.
- (v) After Edward's time Parliament, instead of leaving redress of grievances to King's legislation, frames *Bill* which it presents for King's approval.

B. Edward I and Wales

Conquest.

- (i) Welsh (= descendants of Ancient Britons), though subdued in south by Marcher earls, maintain independence in north-west.
- 1277 (ii) Chieftain *Llewellyn*, leagued with de Montfort faction, blockaded and surrenders.
- (iii) Edward tries to hold Wales by (a) Castles at *Conway, Carnarvon*, etc., (b) establishing English Laws and customs.

Revolt.

- 1282-3 (i) Tactless government rouses revolt: *Llewellyn* and his brother *David* captured and executed.
- (ii) Wales held down despite fresh revolt in 1284.
- (iii) As sop to Welsh pride Edward presents infant son as *Prince of Wales*.

C. Edward I and Scotland

Diplomacy.

- 1290 (i) Edward tries to unite crowns of Scotland and England by marrying his young son to girl queen of Scotland (*Maid of Norway*).
- 1290 (ii) On girl queen's death, nine candidates for throne: Edward nominates *John Balliol*.
- 1296 (iii) Edward treats his nominee as vassal king; forces Scots into resistance: deposes *Balliol* and annexes throne.

National Resistance

A. William Wallace

- 1297 (i) Cuts up English army at *Stirling Bridge*.
- 1298 (ii) Is defeated at *Falkirk* and executed. Edward appoints regents.

B. Robert Bruce, grandson of one of nine candidates,

- 1306 (i) Murders Edward's regent, *Red Comyn*; crowned, but is driven into hills.
- 1307 (ii) Edward I dies and Bruce begins to recover ground.

D. Edward II and Scotland

- 1314 (i) Bruce with French aid retakes *Edinburgh, Roxburgh*, etc.
 (ii) Defeats English at *Bannockburn*.
 (iii) Ravages English border and keeps crown till death, 1324.

E. Misgovernment of Edward II

Edward so weak that he is overridden by Barons, who

- (i) Appoint Lords Ordainers to control government.
 (ii) Thrice exile and finally execute his favourite, *Piers Gaveston*.
 1327 (iii) Arrest and murder Edward himself.

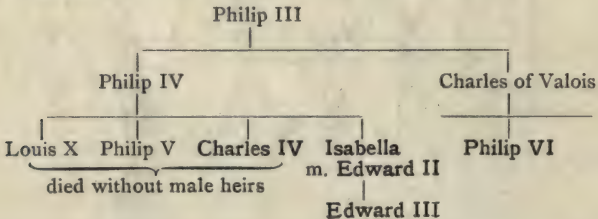
Special Subjects: The holding of a Parliament; Early History of Scotland; Battle of Bannockburn.

XIV. EDWARD III (1327-1377)

THE HUNDRED YEARS' WAR with France (1339-1458) begun by Edward III, continued by Henry V and Henry VI.

A. Causes which brought natural rivalry between two growing countries to a head.

- (i) Desire of *Philip VI* to recover English *Aquitaine*.
 (ii) Philip's encroachment on *Flanders* threatens to check English wool trade with *Ghent, Bruges*, etc.
 (iii) Philip helps *Bruce's son* to recover Scotland from Balliol's son (whom Edward III set on throne after victory of *Halidon Hill*, 1333).
 (iv) Edward III *claims French throne* as being nephew (through his mother) to late King Charles IV, to whom Philip was only cousin.
 [N.B.—French object that by *Salic Law* inheritance through a woman is barred.]



B. English Victories (1338-1360)

- 1338- (i) Preliminaries: English fleet beats French off *Sluys*. Fighting in
1345 Flanders and Aquitaine.
- 1346 (ii) Campaign of **Crecy** [object—to strike at Paris and draw off French from Aquitaine?]
- July 22 (a) Edward lands at *La Hogue* in Normandy.
(b) Loiters in Normandy: fails to take *Rouen*: sends fleet home.
(c) Finding large French army guarding *Paris*, turns north to Channel coast.
(d) Headed off at *River Somme*: escapes across tidal ford: turns on pursuers at *Crecy*.
- Aug. 26 (e) Battle of *Crecy* won by long-bow against disunited charges of French cavalry.
(f) Edward marches on to *Calais* and takes it after eleven months' siege.
- (iii) Nine years' lull. *Black Death* ravages England: Philip of France succeeded by John.
- 1356 (iv) Campaign of **Poitiers**, by Black Prince quartered at *Bordeaux*.
(a) Returning from *raid through Poitou*, Black Prince is overtaken near *Poitiers*.
(b) French knights (dismounted) attack English when they try to retire.
(c) French routed and *King John* made prisoner.
- 1360 (v) Treaty of **Bretigny**.
(a) Edward abandons claim to French throne.
(b) But receives **Ponthieu** and **Poitou**.

C. English Decline (1360-1377)

- (i) Unauthorised war between *free companies*.
- (ii) Black Prince and *John of Gaunt* invade Spain and put Don Pedro on throne of Castile.
- (iii) War renewed: French under *du Guescelin* avoid battle behind town walls.
- (iv) English strength ebbing. Black Prince dies.
- 1376 **Result**: *All English territory in France lost except Calais and strip round Bordeaux*.

Special Subjects: Raising of English army; Armour, weapons, and tactics, contrasted with French; Battles of *Crecy* and *Poitiers*.

XV. PEASANTS' REVOLT (1381)

Causes

- (i) During fourteenth century villeins were beginning to pay *rent* instead of *work* to landlords, and a large class of *free* labourers thus arose.
- 1349 (ii) *Black Death* causes scarcity of labourers: hence wages rise and villeins get out of hand.
- 1351 (iii) Parliament in interest of landlords try to fix wages at level previous to *Black Death* (*Statute of Labourers*).
- (iv) Agitation of socialistic priest, *John Ball*, and others. [1377, Ed. III dies.]
- 1381 (v) *Poll Tax* (to pay for French wars) levied on all: second visitation of collectors causes rising.

The Rising

- (i) The men of *Kent* and *Essex* rise and murder landlords, etc.
- (ii) Enter London, sack *Savoy Palace*, etc., June 13.
- (iii) Richard (aged fourteen) leaves Tower to parley; massacre of *Chancellor*, etc., June 14.
- (iv) Richard meets rebels in *Smithfield Market*: *Wat Tyler* murdered, but Richard's coolness pacifies mob, June 15.
- (v) Peasants go home trusting in Richard's promises of lower rents, etc.
- (vi) Richard takes vengeance on rebels by brutal executions, etc.

Result

Despite failure of rising, *Statute of Labourers* altered in 1390: and landlords gradually allow villeins their liberty: growth of yeoman class.

Wycliffe and the Lollards**State of Church**

- (i) Church controls education and hampers free thinking.
- (ii) Priests, monks, and even friars degenerating fast.
- 1378-1418 (iii) "*Great Schism*" between Pope at Rome and rival Pope at *Avignon* discredits Church.
- (iv) Despite Edward III's Statutes (*Praemunire*, forbidding English clergy to appeal to Rome, and *Provisors*, preventing Papal appointments to English benefices), English Church is too much under Pope's thumb.

Wycliffe's Protest

- (i) Wycliffe, Master of *Balliol College, Oxford*, denounces Pope's supremacy.
- 1377 (ii) Wycliffe tried in St. Paul's: rescued through riot of citizens against *John of Gaunt*.
- (iii) Council, which attempts to denounce Wycliffe as heretic, discredited by earthquake.
- (iv) Wycliffe founds order of poor priests, "*Lollards*": and translates Bible into English.
- 1384 (v) After Wycliffe's death *Lollards* continue.
- 1401 (vi) Many (e.g. *John Oldcastle*) burnt under Statute "*de heretico comburendo*".

Result

Though partially suppressed, *Lollardry* paves way for Reformation.

Special Subjects: English schools and education.

XVI. HOUSE OF LANCASTER

Fall of Richard II

- (i) *John of Gaunt*, King Richard's uncle, by marriage with heiress, becomes *Duke of Lancaster*.
- 1388 (ii) His son, *Henry Bolingbroke*, assists *Lords Appellant* to humiliate youthful Richard.
- 1389 (iii) Richard recovers power and simulates forgiveness.
- 1397 (iv) Richard takes vengeance on *Lords Appellant*: but promotes *Bolingbroke* to be Duke of Hereford, and *Mowbray* to be Duke of Norfolk.
- 1398 (v) Exiles *Bolingbroke* and *Mowbray*.
- 1399 (vi) *John of Gaunt* dies. *Bolingbroke* returns to claim Duchy of Lancaster.
- (vii) Captures Richard, has him murdered at *Pontefract*, and takes crown as *Henry IV*.

Reign of Henry IV

- (i) *Owen Glendower* in Wales and *Earl Douglas* in Scotland rise in Richard's cause.
- (ii) The *Percies*, who defeat *Earl Douglas* at *Homildon Hill*, alienated by Henry's claim of prisoners.
- 1403 (iii) *Percies* and the Scotch in alliance defeated by Henry at *Shrewsbury*.
- 1413 (iv) *Henry IV* dies.

Henry V Renews Hundred Years' War

- (i) France (under mad King *Charles VI*) divided between faction of *Jean Sans Peur*, Duke of *Burgundy*, and aristocrat party of Duke of *Orleans*, whom *Jean* murders.
- (ii) Henry undertakes war to divert English minds from domestic quarrels.
- 1415 (iii) Campaign of *Agincourt*.
- (a) Loses one-third of force in capture of *Harfleur*.
- (b) Marches towards *Calais* dogged by *Constable*.
- (c) After detour at *River Somme* cut off at *Agincourt*.
- (d) English win through long-bow and capture Duke of *Orleans*.
- 1419 (iv) *Jean Sans Peur* murdered by *Dauphin* and *Orleanists*: his son joins English.
- 1420 (v) With *Burgundian* aid Henry extorts promise of crown on mad King's death. [*Treaty of Troyes*.]
- (vi) Northern France in English hands. *Dauphin* retreats south of *Loire*.
- 1422 (vii) *Henry V* dies.

The Turn of the Tide

A. Jeanne d'Arc

- 1428 (i) *Duke of Bedford* (Regent for infant *Henry VI*) besieges *Orleans* (key to *Loire* valley).
- 1429 (ii) *Jeanne* persuades *Dauphin* to send her to relief of *Orleans*.
- 1429 (iii) *Jeanne* raises siege; pursues and defeats English at *Patay*.
- 1429 (iv) With her encouragement *Dauphin* crowned at *Rheims*.
- 1431 (v) *Jeanne* captured by *Burgundians* and burnt at *Rouen*.

B. Desertion of Burgundy

- 1431 (i) Henry VI crowned at Paris : but English lose ground.
 1435 (ii) Duke of Burgundy offended by Bedford's marriage with princess of *St. Pol*, which he himself covets.
 1437 (iii) Burgundy deserts English : Dauphin recovers north France.
 1449 (iv) Despite Richard Duke of York's defence, Normandy slowly lost.
 1453 (v) All French soil lost except **Calais**.
 (vi) The Dauphin, now Charles VII, and his son, *Louis XI*, restore prosperity to France.

Special Subjects : Battle of Agincourt ; Jeanne d'Arc.

XVII. HOUSE OF YORK

Rise of Yorkists

- (i) Henry VI half mad and discredited by failure in France.
 1453 (ii) *Richard Duke of York*, also a descendant of Edward III (see Genealogy), becomes Regent and hopes for crown.
 (iii) On birth of a son to Henry, York plans usurpation.
 (iv) Receives powerful backing from *Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick*.

Lancastrians Thrice Victorious and Thrice Misuse Their Victory

- 1459 A. (i) York and Warwick rebel and are driven out of England.
 (ii) Henry's queen, Margaret, alienates south by cruel revenges.
 1460 (iii) Warwick returning defeats Lancastrians at *Northampton* and restores York to regency.
 1460 B. (i) Queen Margaret, gathering new army in north, defeats and kills York at *Wakefield*.
 (ii) Defeats Warwick at *St. Albans* : but is forestalled in occupation of London by *York's son, Edward*.
 1461 (iii) Gathering support (thanks to retreating Lancastrian's excesses), Edward follows and defeats them at *Towton*.
 (iv) Edward crowned King : Henry and Margaret escape to Scotland.
 1465 C. (i) Edward alienates "King-maker" Warwick by idleness and marriage into another family.
 1469 (ii) Being joined by Warwick, Lancastrians drive Edward out.
 (iii) Edward gathers support in France and returns.
 1471 (iv) Defeats Lancastrians at *Barnet* (where Warwick falls) and *Tewksbury*.
 (v) Gets his brother *Richard of Gloucester* to murder old King Henry.

The Two Yorkist Kings

A. Edward IV

(i) Self-indulgent and unscrupulous: murders brother, *Duke of Clarence*.

71-83] (ii) At death leaves two young boys as heirs, under charge of queen.

B. Richard III

(i) Accuses Edward's queen of witchcraft: and puts two nephews into Tower.

83-85] (ii) On plea of Edward's illegal marriage, gets Parliament to make him King.

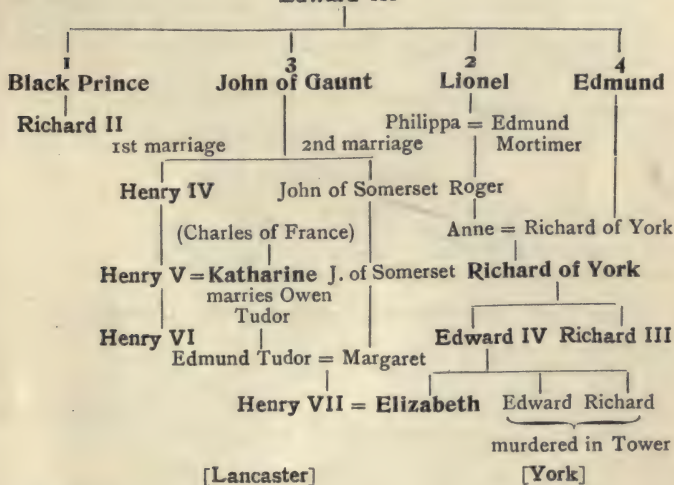
483 (iii) Murders his two nephews in the Tower.

(iv) Richard's unpopular and harsh government alienates supporters.

485 (v) *Henry Tudor* (a Lancastrian, see Genealogy) lands in Wales and defeats and kills Richard at *Bosworth Field*.

Henry Tudor by Marriage with Elizabeth, Edward's Daughter,
Unites Lancaster and York.

Edward III



Special Subject : The beginning of enclosure ; The Guilds.

XVIII. ARTS OF THE MIDDLE AGES

LITERATURE

- Jean Froissart**, born in France, 1337; died 1410. Serves under a French noble; travels in England, Scotland, Italy, etc.; writes a **Chronicle** in French describing the events of the Hundred Years' War, etc., from 1326-1400.
- Geoffrey Chaucer**, born about 1335; died 1400. Serves in France under Edward III; Member of Parliament for Kent; Valet of Royal Chamber and receives a pension from the King; writes in rhymed couplets the **Canterbury Tales**, consisting of a Prologue (which describes the pilgrims who met at Southwark en route for Canterbury) and the stories which the pilgrims told on their journey.
- Sir Thomas Malory**, born about 1400; died 1471. Probably served under Earl of Warwick, who had charge of Joan of Arc at Rouen; taking as his subject the story of King Arthur and his knights (already told by Geoffrey of Monmouth and others), he wrote in prose the **Morte d'Arthur**, which Tennyson retold in verse in his "Idylls of the King".

ARCHITECTURE

[N.B.—Dates are approximate; the different styles overlap each other.]

A. 1050-1200, Norman Style

- (i) *Round* arches and thick pillars.
- (ii) Patterns of zigzag type.
- (iii) Roofs usually of timber, rarely of stone.
- (iv) Square squat towers like fortress.

B. 1200-1350, Early English developing into Decorated Style

- (i) *Pointed* arches and slender pillars.
- (ii) Delicate carving in imitation of foliage, etc.
- (iii) Stone vaulted roofs.
- (iv) Windows at first narrow "lancets," but developing gradually into decorated tracery of geometrical or flowing pattern.

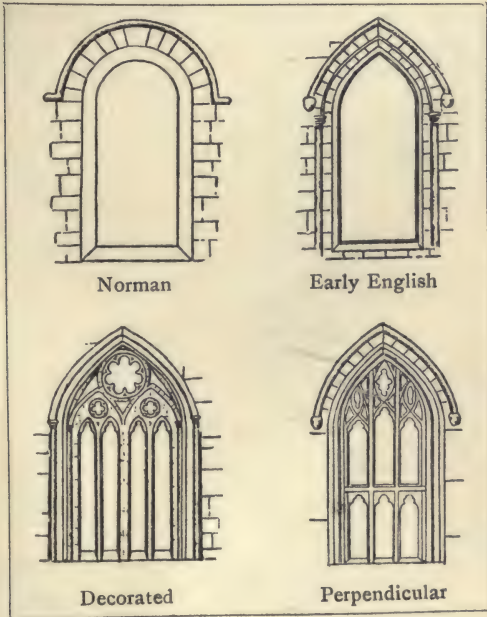
C. 1350-1500, Perpendicular Style

Lines of tracery carried up vertically to head of window; general tendency to monotonous repetition.

D. 1500 onwards, Renaissance Style

In imitation of ancient Greek and Roman models.

STYLES OF MEDIÆVAL ARCHITECTURE





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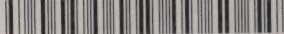
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