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THE  
HISTORY  
OF  
GREAT BRITAIN,

FROM THE  
FIRST INVASION OF IT BY THE ROMANS UNDER  
JULIUS CÆSAR.

WRITTEN ON A NEW PLAN.

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THE SIXTH EDITION.  
IN TWELVE VOLUMES.  
VOL. III.

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LONDON:

PRINTED FOR T. AND J. ALLMAN, PRINCE'S STREET, HANOVER SQUARE; W.  
BAYNES AND SON, PATERNOSTER ROW; A. B. DULAU AND CO. SOHO SQUARE;  
C. SMITH, STRAND; W. WRIGHT, FLEET STREET; WESTLEY AND PARRISH,  
STRAND; JOHN ANDERSON, JUN. EDINBURGH; M. KEENE AND JOHN  
CUMMING, DUBLIN.

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THE  
HISTORY  
OF  
GREAT BRITAIN.

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BOOK II.

CHAP. I.

THE CIVIL AND MILITARY HISTORY OF GREAT BRITAIN,  
FROM THE ARRIVAL OF THE SAXONS, A. D. 449. TO  
THE LANDING OF WILLIAM DUKE OF NORMANDY,  
A. D. 1066.

SECTION I.

*From the arrival of the Saxons, A. D. 449. to A. D. 600.*

THE succours which the British ambassadors (mentioned in the conclusion of the first chapter of the first book of this work) obtained from the Saxons, came over from the Continent in three large ships, under the conduct of two brothers, called *Hengist* and *Horsa*, and landed in the isle of Thanet. They were received with

A. D. 449.  
to 600.  
Arrival of  
the Saxons.

A. D. 449.  
to 600. } joy by the dispirited Britons; who assigned them a place for their head-quarters in the island where they landed; and made them the most ample promises of all necessary provisions, and suitable rewards for their assistance\*.

Saxons and Britons defeat the Scots and Picts.

As soon as these preliminaries were settled, the Saxons joined the British army, and marched against the Scots and Picts, who had now pushed their destructive ravages as far as Stamford. Near that place a bloody battle was fought, in which the Britons, instructed, animated, and assisted by their new allies, obtained a complete victory over their old enemies, and obliged them to retire into their own country †. Transported with joy at this victory, they loaded the Saxon chiefs, and their principal followers, with benefits, which made them in no haste to abandon a country where they were so well received ‡.

Arrival of another army of Saxons.

The Britons, for some time, were so far from entertaining any jealousy of their new allies, that they readily consented to a proposal made by Hengist, of sending for a reinforcement of his countrymen, as a further security against any future attempts of their ancient enemies. This reinforcement, consisting of about five thousand of the bravest warriors, came over in seventeen ships, and joining the army under Hengist, added greatly to his strength and confidence §.

\* Chron. Saxon. p. 12. Bedæ Hist. Eccles. l. i. c. 15.

† Id. ibid. H. Huntingdon, l. 2.

‡ R. Higden. Polychron. l. 5.

§ Gildæ Hist. c. 23.



It is impossible to discover whether or not Hengist and Horsa, and their followers, when they first embarked in this expedition, had formed a design of making good a settlement for themselves in Britain; but it plainly appears, from their conduct, as well as from the testimony of historians, that they entertained such a design soon after their arrival \*. The beauty and fertility of the British plains excited them to wish, and the unwarlike character and divided state of their inhabitants, encouraged them to hope, for a solid establishment in this rich and pleasant country. As soon, therefore, as the two Saxon chieftains saw themselves at the head of a considerable army of brave determined warriors, they prepared to seize some part of those territories which they had been invited to defend. With this view they concluded a separate peace with their enemies the Picts, against whom they had engaged to wage perpetual war, and began to quarrel with their friends the Britons about their provisions and promised rewards, threatening to do themselves justice, as they called it, by force of arms; and even putting these threats in execution, by destroying the country about them with fire and sword, and killing all who fell into their hands †.

A. D. 449.  
to 600.

The Saxons  
resolve to  
settle in  
Britain.

The unhappy Britons were now effectually awakened from their delusive dreams of enjoy-

Various  
conduct of

\* Bedæ Hist. Eccles. l. 1. c. 15.

† Id. *ibid.* Gild. Hist. c. 23, 24, 25.

A. D. 449.  
to 600.

the Britons  
on this oc-  
casion.

ing peace and safety under the protection of the Saxons, and fully convinced of their folly in calling so fierce and faithless a people to their assistance. In their first consternation, great multitudes abandoned their country, and fled into that part of Gaul which about this time began to be called *Britanny*, from its being chiefly inhabited by Britons; others took shelter in the most impenetrable woods, where they led a wretched savage kind of life, or even perished with hunger; while not a few, in order to preserve their lives, submitted to the most abject slavery. Many, however, on this occasion acted a more manly part, and determined to defend themselves and their country to the last extremity \*. These brave and virtuous Britons, despising Vortigern, their former leader, for his vices, and hating him for his unfortunate counsels, and too intimate connections with their enemies, declined fighting under his banner, and placed his son Vortimer at their head †.

War be-  
tween the  
Saxons and  
Britons.

A long and cruel war now broke out between the Saxons and Britons, in which many battles were fought, of which we have but very imperfect accounts. In one of these actions, near Ailesford, Horsa, one of the Saxon chieftains, was slain, by which his brother Hengist became sole commander of their united forces. This illustrious chief, about two years after, gained a great victory over the Britons at Crecanford,

\* Gildæ Hist. c. 23, 24, 25.

† Nennii Hist. c. 45.

now Crayford, which gave him the possession of all Kent, and emboldened him to assume the name of *king*, having before this contented himself with the humbler title of *heretogen*, or *general*\*. Thus was the first Saxon kingdom, that of Kent, founded, about eight years after the arrival of Hengist and his followers in this island.

A. D. 449.  
to 600.

The new monarch of Kent, in order to strengthen the Saxon interest in Britain, and procure comfortable settlements for his family and friends, invited his son Octo, and his nephew Ebessa, to collect as many followers as they could, and come over into this island. These youthful chieftains complied with the invitation; and having plundered the Orkney isles in their passage, arrived with a fleet of forty sail on the coast of Northumberland; of which, together with all the country to the frith of Forth, they took possession, without meeting with much opposition †. This was probably owing to the depopulated state of the country between the two Roman walls, which had been a scene of war and devastation for near two centuries, and to the alliance and friendship which at this time subsisted between the Picts and Saxons. Thus early were the south-east parts of Scotland, as well as the North of England, inhabited by the Saxons; and in those parts, as well as in the

Arrival of  
another  
army of  
Saxons.

\* Chron. Saxon. an. 455. 457. Higden. Polychron. l. 5, an. 457.

† Nennii Hist. c. 37.

A. D. 449. south of Britain, their language and their posterity have continued to the present times.

Progress of  
the war  
between  
the Saxons  
and Bri-  
tons.

Though Hengist had gained several victories over the Britons, they did not long allow him to enjoy his new kingdom in tranquillity. On the contrary, they fought many battles against him with various success, under the conduct of Aurelius Ambrosius, who was descended of a Roman family, and inherited the martial virtues of that glorious people \*. But Hengist obtained a great victory, A. D. 465, at Wippidfleet, where no fewer than twelve British chieftains were slain, and only one Saxon chief, named *Wippid*, from whom the place of battle derived its present name †. About eight years after, he gained another still more decisive victory; which struck such a terror into the Britons, that they gave him little further disturbance during the remainder of his reign, which ended with his life, A. D. 488 ‡.

Æsc, Octo,  
Hermenric,  
and Ethel-  
bert, suc-  
cessively  
kings of  
Kent.

Hengist, the first king of Kent, and first Saxon monarch in Britain, was succeeded by his son Æsc, who reigned over his little kingdom twenty-four years in profound tranquillity, and left it in that condition to his son Octo, who began his reign A. D. 512 ||. This prince was not so fortunate as his father had been; for in his reign, which lasted twenty-two years, the countries of Essex and Middlesex were taken from him by the East-Saxons. Octo was suc-

\* Bedæ Hist. Eccles. l. 1. c. 16.

‡ Id. *ibid.*

† Chron. Saxon. A. D. 465.

|| Will. Malmsb. c. 1.

ceeded by his son Hermenric, A. D. 534, who reigned thirty-two years, but performed nothing memorable\*. Ethelbert, the son and successor of Hermenric, was the greatest of the Kentish kings. In a long and prosperous reign of fifty-six years, he obtained many victories, enlarged his dominions, and gained a great ascendant over all the other Saxon princes of his time. Ethelbert died A. D. 616, and was succeeded by his son Edbald, whose history will be pursued in the second section of this chapter.

A. D. 449.  
to 600.

The success of Hengist and his followers, encouraged other Saxon chiefs to try their fortunes, and attempt settlements in this island. One of these, named *Ælla*, arrived A. D. 477, with his three sons, Cymen, Wlencing, and Cissa, and a train of martial followers. They landed at Cymenshore, near Wittering, defeating a body of Britons, who attempted to prevent their landing †. *Ælla* defeated the Britons in a great battle at Mecredesburn, A. D. 485. and took and destroyed Andereda, the strongest fortress in those parts, A. D. 490 ‡. After these successes he assumed the name of *king*, and founded the kingdom of Sussex; in the government of which he was succeeded by his youngest son Cissa, A. D. 515, who had a very long reign. Before the death of Cissa this little kingdom became so inconsiderable, that his immediate successor is not so much as named in history ||.

Arrival of  
another  
army of  
Saxons,  
who  
founded  
the king-  
dom of  
Sussex.

\* Hen. Hunt. l. 2.

‡ Id. *ibid.*

† Chron. Saxon. p. 14.

|| Hen. Hunt. l. 2.

A. D. 449.  
to 600.

Arrival of  
other Sax-  
on armies,  
which  
founded  
the king-  
dom of  
Wessex.

Cerdic, another Saxon chieftain, with his son Cynric, and a band of chosen warriors, arrived in Britain A. D. 495, and landed in the west, at a place which from him was afterwards called *Cerdicshore* \*. On the very day of his landing, he engaged and defeated an army of Britons, and from thenceforward continued to wage war against them without intermission, for more than twenty years, with various success †. In the first year of the sixth century, Cerdic received a reinforcement from Germany, under the command of Porta, and his two sons, Bieda and Megla, who landed at a place since called *Portsmouth*. By the assistance of this reinforcement, he prosecuted the war against the Britons with greater vigour than he had done before, and gained so many victories, that he assumed the title of *king*, and founded the kingdom of the West-Saxons, A. D. 519 ‡.

Ambrosius  
and Ar-  
thur com-  
mand the  
Britons  
against  
Cerdic.

Cerdic, the founder of the West Saxon kingdom, met with a more steady and obstinate resistance from the Britons, than any of the other Saxon chieftains who founded kingdoms in this island. This circumstance was probably owing to the superior courage and abilities of Aurelius Ambrosius, and the famous Prince Arthur, who successively commanded the British forces against Cerdic and his followers. The first of these great generals, to whom the Britons gave the name of *Natanleod* (preserver of the people), fell

\* Chron. Saxon. p. 15.

† Id. *ibid*.

‡ Id. *ibid*. p. 17. Hen. Huntingdon, l. 2.

in battle, with five thousand of his bravest troops, A. D. 500 \*. The great actions of Arthur, who succeeded Ambrosius in the command of the British armies, have been celebrated in such romantic strains by the British bards, and blended with so many extravagant fables by Jeffrey of Monmouth, that not only the truth of those actions ascribed to him, but even the reality of his existence, hath been called in question †. There seems, however, to be sufficient evidence, that there was a brave and virtuous prince of this name in those times, who had the chief command among the Britons, and at their head obtained several victories over the Saxons, though it certainly exceeds the power of the greatest human sagacity to distinguish what is true from what is fabulous in his history ‡. The last and greatest of those victories was that of Mountbadon, near Bath, A. D. 520 ||. This victory gave so great a check to the arms of Cerdic, and his son Cynric, that they made little or no progress in their conquests for several years. But having received some fresh reinforcements from the continent, they defeated the Britons, A. D. 527, at a place from thence called *Cerdicsford*, and about three years after made an entire conquest of the Isle of Wight §. In a word, Cerdic, after a long and bloody struggle of near forty years, subdued those countries which are now

A. D. 449.  
to 600.

\* Chron. Saxon. p. 18.

† Gaulfrid. Monumut. l. 9. 10.

‡ See Biographia Britannica, vol. i. p. 197, &c.

|| Hist. Gildæ, p. 9. Hen. Hunt. l. 2.

§ Chron. Saxon. p. 18.

A. D. 449.  
to 600.

called *Hampshire, Dorsetshire, Wiltshire, Berkshire*, and the isle of Wight. At his death, which happened A. D. 534 \*, he was succeeded in the throne of Wessex by his valiant son Cynric, who had been the companion of all his toils and victories. This prince reigned twenty-six years, and supported the character which he had obtained of a brave and prudent general, by gaining several victories over the Britons †. Cynric was succeeded, A. D. 560, by his son Ceaulin, who was still more ambitious and enterprising than his father and grandfather had been. Being assisted by his brother Cutha, he defeated Ethelbert King of Kent, A. D. 568; and nine years after obtained a great victory over the Britons at Durham in Gloucestershire, killing three of their princes, Commail, Condidan, and Farinmail ‡. By these and several other victories, he enlarged the boundaries of the West-Saxon kingdom, by adding those countries which are now called *Devonshire* and *Somersetshire*, to his former territories. At length, however, this prince experienced a most grievous reverse of fortune, both in his family and government; for he lost by death his valiant brother Cutha, and a son of the same name, no less valiant. The other Saxon princes, dreading his ambition, formed a confederacy against him, into which some of the Britons also entered; and he was defeated by their united forces at Wodensburgh, A. D. 591.

\* Chron. Saxon. p. 18.

† Ibid. p. 19, 20.

‡ Ibid. p. 22.



To complete his misfortunes, his own subjects revolted, and drove him into exile, where he soon after died\*. The unhappy Ceaulin was succeeded by his nephew Ceolric, who reigned only five years, and dying A. D. 596, left his dominions to his brother Ceolwolf. This prince, being of a martial spirit, had wars not only with the Britons, but also with the Saxons, Scots, and Piets, which continued through his whole reign of fourteen years †.

The Saxons having thus far succeeded in their attempts, and established the three small kingdoms of Kent, Sussex, and Wessex, other bands of adventurers from the same country, were thereby encouraged to try their fortunes, and endeavour to obtain settlements in this island. These adventurers landed on the east coasts of Britain, at different times, and under different leaders, whose names and actions have not been preserved in history ‡. By degrees, however, these unwelcome guests gained so firm a footing, and penetrated so far into the country, that three of their chieftains assumed the title of *kings*, and founded three other small kingdoms in the east and midland parts of Britain. These were the kingdoms of the East-Saxons, the East-Angles, and Mercians. The territories which composed the kingdom of the East-Saxons, were chiefly dismembered from that of Kent; and consisted of the counties of Essex, Middlesex, and part of

A. D. 449.  
to 600.

The arrival  
of other  
armies of  
Saxons,  
and found-  
ing of the  
kingdoms  
of the East-  
Saxons,  
East-An-  
gles, and  
Mercians.

\* W. Malm. l. 1. c. 2.

‡ Hen. Hunt. l. 2.

† Id. *ibid.*

A. D. 449.  
to 600.

Hertfordshire: its first monarch was named *Erkenwin*; but the time when he began to reign, and the actions which he performed, are equally unknown\*. The kingdom of the East-Angles consisted of the counties of Cambridge, Suffolk, and Norfolk: its first king was Uffa, who began his reign A. D. 575; and from him all his successors in that kingdom had the surname of *Uffans*. The kingdom of the Mercians comprehended all the middle counties of England to the east of the Severn, and south of Yorkshire and Lancashire: its first sovereign was Creda, who began his reign A. D. 585 †. The princes who reigned in these three petty kingdoms in the sixth century, performed nothing worthy of being recorded in history.

Kingdom  
of North-  
umberland  
founded.

Though a colony of Saxons (as hath been already mentioned) had settled on the east coast of Britain, between the walls of Severus and Antoninus Pius, not long after the middle of the fifth century, we know very little of the history of that colony for the greatest part of a century after their arrival. The Saxons being at a great distance from their countrymen in the south, and surrounded with enemies on all hands, continued long in a weak condition; and being also under the command of several petty chieftains, none of these had the presumption to assume the name of *king* ‡. At length, however, they received a very powerful reinforcement

\* Hen. Hunt. l. 2.

‡ W. Malsm. l. 1. c. 3.

† Id. *ibid.*

from Germany in a fleet of fifty ships which arrived at Flamborough, A. D. 547, under the command of Ida; who, being a prince of great wisdom and valour, assumed the royalty, and founded the kingdom of Northumberland, or rather of Bernicia, soon after his arrival \*. The castle of Bamburgh, built by Ida, was the capital of this most northerly kingdom of the Saxons; which comprehended not only the present county of Northumberland, but the counties of the Merse and the three Lothians, or the whole eastern coast of the ancient Roman province of Valentia. Ælla, another Saxon chieftain, having subdued all the country between the Humber and the Tyne, founded another little state in these parts, which was called the kingdom of *Deira* †. These two kingdoms were united, not long after, in the person of Ethelfrid, the grandson of Ida, who married Acca, the daughter of Ælla; and having expelled her brother Edwin, added his territories to his own, and thereby founded the powerful kingdom of Northumberland ‡.

A. D. 449.  
to 600.



In this manner were the seven Saxon kingdoms, commonly called *the heptarchy*, founded in that part of Britain, which soon after began to be called *England*, from the Angles, which were the most numerous and powerful tribe of the Saxons ||.

The heptarchy  
completed.

\* Chron. Saxon. p. 19. Hen. Hunt. l. 2. c. 3.

† Bedæ Hist. Eccles. l. 2. c. 1. Annal. Beverl. p. 78.

‡ W. Malms. l. 1. c. 3.

|| Camd. Britan. p. 168.

A. D. 449.  
to 600.

Before we prosecute the history of these Saxon kingdoms any further, it may not be improper to take a very short view of the state of the other nations who inhabited Britain in this period, and of the most important events which happened among these nations.

British  
states.

Though the Saxons had by degrees dispossessed the Britons of the most valuable part of their country, in which they had erected seven kingdoms; yet that unhappy people still continued to possess a very large tract on the west coast of Britain, extending from the Land's-end to the frith of Clyde. All the inhabitants of this extensive country were descended from the same ancestors, spoke the same language, professed the same religion, and were in all respects the same people, except that they were not united under one sovereign, which would have rendered them invincible, but subjected to a prodigious number of petty tyrants, who were almost constantly at war with one another, and seldom joined their forces to resist the common enemy. Gildas, the most ancient of our historians, who was himself a Briton, and flourished in those times, gives a most shocking character of five of these princes, who were cotemporaries, and domineered in their several districts over their wretched subjects\*. It would be highly improper, on many accounts, to swell this work with laborious investigations of the genealogies of those ancient British prin-

\* Epistola Gildæ, p. 1, 2, 3.

ces, or minute details of their mutual wars, which could not be rendered either instructive or entertaining. If any of our readers have a taste for such inquiries, they may consult the works quoted below \*. It is sufficient to observe, that in this extensive tract of country there were four considerable states or principalities in this period, viz. those of Cornwall, South Wales, North Wales, and Cumberland. In each of these states there was commonly one prince who was more powerful than the other chieftains or heads of clans, and had some degree of authority over them, though each of these chieftains was a kind of sovereign in his own little district.

A. D. 449.  
to 600.



That part of Britain which lay on the north side of the wall of Antoninus Pius, and of the friths of Forth and Clyde, was inhabited, in this period, by two warlike nations, the Scots and Picts; the former possessing the western, and the latter the eastern division of that country. These nations made a considerable figure in the third, fourth, and fifth centuries, by their frequent incursions into the Roman provinces, which are recorded by the Greek and Roman writers; but after the departure of the Romans, and the arrival of the Saxons, we lose sight of them almost entirely for some time; and their history becomes remarkably obscure for more

State of the  
Scots and  
Picts.

\* Dr Borlase's Antiq. Cornwall, c. 13. Mr Rowland's Mona Antiqua, sect. 11. p. 134. Harding's Chron. Mr Vaughan's Dissertation on British Chronol. and British Antiquities revived. Carte's Hist. vol. i. p. 210. &c.

A. D. 449.  
to 600.



than two centuries. This obscurity is not owing to their having performed no actions worthy of remembrance in this period, but either to their having had no historians to preserve the memory of those actions, or to their having lost the works of those historians, by the injuries of time, and various accidents \*. From the time of the battle between the Britons and Saxons on one side, and the Scots and Picts on the other, near Stamford, A. D. 449, to the beginning of the sixth century, we know very little with certainty of the history of these two last nations. It is highly probable, that, during this period, they were engaged in wars against each other, or against their common enemies the Saxons settled between the walls: but we have no authentic accounts of the particulars of these wars. Many modern writers have indeed filled up this chasm in the annals of the northern parts of Britain, with formal details of the names, actions, characters, and successions of the kings of the Scots. But as a little truth is of more value in history than many fables, we shall not abuse our readers with a repetition of these fabulous, or at best uncertain tales †.

Fergus,  
King of  
Scots.

It must, however, be acknowledged, that though we do not know the particulars of those wars which were carried on by the Scots and Picts in the latter part of the fifth century, it seems very probable that the Scots gained some

\* See Innes's Critical Essay, vol. 2. p. 548—586.

† See Fordun, Boece, Major, Buchanan, Maitland, &c.

advantages in these wars, extended their territories, and became a more powerful and better regulated nation, than they had been in any former period. For there is sufficient evidence, from several monuments of the ancient history of Scotland, which have escaped all the injuries of time, and the rage of enemies, that about the beginning of the sixth century, most probably A. D. 503, all the different clans of the Scots in Britain were united and formed into one nation, by Fergus the son of Erth, who was certainly the first monarch of the Scots nation of whose existence we have any tolerable evidence\*.

The dominions of this first king of Scots are described by two of our most ancient chronicles, in these words: "Fergus filius Erth fuit primus qui de semine Chonare suscepit regnum Albaniae, *i. e.* a monte Drumalban usque ad mare Hiberniae, et ad Inche-Gall." The sea of Ireland is a boundary which needs no explanation. The western islands of Scotland are called *Inche-Galle* by the highlanders of the continent to this day. The only question is concerning the mountain Drumalban, the eastern boundary of this first kingdom of the Scots, which is believed, by our most intelligent antiquaries, to be that ridge of high mountains which runs all the way from Lochlomond, near Dumbarton, on the west, to the frith of Tyne, on the east †.

A. D. 449.  
to 600.

Boundaries of the kingdoms of the Scots and Picts.

\* See the four old chronicles of the kings of Scotland, published by Father Innes, in his Appendix, No. 4, 5, 6, 7.

† Dr M'Pherson's Dissertation, diss. 18. p. 332.

A. D. 449.  
to 600.

All the rest of Scotland, to the north of the frith of Forth, and the wall of Antoninus, was in the possession of the Picts, and constituted the Pictish kingdom, which was at least as ancient as that of the Scots, though its antiquities are still more obscure, occasioned by the total subversion of that kingdom, and destruction of all the ancient monuments of its history, in the ninth century.

Kings of  
the Scots.

Fergus I. King of Scots, according to the only authentic monuments of our ancient history, reigned three years; and dying A. D. 506, was succeeded by his son Domangart, or Dongard; who reigned five years, and was succeeded, A. D. 511, by his son Congal\*. This last prince, after a reign of twenty-four years, dying A. D. 535, was succeeded by his brother Gauran, who reigned twenty-two years. Though Gauran, at his death, left a son named *Edhan*, he was succeeded by his nephew Conal, the son of Congal, who reigned fourteen years, and died A. D. 571. The later Scots historians, Fordun, Boece, Major, and Buchanan, who are mere moderns in comparison of those remote ages, have inserted several kings between Fergus and his great grandson Edhan the son of Gauran, whose names are not to be found in any of our genuine and really ancient monuments, who are therefore to be considered as the creatures of their own invention †. These writers have also ascribed a variety of actions and adventures to

\* See the ancient chronicles, apud Innes, Appen. No. 4, 5, 6.

† Innes's Critical Essays, vol. 2. p. 689, &c.



all these princes, real and imaginary (which may be seen in their works), for which they seem to have had little or no authority, and which, on that account, merit little or no attention from the friends of truth and genuine history.

A. D. 449.  
to 600.

Aidan  
King of  
Scots.

Edhan, or Aidan, the son of Gauran, succeeded his cousin Conal the son of Congal, A. D. 571. A few faint rays of light now begin to appear in the history of the Scots. The name, and some of the actions of Aidan, are mentioned by several ancient authors, who are not unworthy of credit, and who lived at no great distance from the times in which he flourished. On the death of Conal, Aidan returned from Ireland (where he had lived some years in a kind of exile), and was advanced to the throne, chiefly by the influence of St. Columba, who was, at that time, the great oracle of the Scots and Piets in civil as well as religious matters\*. Soon after his accession, he established a more regular administration of justice in his dominions, and exerted himself in suppressing several bands of robbers with which the country was infested †. While he was thus employed, a war broke out between him and Brude King of the Piets, who refused to deliver up certain fugitives from justice, who had taken shelter in his territories: a battle was fought near Dunkeld, in which Aidan obtained the victory, but with the loss of one of his sons, and many

\* Ogygia, p. 43. Boethius Scot. Hist. 1. 8. Buchan. 1. 5.

† Id. *ibid.*

A. D. 449.  
to 600.

of his subjects. St. Columba, who was equally revered by both the Caledonian monarchs, hearing of these scenes of slaughter with much concern, interposed his good offices, and brought about a peace\*. Aidan, after this, was engaged in two successive wars, against Brude King of the Picts, and Ethelfred King of the Northumbrian Saxons; in the course of which several bloody battles were fought with various success†. In the last of these battles, which happened A. D. 603, at a place called *Dogsastane*, being deserted by his allies the Stratheluyd or Cumbrian Britons, he received a total overthrow, in which he lost the greatest part of his army‡. The good old king did not long survive this grievous disaster, but died about the beginning of the year 605, in the thirty-fourth year of his reign, and seventy-eighth of his age||.

We know little or nothing of the history of the Pictish princes who flourished in that period which is the subject of this section, except their names, and the length of their reigns, which have been preserved in an ancient chronicle, published by Mr Innes, in his *Critical Essay on the ancient Inhabitants of Scotland* §.

\* Ogygia, p. 43. Boethius Scot. Hist. l. 8. Buchan, l. 5. Adamnan. Vit. S. Colum. l. i. c. 7.

† See Biograph. Britan. v. i. p. 68.

‡ Bedæ Hist. Eccles. l. i. c. 34. Chron. Saxon. p. 24.

|| Id. ibid.

§ Append. No. I.

## SECTION II.

*The civil and military history of Great Britain, from A. D. 600. to the accession of Egbert, the first English monarch, A. D. 801.*

AT the beginning of the seventh century, all the south and east coasts of Britain, from Cornwall to the frith of Forth, were possessed by various tribes of Saxons, Iutes, and Angles, divided into seven petty states or kingdoms, viz. those of Wessex, Sussex, Kent, Essex, East-Anglia, Mercia, and Northumberland. The east coasts of Caledonia, from the frith of Forth to Caithness, were occupied by the Picts, now united into one kingdom; and the north and west coasts of that country, from Caithness to the frith of Clyde, with the adjacent islands, were inhabited by the Scots, now also formed into one monarchy. Almost all the western coasts, from the frith of Clyde to the Land's end, were still in the possession of the posterity of the ancient Britons, divided into many little principalities, whose numbers, names, and boundaries, were perpetually changing, by the division of the territories of the fathers among their sons, by conquests and other accidents.

A. D. 600.  
to 801.  
State of  
Britain.

An island inhabited by so many fierce and warlike nations, animated with the most implacable enmity against each other, derived from their

A. D. 600.  
to 801.



ancestors, and every day more and more inflamed by mutual injuries, could not fail to be a scene of much confusion, and of many wars and revolutions. To form these wars and revolutions into one clear, perspicuous, unperplexed narration, is extremely difficult, if not impossible, though it must be attempted.

The history of the several British states, regulated by the chronology of the West-Saxons.

As all the other six kingdoms of the Anglo-Saxons fell gradually under the dominion of the West-Saxon princes, (from whom Egbert, the first English monarch, and his successors, were descended), it may not be improper to give our first attention to the history of these princes, and to regulate our introduction of the most memorable events which happened in all the other states of Britain, by the chronology of the West-Saxon kingdom. By this means the thread of our narration will be preserved unbroken, and some degree of unity and order introduced into this most intricate and perplexing period of the history of Britain.

Cinigesil and Quicelm, kings of Wessex.

Upon the death of Ceolwulf King of Wessex, A. D. 611, Cinigesil, his nephew, the son of Ceolric, obtained the government of that kingdom; and soon after assumed his brother Quicelm to be his partner in the throne\*. These two princes, who were justly admired for the warmth and constancy of their fraternal affections, defeated the Britons A. D. 614, at Beamdune, now Bampton, in Devonshire †.

\* Chron. Saxon. p. 25.

† Id. *ibid.* Hen. Hunt. l. 2. W. Malms. c. 2.

At the accession of Cinigesil to the govern-  
 ment of Wessex, Ethelfred King of Northumber-  
 land was the most powerful and enterprising  
 prince among the Anglo-Saxons. Having mar-  
 ried Acca, the daughter of Alla, King of Deira,  
 he got possession of that kingdom on the death  
 of his father-law, A. D. 588, though Alla left  
 an infant son, named *Edwin*, who lived many  
 years in exile, and became afterwards very fa-  
 mous\*. Ethelfred succeeded his father Athelric  
 in the kingdom of Bernicea, A. D. 590, and by  
 that means united the two Northumbrian king-  
 doms into one. After the great victory which  
 he obtained over Aidan King of Scots, A. D.  
 603, he had leisure to pursue his ambitious  
 schemes for the enlargement of his dominions,  
 without dreading any interruption from the  
 north. Accordingly he engaged in a long war  
 against the neighbouring British princes; in the  
 course of which he obtained a great victory over  
 Brocmail King of Powis, near Chester, A. D.  
 613. Brocmail, before the battle, had persuaded  
 1250 of the monks of Banchor to accompany  
 his army, and pray for his success, promising  
 them his protection. Ethelfred made his first  
 attack upon these monks, and slew no fewer than  
 1200 of them; which struck such terror into  
 the British army, that they fled, after a very  
 feeble resistance †. By this victory the city of  
 Chester, and the adjacent country, fell under the  
 dominion of the conqueror.

A. D. 600.  
to 801.

Ethelfred  
King of  
Northum-  
berland.

\* W. Malms. c. 3.

† Bedæ Hist. Eccles. l. 2. c. 3.

A. D. 600.  
to 801.

Edwin re-  
covers the  
kingdom  
of North-  
umber-  
land.

Though Ethelfred was thus successful in his martial enterprises, he was far from being easy in his mind. Prince Edwin, his injured brother-in-law, and lawful heir to one half of his dominions, had escaped all his snares, and was now grown up to man's estate. This prince had been carried in his infancy, by some friends of his family, to the court of Cadvan Prince of North Wales, where he was educated; but an unfortunate quarrel having happened between him and Cadwallon, the eldest son of Cadvan, he was obliged to abandon the territories of that prince \*. After this he wandered for some time from place to place, in continual fear and danger from the machinations of Ethelfred, till at length he found an asylum in the court of Ceorl King of Mercia. Here he continued some years, married Quoenburga, daughter of Ceorl; and by her had two sons, Osfred and Eodfred. But not finding himself secure from the power of his unrelenting persecutor, even in the court of his father-in-law, he retired from thence, and put himself into the hands of Redwald King of East-Anglia, who promised him his protection. Redwald was by far the best and greatest prince that ever governed the little kingdom of the East-Angles, and for some time resisted all the threats and promises of Ethelfred. At length, however, these promises became so tempting, and the danger of rejecting them appeared so great, that

\* Vaughan's Dissertat. on British Chronol.

Redwald's resolution began to fail, and he was on the point of making a sacrifice of his honour to his interest, by delivering up his royal guest into the hands of his enemy. Edwin received a secret intimation of his danger from a faithful friend, who advised him to make his escape : but this unhappy prince, being weary of a wandering life, and not knowing whither to fly, or whom to trust, resolved calmly to wait the event, without betraying any distrust of his protector. This proved a fortunate resolution ; for Redwald having communicated his thoughts concerning Edwin to his queen, that princess painted the infamy of betraying his friend in such strong colours, that he changed his mind, and determined to assist him in recovering his kingdom. With this view he raised an army with all possible secrecy and expedition, and marched directly into Northumberland. Ethelfred was greatly astonished at this unexpected attack ; but being full of courage, and trusting to his good fortune, which had never yet forsaken him, he collected a small army in haste, with which he met his enemies on the east banks of the river Idle. Redwald had drawn up his army in excellent order in three bodies ; the first of which was commanded by his eldest son, named *Rainer*, the second by himself, and the third by Edwin. Ethelfred made a furious attack upon the first of these bodies, and killed its commander with his own hand. Encouraged with this success, he rashly rushed upon the second division ; where he

A. D. 600.  
to 801.

A. D. 600.  
to 801.

was overpowered and slain, and all his army cut in pieces. This victory was so complete, that Edwin met with no further resistance, but took peaceable possession of the whole kingdom of Northumberland, A. D. 617, Ethelfred's seven sons having abandoned their country, and fled into Scotland\*.

Edwin  
escapes an  
assassina-  
tion.

Edwin, educated in the school of adversity, proved one of the best and greatest of the Anglo-Saxon kings †. He established the most perfect police and regular administration of justice in his own dominions, and was, either through love or fear, respected, and in some degree obeyed, by all the other princes of the Heptarchy ‡. Quicelm, King of the West-Saxons, bore this superiority of Edwin's with the greatest impatience, and attempted to destroy him by the most dishonourable means. He sent one Eumer as his ambassador to Edwin, A. D. 626, with instructions to kill that prince with a poisoned dagger, which he carried concealed under his robe. When this pretended ambassador, but real assassin, was introduced to an audience of the Northumbrian monarch in his palace at Aldby on the banks of the river Derwent, he pulled out his dagger in the midst of his harangue, and aimed a violent blow at the King; who was on

\* Chron. Sax. p. 27. Bedæ Hist. Eccl. l. 2. c. 12. Hen. Hunt. l. 2. W. Malms. c. 3.

† This prince was most probably the founder of the castle and city of Edinburgh, which was anciently called Edwinsburgh.

‡ Bedæ Hist. Eccles. l. 2. c. 14. W. Malms. l. 1. c. 3.



this occasion preserved from certain death, by the generous, heroic affection of Lilla, one of his courtiers, who intercepted the blow with his own body, and fell down dead on the spot. The treacherous murderer was soon dispatched by the guards, though he slew another of the King's servants, named *Frodheri*, in the scuffle \*. Edwin, justly incensed at this base attempt upon his life, marched an army into the territories of the West-Saxons, and took a severe revenge †.

A. D. 600.  
to 801.

Edwin had hitherto been successful in all his enterprises, and victorious over all his enemies; but a dangerous and formidable rival now appeared upon the stage. This was Penda, grandson of Creda, who mounted the throne of Mercia A. D. 626. Penda was one of the fiercest and most bloody tyrants that ever disgraced royalty; and though he was fifty years of age when he began his reign, he lived to be the destruction of many excellent princes, and the author of many calamities to his country ‡. He slew in battle no fewer than three kings of the East-Angles, Sigbert, Egric, and Annas, who were unhappily his neighbours and cotemporaries ||. He invaded the territories of the two brothers, Kings of Wessex, and fought a bloody battle against them near Cirencester, which was ended by night, before victory had declared on either side. Next morning, finding that he had sus-

War between Edwin and Penda King of Mercia.

\* Bedæ Hist. Eccl. 1. 2. c. 9.

‡ W. Malm. 1. 1. c. 3.

† Id. ibid.

|| Id. ibid.

A. D. 600.  
to 801.

tained a great loss of men in the preceding battle, he consented to make peace with the royal brothers, that he might be at leisure to turn his whole forces against Edwin King of Northumberland, his most powerful rival, and chief object of his malice\*. To secure his success in this enterprise, he entered into an alliance with Cadwallon Prince of Wales, who had not yet forgotten his quarrel with Edwin in his youth. These two princes having united their forces, invaded Northumberland with a very great army, and defeated and killed Edwin near Hatfield, on October 12th, A. D. 633 †. This defeat was exceedingly fatal to the army, the family, and dominions of Edwin; his army being almost entirely cut in pieces in the action; his children either slain in the battle, or driven into exile, and his dominions desolated by the ferocious conquerors with fire and sword ‡.

History of  
Northum-  
berland  
continued.

After Penda and Cadwallon had returned into their own dominions from that scene of desolation which they had occasioned in the north, Osric, a cousin of Edwin's, seized the kingdom of Deira; and Eanfred, the eldest son of Ethelfred, returning from Scotland, was acknowledged King of Bernicia ||. But these princes did not long enjoy their dignity, being both killed by Cadwallon in the year 634; a year which was esteemed unfortunate and accursed by the people

\* Hen. Hunt. l. 2.

‡ Bedæ Hist. Eccles. l. 2.

† Chron. Saxon. p. 29.

|| Chron. Saxon. p. 30.

of Northumberland even in the days of Vene-<sup>A. D. 600.</sup>  
 rable Bede, on account of the apostacy and death <sup>to 801.</sup>  
 of these two kings, and the many direful calamities which befel their subjects \*. Cadwallon, who had been the chief author of these calamities, was not much longer allowed to enjoy the cruel delight which he took in destroying his fellow-creatures. For Oswald, the second son of Ethelfred, after the death of his brother, with whom he returned from Scotland, collected a small army of brave and resolute men, who were determined to deliver their country, or perish in the attempt. With this little army he assaulted, defeated, and slew Cadwallon, at a place called *Hefenfield*, now *Benfield*, in Northumberland, A. D. 635 †. By this great victory, Oswald obtained possession of the whole kingdom of Northumberland, which he soon restored to its former prosperity, by his wise and mild administration.

We are not informed in what manner the ever-<sup>Wars be-</sup>  
 restless and turbulent Penda King of Mercia, was <sup>tween Os-</sup>  
 employed in this interval. But at length ob- <sup>wald King</sup>  
 serving that Oswald, King of Northumberland, <sup>of Nor-</sup>  
 had arrived at a degree of power and prosperity <sup>thumber-</sup>  
 equal to that of his great predecessor Edwin, his <sup>land and</sup>  
 jealousy was awakened, and he resolved on his <sup>Penda.</sup>  
 destruction. To accomplish this he declared war against him, which was carried on for some years with various success. At last a decisive battle

\* Bedæ Hist. Eccles. l. 3. c. 1.

† Id. ibid. c. 2.

A. D. 600. was fought on August 5th, A. D. 642, at a place  
 to 801. called *Maserfilth*, in which the good King Os-  
 wald was defeated and slain, in the thirty-eighth  
 year of his age, and eleventh of his reign \*. Penda, as usual, made cruel use of his victory; and after he had done all the mischief he could in the open country, besieged Bebbanburgh, the capital city of Bernicia. Here he met with an unexpected repulse, which Beda ascribes to the wonder-working prayers of Aidan, bishop of Holy-Island. After Penda had made many assaults without success, he collected an immense quantity of wood and other combustible materials, which he piled up as near the walls as possible; and when he observed the wind bearing strong towards the city, he set fire to the pile, in hopes of burning the town. But when the flames were surmounting the walls, and threatening all within them with destruction, the wind suddenly changed, and blew them with still greater violence on the besiegers, burning some of them to death, and obliging the rest to fly †. After the death of Oswald, the Northumbrian kingdom was again divided, Oswi his brother succeeding him in Bernicia, and Oswin his cousin in Deira.

Wars be-  
 tween Cen-  
 wal King of  
 Wessex and  
 Penda King  
 of Mercia,  
 &c.

Cinigesil King of Wessex died A. D. 643, (his royal brother Quicelm having died a few years before), and was succeeded by his son Cenwal. This prince, soon after his accession, divorced

\* Bedæ Hist. Eccles. l. 3. c. 9.

† Id. *ibid.* c. 16.

his queen, who was sister to Penda King of Mercia: an action which drew upon him, as he might have foreseen, the indignation of that powerful and impatient monarch; who invaded his dominions, defeated him in several battles, and at last obliged him to abandon his country, and take shelter in the court of Annas King of the East-Angles, A. D. 645 \*. When he had remained there about three years in exile, he found an opportunity of recovering his kingdom, which he thenceforward defended with great valour and success, during a long reign of thirty-one years †. The furious Penda being enraged at Annas for the kind reception he had given to Cenwal in his distress, invaded his territories, A. D. 654, killed him in battle, and cut almost his whole army in pieces ‡. But heaven was now preparing to take vengeance on this hoary tyrant, and destroyer of so many kings. Though he was connected with Oswi King of Northumberland, by a double marriage between their children, (Alchfred, the son of Oswi, being married to Cyneburga, the daughter of Penda, and Peada, the son of Penda, to Alchfleda, the daughter of Oswi), nothing could dissuade him from invading the territories of that prince. Oswi remembering that two of his greatest predecessors, Edwin and Oswald, had been slain, and innumerable calamities brought upon his

\* Chron. Saxon. p. 32.

† Hen. Hunt. l. 2. W. Malm. c. 2.

‡ Hen. Hunt. l. 2.

A. D. 600.  
to 801.

country, by this dreadful adversary, endeavoured to avert the impending storm, by offering the most valuable presents. But all these offers were rejected with disdain, and Penda entered Northumberland at the head of a powerful army, accompanied by Ethelhirc King of the East-Angles, and Edelwald King of Deira, his allies, or rather vassals; threatening to extirpate the whole inhabitants without exception. Oswi, perceiving that nothing under heaven could preserve himself, his family, and subjects, from destruction, but their own activity and courage, collected all his forces, and boldly marched to attack his enemies, though greatly inferior to them in numbers. The two hostile armies met A. D. 655, on the banks of a river, then called *Wenuaid* now *Broad-Arc*, which runs by Leeds, where a bloody battle was fought; in which the Northumbrians, exerting the most desperate valour, and fighting for their very existence as a nation, obtained a complete victory, killed Penda and Ethelhirc, and about thirty other chieftains, with a prodigious number of their followers\*. By this great victory, Oswi not only preserved his own dominions from ruin, but got possession of the whole kingdom of Mercia; the southern part of which beyond the Trent, he voluntarily bestowed upon Peada, the eldest son of Penda, and his own son-in-law. But this prince being slain soon after by treachery, Oswi governed the

\* Bedæ Hist. Eccles. l. 3. c. 24.

Mercian territories about three years by his lieutenants; who were then expelled by a combination of the nobles, and Wulphere, the second son of Penda, was by them raised to the throne of Mercia, A. D. 659\*. From this period, Oswi King of Northumberland, seems to have lived in perfect peace with Wulphere King of Mercia, during his whole reign; and an uncommon degree of tranquillity prevailed over all the kingdoms of the heptarchy for many years after the death of the furious Penda. This affords us a favourable opportunity of taking a very short view of the most important events which happened in other parts of Britain, from the beginning of the seventh century, to the death of Cenwall King of Wessex, A. D. 672.

A. D. 600.  
to 801.



The history of the Britons of Cornwall, Wales, and Cumbria, is exceedingly obscure in this period. Being under the government of many petty princes or chieftains, they were almost engaged in continual broils and quarrels amongst themselves; which prevented them from giving much disturbance to their common enemies the Saxons. Cadwallon, the cotemporary, enemy, and conqueror, of Edwin King of Northumberland, was by far the most powerful of the British princes of those times; and after his death, which happened A. D. 635, the Britons seem to have been quite dispirited, and to have lost all hopes of recovering their country from the

History of  
Wales.

\* Bedæ Hist. Eccles. l. 3. c. 24.

A. D. 600. Saxons. They fought, indeed, several battles  
 to 801. against the Saxons after this; particularly one  
 against Cenwall King of Wessex, at Bradford upon Avon, A. D. 652; and another against the same prince at Pen in Somersetshire, A. D. 658; but they fought with little spirit, and were constantly defeated\*.

History of  
 Scotland.

Nor is the history of the Scots much more clear and certain in this period than that of the Britons; and that of the Picts is almost quite unknown. This acknowledgement concerning the Scots will, perhaps, appear surprising and offensive to those who peruse the works of Fordun, Boethius, Buchanan, and other Scots historians, and there find a regular succession of many kings of Scotland in those times, with formal descriptions of their characters, and long details of their actions. But as all these writers are mere moderns, in comparison of the times we are now considering, and seldom condescend to quote their authorities, those who do not yield an implicit faith to all their narrations, ought not to be too severely censured: and a writer who thinks himself obliged to omit some of these narrations, as at best uncertain, will not be greatly blamed by the real friends of truth.

Continued.

Aidan King of Scots dying A. D. 605, was succeeded by his eldest surviving son Eoach Buydhe, or Eoach the Yellow, so called from the colour of his hair †. This prince, who is

\* Chron. Saxon. p. 33—39.

† See Innes's Essays, Append. No. 4.



named *Eugenius* by our modern historians, is said to have been a great favourite of the famous St Columba, who pointed him out to his father Aidan as his successor, at a time when he had three elder sons living\*. Some of our later historians represent *Eugenius* as a peaceful, others as a warlike prince, continually fighting, either against the Picts or Saxons: a sufficient proof that they knew nothing with certainty of his character or actions †. The only thing recorded of him with any tolerable evidence is, that he gave a kind reception and hospitable entertainment to the seven sons of Ethelfred King of Northumberland, who fled into Scotland with their sister Elba, and many followers, A. D. 617 ‡.

A. D 600.  
to 801.

In the two ancient catalogues of the kings of Scots, published by Father Innes, Kinath-Kerr, or Kinath the Left-handed, the son of Conal, is placed immediately after Eoach Buydhe, and is said to have reigned three months: though all our modern historians, for what reason I know not, have inverted this order, and placed the short reign of Kenneth before that of *Eugenius* ||. However this may be, it is generally agreed, that Ferchar, the eldest son of Eochod, or *Eugenius*, ascended the throne of Scotland A. D. 622; concerning whom Fordun confesses he knew nothing; though two more modern

Continued.

\* Adamnan. Vita Columb. l. 1. c. 8.

† Fordun, c. 32. Buchan. l. 5.

‡ Fordun, c. 33. Bedæ Hist. Eccles. l. 2. c. 12.

|| Fordun, c. 51. Buchan. l. 5.

A. D. 600. historians pretend to have discovered, by what  
 to 801. means they do not inform us, that he was a very  
 wicked prince; and that being cast into prison  
 by his nobility for his crimes, he there put an  
 end to his own life\*.

Continued. Dovenald Breach, or Donald the Speckled,  
 succeeded his brother Ferchar A. D. 632. He is  
 said to have been a good prince, and to have  
 generously assisted the sons of Ethelfred King of  
 Northumberland, in returning into that coun-  
 try, and recovering their paternal dominions †.  
 He was succeeded, A. D. 646, by his nephew  
 Ferchar Fada, or Ferchar the Long ‡. Though  
 Fordun, the most ancient of the Scots histo-  
 rians, seems to have known nothing of the cha-  
 racter of this prince, two of his successors, Boe-  
 thius and Buchanan, describes his vices as par-  
 ticularly as if they had been personally acquainted  
 with him, and represent him as a monster of  
 impiety, cruelty, and sensuality ||. What credit  
 is due to this representation, let the reader  
 judge. Upon the death of Ferchar, A. D. 664,  
 Maldwin, his cousin, the son of Dovenald  
 Breach, mounted the throne. In the ancient  
 catalogues of the kings of Scots, the name of  
 this prince is inserted immediately after that  
 of his father, and before that of his cousin  
 Ferchar §. But Fordun and his followers have  
 changed this order of succession, without giving

\* Boet. l. 9. Buchan. l. 5.

† Fordun, c. 37.

§ Innes, Append. No. 4, 5.

† Fordun, c. 34.

|| Boeth. l. 9. Buchan. l. 5.

any reasons for the change. Maldwin is represented by all our historians as a wise and good prince, who governed his own subjects with prudence and justice, and maintained peace with all his neighbours\*. In the fifth year of this king's reign, a most dreadful pestilence raged in all the nations of Europe, except among the Scots and Picts; of which Fordun gives a particular account from Adamnan abbot of Jona, who flourished in those times †. Maldwin ended his life and reign A. D. 684.

The civil and military history of the Pictish nation, (who possessed the eastern and best part of Caledonia), from the beginning of the seventh century to the death of Maldwin King of Scots, is entirely lost, except the names of their kings, which may be seen in the Appendix. Before we take our leave of the north for some time, it may not be improper to take notice, that from the death of Aidan King of Scots, A. D. 605, to the death of Maldwin, A. D. 684, an uninterrupted peace subsisted between the Scots and Saxons; a thing not very common between two such fierce and warlike neighbours. The reasons of this long cessation of hostilities seem to have been these: The Scots were so much weakened and dispirited by the great loss which they sustained in the fatal battle of Dægfastane, A. D. 603, that for a long time they had neither power nor inclination to make any further at-

A. D. 600.  
to 801.

History of  
the Picts,  
and a long  
peace be-  
tween the  
Saxons and  
Scots.

\* Fordun, l. 3. c. 40.

† Fordun, l. 3. c. 40.

A. D. 600.  
to 801.

tempts upon the Saxons ; and the Saxons were so much employed in mutual quarrels, that they had no leisure to disturb the Scots. After the return of the family of Ethelfred from Scotland, A. D. 634, where they had been kindly entertained seventeen years, a cordial friendship (strengthened by mutual good offices, and cherished by the means of those Scottish clergy who converted the Northumbrian Saxons to Christianity) took place between the Scots and Saxons, and continued many years.—But it is now time to return to the south, and pursue the civil and military history of the Anglo-Saxons, from the death of Cenwall King of Wessex, A. D. 672.

History of  
Wessex.

Cenwall having died without issue, the succession to the throne of Wessex remained for some time in an unsettled state. Sexburga, his widow, who was a princess of uncommon spirit and abilities, kept possession of the chief authority to her death, which happened about a year after that of her husband \*. After this, the succession was disputed between Eskwin, a prince of the royal family, and Kentwin, brother to the late King Cenwall, who reigned for about three years over different districts †. Wulphere King of Mercia, second son of the long redoubted Penda, had an engagement with Eskwin, one of these competitors, at Bedwin in Wiltshire, A. D. 675 ‡. Wulphere did not long survive this

\* Chron. Saxon. p. 41.

† Bedæ Hist. Eccles. l. 4. c. 12.

‡ Chron. Saxon. p. 41.

action, but dying that same year, was succeeded by his brother Ethelred \* ; and Eskwin dying the year after, Kentwin, his competitor, became sole monarch of the West Saxons †.

At the accession of Kentwin to the throne of Wessex, A. D. 676, the three small kingdoms of Sussex, Essex, and East Anglia, had fallen into a state of imbecillity, and subjection to their powerful neighbours, the Kings of Mercia and Wessex. This was occasioned by disputes about the succession in these little states, upon the failure of the male issue of their respective founders, and by various other accidents. A few years after, the kingdom of Kent, the most ancient of the Saxon states in Britain, fell into the same condition, from the same causes. From henceforward, therefore, we shall hear very little of these small independent states, as few of the events which happened in them are worthy of a place in history.

We shall now pursue the history of the three more powerful and flourishing kingdoms of Wessex, Mercia, and Northumberland, which were at this time governed by the three following princes: Kentwin, King of Wessex; Ethelred, the youngest son of Penda, and brother of Wulphere, King of Mercia; Egfrid, son of Oswi, King of Northumberland. These three princes were restless and ambitious, and engaged in almost constant wars.

\* Chron. Saxon. p. 41.

† Id. p. 44.

A. D. 600.  
to 801.

Kentwin King of Wessex employed his arms chiefly against the Britons of Cornwall and Somersetshire, and over-run those countries, having penetrated as far as the Bristol channel, A. D. 681 \*. Ethelred King of Mercia, who began his reign A. D. 675, made his first efforts against the little kingdom of Kent, which he laid waste †. After this, he turned his arms against Egfrid King of Northumberland, from whom he recovered Lincolnshire, and against whom he fought a very bloody battle, A. D. 679, on the banks of the Trent, in which Elfwin, an amiable young prince, brother to King Egfrid, was slain. A peace was happily brought about between these two monarchs, by the mediation of Theodore Archbishop of Canterbury; after which Ethelred spent the remainder of his long reign in a state of tranquillity ‡. But Egfrid the Northumbrian monarch did not imitate his example; for no sooner was the pacification between him and Ethelred concluded, than he turned his arms against the Scots and Picts. In the first year of this war, A. D. 614, he gained some advantages against the Scots; but the year following, having ventured too far into the enemy's country, he was defeated and slain, and almost his whole army cut in pieces by the Picts ||. This defeat was very fatal to the kingdom of Northumberland. The fine country be-

\* Chron. Saxon. p. 45.

† Bedæ Hist. Eccles. l. 4. c. 21.

‡ Bedæ Hist. Eccles. l. 4. c. 26.

† Id. p. 44.

tween the frith of Forth and the river Tweed, <sup>A. D. 600.</sup> on the east, was over-run by the Picts; and in <sup>to 801.</sup> the west, the Britons of Galloway and Cumberland recovered their liberty and their country; by which the boundaries of the Northumbrian kingdom were very much contracted. The prince who reigned over the Scots when Egfrid invaded them, was Eochol Renneval, or the Crooked-nose, called by our late historians *Eugenius* IV. who succeeded his uncle Maldwin A. D. 684, and died A. D. 687\*. The Pictish king who defeated and slew the Northumbrian monarch, was Brude III. who reigned from A. D. 674 to 695 †.

Kentwin, king of Wessex, dying A. D. 685, <sup>Continued.</sup> was succeeded by Ceodwalla, a prince of the blood-royal, who greatly enlarged his dominions by the entire reduction of the kingdom of Sussex, and made several very destructive inroads into the kingdom of Kent; in one of which he lost his brother Mollo, who was surrounded, and burnt to death, with all his attendants, by the enraged enemy, A. D. 687 ‡. The year after this tragical event, Ceodwalla, being seized with remorse for the cruelties which he had committed in the course of his wars, took a journey to Rome, where he died soon after his arrival, on April 20. A. D. 689, and was succeeded by his cousin Ina, who proved one of the best and greatest

\* Fordun, l. 3. c. 43.

‡ Chron. Saxen. p. 45, 46.

† Innes, v. 1. p. 138.

A. D. 600.  
to 801.

princes of the age in which he lived \*. Aldfrid, a natural brother of Egfrid's, had succeeded that unhappy prince in the kingdom of Northumberland A. D. 685; but being more addicted to letters than to arms, he contented himself with governing his own subjects with wisdom and justice, without disturbing any of his neighbours †. Ethelred still continued to reign in Mercia, but had conceived an abhorrence of war, and spent the greatest part of his time in acts of devotion. These circumstances were favourable to Ina's design of enlarging his dominions. With this view, and in order to revenge the cruel death of his relation Mollo, he invaded Kent A. D. 694; but was prevailed upon, by a great sum of money, to desist from that enterprise ‡. He then turned his arms against the Britons, and obtained a great victory over Gerwint King of Wales, by which he made an entire conquest of Cornwall and Somersetshire, and annexed them to his kingdom §. While Ina was thus employed, Ethelred King of Mercia, who had lived many years like a monk upon the throne, descended from it A. D. 704, and became a monk in reality, leaving his crown to his nephew Cenred ||. This prince was soon after seized with the fashionable frenzy of those times, abandoned his throne, and went to Rome A. D. 709, in company with another royal vagabond,

\* Chron. Saxon. p. 45, 46. Bedæ Hist. Eccles. I. 5. c. 75.

† Id. Ibid. I. 4. c. 26.

‡ Chron. Saxon. p. 48.

§ Hen. Hunt. I. 4.

|| Chron. Saxon.



Offa King of the East-Saxons; and there they both embraced the monastic life \*. Aldfrid, the learned King of Northumberland, after a peaceful reign of twenty years, had died at Dryffield in December A. D. 704, and was succeeded by his son Osred, a young prince about eight years of age †. The Picts, after the great victory which they obtained over Egfrid, had made several incursions into Northumberland. In one of these, A. D. 699, they defeated and killed one Berht, a Northumbrian nobleman ‡. But they were not so successful in another invasion, A. D. 711; for being encountered by Berectfrid, regent of the kingdom in the minority of Osred, they were defeated, and so great a number of them slain, that it in some measure revenged the death of Egfrid and Berht ||. Ceolred, the son of Ethelred, who succeeded his cousin Cenred in the throne of Mercia, was not of so monkish a disposition as his two predecessors; but being jealous of the increasing power of Ina King of Wessex, he declared war against him. In the course of this war, a very bloody battle was fought A. D. 715 at Wodnesbeorth, in which neither party had any reason to boast of victory, and both suffered so much, that it put an end to all further hostilities §. Ceolred did not long survive this battle; but dying A. D. 716,

A. D. 600.  
to 801.

\* Chron. Saxon. p. 50. Bedæ Hist. Eccles. l. 5. c. 19.

† Id. ibid. l. 5. c. 18.

‡ Chron. Saxon. p. 49.

|| Id. p. 50. Hen. Hunt. l. 4.

§ Id. ibid. Chron. Saxon. p. 51.

A. D. 600.  
to 801.

was succeeded by Ethelbald, who was next heir to the crown. The same year proved fatal to Osred, the young King of Northumberland, who was then slain, though we are not informed in what manner, or by whom \*. Cenred, a prince of the blood-royal, seized the crown, of which he kept possession only two years, and was then succeeded by Osric, the second son of Aldfrid, who performed nothing memorable; but dying A. D. 726, left his kingdom to Ceolwolf, who was brother to his predecessor Cenred, and patron to the venerable historian Bede †.

England  
enjoyed  
peace for  
some years.

England at this period enjoyed an uncommon degree of tranquillity for several years. This seems to have been owing to the unsettled state of the Northumbrian kingdom; to the libidinous disposition of Ethelbald King of Mercia, which engaged him in other pursuits than those of ambition; and to the great change which age had produced in Ina King of Wessex, who spent the last years of his reign in the beneficent works of peace, and at last retired to Rome A. D. 728, (with his Queen Ethelburga), and there ended his days in a monastery ‡.—Here it may not be improper to take a very short view of the chief things which had been lately transacted in the other parts of Britain.

History of  
Wales.

The unhappy Britons, who had been deprived of the most valuable part of their country by the Saxons, still continued to suffer new losses, and

\* Bedæ Hist. Eccles. l. 5. c. 24.

‡ W. Malm. l. 1. c. 2.

† Id. l. 5. c. 23.

to be confined within narrower and narrower <sup>A. D. 600.</sup> bounds. By the West Saxon kings, Kentwin <sup>to 801.</sup> and Ina, they were deprived of all the country on the south side of the Bristol channel; and by the Northumbrian princes, those of Cumberland and Galloway were reduced to a state of great subjection. From this indeed these last obtained a temporary relief by the defeat and death of Egfrid, and the misfortunes which thereby came upon the kingdom of Northumberland: but this relief was not of very long duration, as we shall presently observe. The most powerful prince among the Britons, in the end of the seventh and beginning of the eighth century, was named *Gerwint*, the same who was defeated by Ina King of Wessex, A. D. 710 \*. After the death of this prince, A. D. 720, Roderic Malwynoc, a descendant of the famous Cadwallon, was the most considerable of the British princes, and is said (by the Welsh historians) to have fought many battles, with various success, against the kings of Wessex and Mercia, who were his cotemporaries †.

Eochol Renneval, or Eugenius IV. King of Scots, dying A. D. 687, was succeeded by Ewen, or Eugenius V. son of Ferchar the Long. On this occasion, the modern Scots historians have again departed from the order of succession in the most ancient catalogues of the kings of Scots, in which Arncellac, or Armkelleth, is

\* Chron. Saxon. p. 50.

† Powel's Hist. Wales, p. 15.

A. D. 600. introduced before Ewen \*. However this may  
 to 801. be, it is agreed, that these two princes reigned  
 from A. D. 687 to A. D. 698, and had several skirmishes, but no decisive battle, with their neighbours the Picts †. On the death of his immediate predecessor Heatagan, the son of Findan, called Eugenius VI. became King of Scots, and put an end to all disputes with the Picts for some time, by marrying Spondana, daughter of their king ‡. Fordun, the most ancient of the Scotch historians, gives an excellent character of this prince; and seems to have known nothing of the strange, improbable tale, of his having been tried by his nobles for the murder of his queen, which is so formally related by more modern writers ||. Murdoch, the son of Armkelleth, succeeded his uncle Heatagan A. D. 715, and reigned fifteen years in the most profound peace §.

An univer-  
 sal peace in  
 Britain.

The former part of the eighth century appears to have been the most peaceful period of the ancient history of Britain since the arrival of the Saxons. At that time, the long and violent storms which had agitated all the nations inhabiting this island for several ages, with very little intermission, subsided into an universal calm, which is thus described by the venerable historian Bede, in the conclusion of his most valuable work: “ At this time the Picts are in a state of


\* Innes, Append. No. 4, 5.

† Fordun, l. 3. c. 43, 44.

‡ Id. c. 45.

|| Boet. Hist. Scot. l. 9. Buchan. Scot. Hist. l. 5.

§ Fordun, l. 3. c. 45.

“ friendship with the English, and of conformity A. D. 600.  
to 801.  
 “ with the universal church in truth and peace.   
 “ The Scots, too, contented with their own terri-  
 “ tories, are forming no plots against the Eng-  
 “ lish. Nay, even the Britons themselves,  
 “ though animated with hereditary hatred  
 “ against the English, and at variance with the  
 “ Catholic church about the time of keeping  
 “ Easter, finding themselves baffled both in their  
 “ civil and religious contests, have sunk into a  
 “ state of tranquillity, some under their own  
 “ princes, and some under the dominion of the  
 “ English. This is the present state of all the  
 “ nations of Britain, in this year 731. What  
 “ will be the consequence of this tranquillity,  
 “ which hath made so many, both of the nobi-  
 “ lity and common people, in this kingdom of  
 “ Northumberland, abandon the use of arms,  
 “ and crowd into monasteries, time alone can  
 “ discover\*.” With extreme regret, we must  
 here take our leave of this venerable historian,  
 who hath hitherto been our chief companion and  
 guide through the intricate mazes of the Anglo-  
 Saxon history.—But it is now time to turn  
 our attention towards the South.

Ina King of the West-Saxons, at his departure History of  
Wessex,  
Mercia,  
and Nor-  
thumber-  
land.  
 for Rome, A. D. 729, left his throne and king-  
 dom to Ethelhard, brother to his queen Ethel-  
 burga, and a prince of the royal family ; who  
 having defeated Oswald, another prince of the

\* Bedæ Hist. Eccles. l. 5. c. 23.

A. D. 600. blood, and pretender to the crown, reigned in  
 to 801. } profound peace to the time of his death A. D.  
 741 \*. Ceolwolf King of Northumberland had  
 in the mean time resigned his crown, and retired  
 into the monastery of Lindesfarne, A. D. 737,  
 and was succeeded by his cousin Eadbert, the  
 last king of the Northumbrians who made any  
 considerable figure †. He defended the southern  
 frontiers of his kingdom against some attempts  
 of Ethelbald King of Mercia, with spirit and  
 success, and reduced the Strath-Cluyd Britons  
 to their former subjection ‡. This great prince,  
 after having triumphed over all his enemies,  
 and gained the love and admiration of his sub-  
 jects, was unfortunately seized with the epidemic  
 madness of those times, resigned his crown to  
 his son Osulf, and retired into a monastery,  
 A. D. 758; where he lived to see the ruin which  
 this unwarrantable step brought upon his family  
 and country ||. Cuthred, who succeeded Ethel-  
 hard in the throne of Wessex, had an unquiet  
 reign, being almost continually engaged in war,  
 either against Ethelbald King of Mercia, or, in  
 conjunction with that prince, against the Bri-  
 tons §. In the ninth year of his reign, his son  
 Cenric, a young prince of great courage, was  
 slain in a military tumult. About a year after  
 this great misfortune, he defeated, and gene-  
 rously pardoned, Ethelhun, a nobleman of an

\* Chron. Saxon. p. 53. 55.

† Sim. Dunelm. c. 16.

‡ Id. c. 18. Continuatio Bedæ.

|| Sim. Dunelm. c. 18.

§ W. Malms. l. i. c. 1. Hen. Hunt. l. 4.

ambitious and un/daunted spirit, who had raised a rebellion; and it was not long before he reaped the reward of his generosity. For his great rival Ethelbald, having collected all his forces, in order to decide their quarrel by one great blow, the two monarchs met, at the head of two great armies, A. D. 752, at Burford, where a long and bloody battle was fought, in which Cuthred obtained the victory, chiefly by the prodigies of valour performed by the grateful Ethelhun.— This nobleman, after killing great numbers of the Mercian soldiers, encountered Ethelbald, and obliged him to fly, in which he was soon followed by his whole army\*. Cuthred did not very long survive this victory, and another which he obtained over the Britons; but dying A. D. 754, was succeeded by his cousin Segebert; who, by his folly, pride, and cruelty, soon forfeited the esteem, and incurred the hatred, of his subjects; who, A. D. 755, rebelled against him, and drove him from his throne and country. The worthless and wretched Segebert, being forsaken by all the world, took shelter in the great forest of Anderida, where he was discovered and put to death by a swine-herd †.— Cynewlf, a prince of the royal family, who had headed the insurrection against Segebert, succeeded him in the throne of Wessex ‡. About the same time, Ethelbald King of Mercia, after

A. D. 600.  
to 801.

\* Hen. Hunt. l. 4.

‡ Id. *ibid.*

† Id. *ibid.* Chron. Saxon. p. 56.

A. D. 600. a long reign of forty-one years, was killed in  
 to 801. battle at Seckington in Warwickshire \*. Beorn-  
 red, who succeeded him, appears to have been  
 an usurper, and probably commander of the  
 army which defeated and slew him. If this was  
 really the case, he had no great reason to rejoice  
 in the success of his ambitious schemes; for,  
 before the end of the year 755, he was de-  
 throned, and expelled by a general insurrection  
 of the nobility and people of Mercia, under the  
 conduct of Offa, a brave young prince of the  
 royal family, who was by universal consent raised  
 to the throne †.

Continued.

Offa was by far the greatest and most powerful  
 prince that ever filled the throne of Mercia, and  
 raised that kingdom to a degree of greatness and  
 prosperity, which seemed to threaten all the  
 other kingdoms of the heptarchy with subjec-  
 tion. His first attempt was against the king-  
 dom of Northumberland, from which he dismem-  
 bered the county of Nottingham, and annexed it  
 to his own dominions ‡. The kings of Kent had  
 for a considerable time been in a state of depend-  
 ence, sometimes on the kings of Wessex, and  
 sometimes on those of Mercia. Offa invaded  
 that little kingdom A. D. 774; and having ob-  
 tained a great victory at Otford, reduced it to a  
 state of subjection to his authority ||. Cynewlf,  
 King of Wessex, observing these successes of his

\* Chron. Saxon. p. 59.  
 Ingulph. Hist. Croy. l. 1.  
 || Id. ibid. Hen. Hunt. l. 4.

† Id. ibid. W. Malms. l. 1. c. 4.  
 ‡ Brompton, p. 776.



most powerful rival with a jealous eye, raised a great army with a design to obstruct his progress; but was defeated by Offa at Bensington in Oxfordshire, A. D. 775\*. After this victory, Offa enlarged his dominions on that side, by the reduction of the counties of Oxford and Gloucester, which had long made a part of the kingdom of Wessex. The Britons seem to have taken advantage of this war between the two greatest of the Anglo-Saxon princes, and made incursions into both their territories; which brought about a peace between them, and the union of their arms against their common enemy. The unhappy Britons, unable to resist two such powerful adversaries, were every where defeated, and obliged to take shelter among the mountains of Wales, abandoning all the low countries to the conquerors †. To secure his acquisitions on that side, Offa commanded a broad and deep ditch to be made from the mouth of the river Wye on the south, to the river Dee in Flintshire on the north; of which some vestiges are still visible ‡. Cynewlf, King of Wessex, after he had reigned twenty-nine years, was surprised and slain, A. D. 784, by Cyneheard, a pretender to his crown, at Merton in Surry, whither he had gone with a few attendants to pay a private visit to a lady. But Cyneheard (who was brother to the wicked and unfortunate Segebert) did not reap

\* Hen. Hunt. l. 4. Chron. Saxon. p. 61.

† Hen. Hunt. l. 4. Powel's Hist. of Wales, p. 19.

‡ Id. *ibid.* Speed's Chron. p. 344.

A. D. 600.  
to 801.

that advantage from this atchievement which he expected; for the nobility and people of the country having heard of the slaughter of their king, flew to arms, and cut him and all his followers in pieces \*. Upon this, Brihtric, a prince of the royal family, mounted the throne of Wessex; though Egbert, descended from Ingeld, brother to King Ina, had a preferable title †.

History of  
Northum-  
berland.

The kingdom of Northumberland, which in the reign of Eadbert had been the largest and most flourishing state in Britain, after the retreat of that prince from the world, became a scene of incessant broils, and frequent revolutions, which at length ended in total anarchy and confusion. Osulf, the son and successor of Eadbert, was killed by his own domestics, July 4. A. D. 759; and Ethelwold, the son of Moll, a nobleman who seems not to have been related to the royal family, advanced to the throne by the favour of the people ‡. Oswin, a prince of the blood, attempted to pull him down from this elevation, but was defeated and slain at Eldem near Melross; though Ethelwold was, not long after, A. D. 765, obliged to resign his crown in favour of Alchred, the son of Osulf; who was in his turn expelled, A. D. 744, by Ethelred, the son of Ethelwold ||. This usurper did not long enjoy his precarious dignity, being driven out, A. D. 779, by Elfwold, the brother of Alchred §.—

\* Chron. Saxon. p. 57. 63.

† W. Malms. 1. 1. c. 2. l. 2. c. 1.

‡ Sim. Dunelm. c. 19. Chron. Saxon. p. 59.

|| Id. p. 60. 61.

§ Id. p. 62. Chron. de Mailros, ad An. 778.

The just title, and many virtues of this prince, A. D. 600. to 801. could not preserve him from the fate of his predecessors, for he was barbarously murdered, A. D. 788, by one of his own generals, and succeeded by his nephew Osred, the son of Alchred \*. Osred had hardly been seated one year on this tottering throne, when he was pulled down and thrust into a monastery by the nobility, who recalled Ethelred, who had been expelled about ten years before †. Ethelred took every possible precaution to preserve himself from a second expulsion. He put to death Eardulf, a powerful nobleman, whose designs he suspected; and having got the two young princes, Elf and Elfwene, the sons of the late King Elfwold, into his hands, he murdered them both ‡. Osred also, his predecessor, being taken prisoner in an attempt he made to recover his crown, shared the same fate ||. Still further to secure himself against all his enemies, he married Elflada, daughter of Offa, the powerful king of Mercia.

But all these precautions proved in vain: for he was murdered by his own subjects about four years after his restoration, A. D. 794 §. So long a succession of sudden and sanguinary revolutions, (of which there is hardly a parallel to be found in history), struck terror into the boldest and most ambitious hearts, and deterred them from aspiring to such a dangerous dignity. This

\* Chron. de Mailros. ad An. 788.

† Id. ibid.

|| Id. ibid.

‡ Id. ad An. 789.

§ Id. ibid.

A. D. 600.  
to 801.

occasioned, if we may believe William of Malmsbury, a total dissolution of government in Northumberland for more than thirty years; which rendered the people of that country unhappy at home, and odious and contemptible among other nations\*. “Charles the Great,” says Alcuinus in a letter preserved by Malmsbury, “is so enraged against the people of Northumberland, that he calls them a perfidious and perverse people, the murderers of their own princes, and worse than heathens; and if I, who am a native of that country, had not interceded for them, he would have done them all the mischief in his power †.”

Wicked ac-  
tion of Offa  
King of  
Mercia.

Offa King of Mercia, not contented with all the additions which he had made to his dominions by the force of arms, increased them still further by an act of the most horrid treachery and cruelty, towards the conclusion of his reign, A. D. 792. Though the kings of the East-Angles, who had never been powerful, had long been in a state of dependence on the Mercian monarchs; yet they still continued to enjoy the title, and many of the prerogatives, of royalty. Ethelred, who at this time governed that small state, was a young prince of the most amiable person and character, beloved by his subjects, and esteemed by all the world. By the advice of his council, he made proposals of marriage to Althrida, daughter of Offa, which were fa-

\* W. Malms. l. 1. c. 3.

† Id. *ibid.*

vourably received, and he was invited to the court of Mercia to conclude the match. When he arrived there, attended by the chief nobility of his kingdom, he was basely murdered, and his dominions annexed to those of Mercia\*. Offa did not long survive this inhuman deed, for which he endeavoured to make some atonement by an expensive journey to Rome, and many liberal donations to the church. He died A. D. 794, and was succeeded by his son Egfrith; who died in less than five months after his father †. This made room for Kenulf, a prince of the royal family, who is greatly celebrated by our monkish historians for his valour and religion. He was the last of the Kings of Mercia who made any considerable figure. For after his death, which happened A. D. 819, that kingdom became a scene of almost annual revolutions, which soon brought on its ruin ‡.

Brihtric, who became King of Wessex on the murder of Cynewlf, A. D. 784, being conscious that this title was disputable, took every precaution he could think of to secure the possession of his throne. With this view he married Eadburga, daughter to Offa King of Mercia, who was by far the most powerful prince in Britain in those times ||. With the same view, he endeavoured, by various means, to get Egbert, his dangerous competitor, into his hands; which

\* Chron. Saxon. p. 65. W. Malms. l. 1. c. 4.


† W. Malms. l. 1. c. 5. ‡ Id. ibid.

|| Chron. Saxon. p. 64.

A. D. 800.  
to 801.

History of  
Wessex.

A. D. 600.  
to 801.



obliged that young prince to abandon his country, and take shelter in the court of Charles the Great; by whom he was kindly received and effectually protected. In the court and armies of that renowned prince, Egbert acquired those accomplishments which laid the foundation of his future greatness, and rendered him the greatest politician and general of the age in which he lived \*. Brihtric was very unhappy in his marriage with Eadburga, who was wanton, cruel, and perfidious, and stuck at nothing to accomplish the destruction of those who had incurred her displeasure. Amongst others she had conceived an implacable animosity against a young nobleman, (who was a favourite of her husband), and resolved upon his death. For this purpose, she prepared a cup of poison; of which Brihtric having inadvertently tasted, lost his life, at the same time, and by the same means, with his favourite, A. D. 800 †. Upon this event the nobility of Wessex recalled Egbert from his exile, and placed him, amidst the joyful acclamations of the people, on the throne of his ancestors; which he filled with great dignity thirty-six years, and became the first monarch of the English nation, by those steps which we shall trace in the beginning of the next section.— In the mean time it may be proper to bring down the history of Wales and North-Britain from where we left it to this period.

\* W. Malms. l. 2. c. 1.

† R. Hoveden Ann. pars prior.

The Britons to the south of the Bristol channel had been in a kind of subjection to the West-Saxon kings, from about the beginning of the eighth century, though their own chieftains still retained some degree of authority, till they were reduced to the condition of subjects by Egbert. Those who lived between the Bristol channel and the river Dee were expelled from the low countries, by Offa King of Mercia, and confined to the mountains of Wales; where they were governed by several petty princes, who, according to the custom of those times, were honoured with the title of kings\*. The most considerable of these princes were, Caradoc King of North Wales, and Conan Tendaethwy King of South Wales, who flourished in the eighth century †. The Cumbrian and Strathcluyd Britons, who lived along the west coasts, from the river Dee to the frith of Clyde, were in subjection to the Northumbrian princes during the flourishing state of that kingdom; and upon its decline, they recovered their liberty; which they did not long enjoy, the one half of them being reduced to the same state of subjection by the Scots and Picts, and the other half by Egbert ‡.

A. D. 600.  
to 801.  
History of  
Wales.

Before we leave the south, it may be necessary to take notice, that the south and east coasts of Britain began to be infested by new and strange

First appearance of the Danes on the coasts of Britain.

\* Powel's Hist. Wales, p. 19. 20.

† Innes, v. I. p. 161.

‡ Id, *ibid*.

A. D. 600.  
to 801.

enemies towards the end of the eighth century. These were the Norwegian and Danish pirates, who made a very distinguished figure in the history of Europe for more than two centuries. The first appearance of these ferocious and destructive rovers was on the coast of Wessex, A. D. 787, where they murdered one of the king's officers, who went amongst them without fear or suspicion, to enquire who they were, and whence they came \*. About six years after, another crew of these pirates, (for as yet they deserved no other name), landed on the coast of Northumberland, killed many of the inhabitants, and plundered the famous monastery of Lindesfarne, or Holy-Island †. The very next year, another fleet of these rovers appeared upon the same coasts, and plundered the monastery of Weremouth; but a storm arising, several of their ships were wrecked, many of themselves drowned, and a considerable number of them taken prisoners, and beheaded on the shore, by the country people ‡. This disaster deterred them for some time from making any attempts upon the British coasts.

History of  
Scotland.

On the death of Murdoch King of Scots, A. D. 730, his son Ewen mounted the throne, and reigned three years, according to the two most ancient catalogues of the kings of Scotland ||. But our later historians change the

\* Chron. Saxon. p. 64.

‡ Id. *ibid.*

Hen. Hunt. l. 4.

|| Innes, Append. No. 4. 5.

† Id. *ibid.*



order of succession, and introduce Ethfine, or Eth the White, immediately after Murdoch. A. D. 600.  
to 801. They differ too from the catalogues concerning the father of Ethfine, who, according to them, was Heatagan, or Eugene VI., who died A. D. 715; but, according to the catalogues, Eochol Crooked-nose, or Eugene IV., who died A. D. 687\*. But in whatever order these two princes reigned, we know very little with certainty of their transactions. Fergus, the son of Ethfine, mounted the throne of Scotland, A. D. 763; but being a profligate and libidinous prince, he was murdered by his queen, in a fit of jealousy, in the third year of his reign †. Onegus King of the Picts, who reigned over that nation from A. D. 730, to A. D. 761, is represented, by the anonymous continuator of Bede's history, to have been a cruel and sanguinary tyrant, from the beginning to the end of his reign ‡. Selvac, the son of Ewen, succeeded Fergus II. in the throne of Scotland, A. D. 766. What credit is due to the story told by Boethius and Buchanan, concerning a rebellion raised against this prince by one Donald Bane, who, assuming the title of *King of the Isles*, invaded the continent of Scotland, where he was defeated and slain, it is difficult to determine ||. Selvac dying A. D. 787, was succeeded by Eochol, the son of Ethfine, who is named *Achaius* by the

\* Innes, Append. No. 4. 5. Fordun, l. 3. c. 46.

† Fordun, l. 3. c. 46.

‡ Bedæ Hist. Eccles. p. 224.

|| Boet. l. 9. Buchan. l. 5.

A. D. 600.  
to 801.

later Scotch historians. From the fall of the Roman empire to this period, the British princes seem to have had little or no connection or intercourse with those on the continent. But Charlemagne, King of France, having by his great policy and many victories revived the Western empire, began to form alliances with foreign princes, and particularly with some of the British kings. That this illustrious prince kept up a friendly correspondence, and entered into a treaty of alliance and commerce with Offa King of Mercia, we have the most undoubted evidence \*. It is also certain, that there subsisted a friendly intercourse, by letters and messengers, between that great prince and the kings of Scots his cotemporaries; but whether that intercourse amounted to a formal alliance, as some French and Scotch historians have affirmed †, may be justly doubted. Achaius married Fergusiana, sister to Hungus King of the Picts; by whom he had a son named *Alpine*, who became heir to the Pictish crown, on the failure of the male line of that royal family ‡. Though Achaius survived the period of this section, it may not be improper to mention his death, which happened in the thirty-second year of his reign, A. D. 819.

\* W. Malms. l. 1. c. 4.

† See Fordun, l. 3. c. 48. Buchan. l. 5. Mezray Hist. Franc. l. 9. p. 412. Eginhard. Vit. Car. Mag. l. 10. p. 79.

‡ Boet. l. 10.

Though the Pictish monarchy appears to A. D. 600. have been in a flourishing state in the latter part to 801. of the eighth century, the particulars of its history which have been preserved are so few, that they cannot be formed into any thing like a continued narration.

## SECTION III.

*The civil and military history of Great Britain, from the accession of Egbert, the first monarch of England, A. D. 801, to the accession of Edward the Elder, A. D. 901.*

THOUGH Brihtric King of Wessex died A. D. 801. 800, it was not till the year after, that his successor to 901. Egbert arrived from the continent, and took possession of the vacant throne, State of England at the accession of Egbert, and the conquests of that prince. At that period all the other kingdoms of the Heptarchy were in a dependant or unsettled state. The little kingdom of Sussex had been some time before annexed to Wessex, and that of the East-Angles to Mercia; and the petty kings of Kent and Essex were tributaries to the Mercian monarchs. The two remaining kingdoms of Mercia and Northumberland, though naturally powerful, were greatly weakened by the unsettled state of their government, and contests about the succession. These circumstances afforded Egbert, who was a wise and valiant prince, at the

A. D. 801. head of an united people, a very fair prospect of  
 to 901. } enlarging his dominions, and extending his authority. This prince, however, spent the first years of his reign in gaining the affections, by promoting the prosperity of his subjects, and in reducing the British chieftains of Devon and Cornwall to an entire subjection to his government\*. Nor was he at last the aggressor in those wars which terminated in the reduction of all the kingdoms of the Heptarchy to his obedience. For Bernulf, who had usurped the throne of Mercia, envying his prosperity, and dreading his power, invaded Wessex with all his forces, A. D. 823. Egbert meeting this bold invader at Ellundun (now Wilton), defeated him with such prodigious slaughter, that the river is said to have been discoloured with the blood, and choked up with the carcasses of the Mercians who fell in that battle†. This victory was so decisive, that Egbert met with little further opposition in the conquest of Mercia and its dependencies. The two tributary kingdoms of Kent and Essex submitted, without much resistance, to his son Ethelwolf, who marched into those parts at the head of a detachment; and the East-Angles, throwing off the Mercian yoke, which they had borne for some time with great impatience, put themselves under the protection of Egbert. This revolt of the East-Angles completed the ruin of the Mercian affairs, as both

\* Chron. Saxon. p. 69.

† Id. p. 70. Hen. Hunt. l. 4.

Bernulf, and his successor Ludecán, Kings of Mercia, lost their lives in attempting to reduce them \*. Wiglaf, who succeeded Ludecán, was soon obliged to abandon his throne, and conceal himself in a cell at Croyland Abbey, to prevent his falling into the hands of the conqueror †. Upon the retreat of this prince, all opposition ceased, and Egbert beheld himself sole monarch of all England to the south of the Humber, about four years after the commencement of the war.

A. D. 801.  
to 901.

Though this surprising success probably exceeded the expectations, it did not satisfy the ambition of Egbert, who passed the Humber with his army, in order to add the kingdom of Northumberland to his other conquests. This kingdom was at that time in such an unsettled and distracted state, that it was in no condition to resist so powerful an invader; and therefore its chief nobility met him at Dore in Yorkshire, made their submission, and acknowledged him for their sovereign ‡. Thus was the reduction of all the kingdoms of the Heptarchy under one monarch completed, A. D. 827, about three hundred and seventy-eight years after the first arrival of the Saxons in this island ||.

Establishment of the English monarchy.

Egbert possessed the art of securing, as well as of making conquests. That he might not too

Wiglaf King of Mercia restored and made tributary by Egbert.

\* Hen. Hunt. l. 4.

† Ingulf. Hist.

‡ Chron. Saxon. p. 71.

|| W. Malms. l. 2. c. 1. Hen. Hunt. l. 4.

A. D. 801.  
to 901.

much exasperate the Mercians, who were a numerous and powerful people, by taking from them at once every shadow of their former independency, he restored their late sovereign Wiglaf to the title of king; but obliged him to pay tribute, and hold his kingdom of him as his superior lord\*. This moderation seems to have been very pleasiug, both to the Mercians and their prince, as we hear of no attempts they made to shake off a yoke which was made so easy.

Egbert's  
wars with  
the Welsh  
and Danes.

Egbert, observing his own hereditary kingdom, and all his late acquisitions, in a state of tranquillity, began to think of new conquests. With this view, he marched his army into North-Wales, over-ran the whole country as far as Snowdon, and would probably have added it to his other dominions, if he had not been called away to encounter more formidable enemies †. These were the danes; who, after a recess of more than forty years, began again to infest the coasts of Britain, A. D. 832, when they plundered the isle of Shepey. The very next year they returned, with no fewer than thirty-five ships, and landed at Charmouth in Dorsetshire; near to which place a battle was fought between them and the English, with great slaughter on both sides, but without much reason to boast of victory on either ‡. About

\* Chron. Saxon. p. 72. Ingulf. Hist.

† Chron. Saxon. p. 72. Hen. Hunt. l. 4.

‡ Id. ibid.

two years after, these teasing plunderers came A. D. 801. to 901. again with a still greater fleet and army; and landing in Cornwall, prevailed upon the Britons of that country to revolt, and join them. Egbert, not dismayed at this junction, engaged and defeated the combined army of the Danes and Britons, at Hensdown-hill, with prodigious slaughter. This was the last glorious action of the life of that great prince, and first English monarch, who died A. D. 836\*.

Egbert was succeeded by his son Ethelwolf; Accession and wars of Ethelwolf. who, in the very first year of his reign, gave the government of Kent, Sussex, and Essex, to his eldest son Athelstan, with the title of king †. The unwelcome visits of the Danes now became annual, or even more frequent; and the history of England for several years consists of nothing but dry details of the descents of these destructive rovers on different parts of the coasts, and of their battles with the inhabitants. The most considerable of these battles was that which was fought at Okeley in Surrey, A. D. 851, between Ethelwolf, assisted by his son Ethelbald, and a great army of Danes, who had landed from a fleet of 350 sail, at the mouth of the river Thames, and had taken and plundered the cities of Canterbury and London in their march. In this action, which is said to have been the bloodiest that ever had been fought in England,

\* Chron. Saxon. p. 73.

† Id. ibid.

A. D. 801. the English obtained a great victory \*. But not-  
 to 01. withstanding this, and two other victories which  
 they obtained that same year, one by land at  
 Wanbury in Dorsetshire, the other by sea near  
 Sandwich, a party of Danes took possession of  
 the isle of Thanet, where they continued several  
 years, which was the first attempt they made to  
 settle in England †. The people of North  
 Wales, observing how much the English were  
 harassed by the frequent depredations of the  
 Danes, and imagining that this was a favourable  
 opportunity for revenging the injuries which  
 they had received from Egbert, invaded Mercia,  
 A. D. 853, with a very numerous army; which  
 obliged Burthred, the tributary King of that  
 country, to implore the assistance of Ethelwolf,  
 who was his father-in-law, as well as his sovereign  
 lord. Upon this Ethelwolf marched an army  
 into Mercia, expelled the Welsh, and pursued  
 them into their own country ‡.

Ethelwolf's  
 journey to  
 Rome, re-  
 turn, and  
 death.

This was the last military exploit of Ethel-  
 wolf; who, the year after, took a journey to  
 Rome, where he spent about ten months in the  
 superstitious devotions of those times, and in  
 acts of liberality to the Pope and clergy; which  
 made him a very welcome guest, and procured  
 him all the frivolous unexpensive honours his  
 heart could wish; and amongst others the papal  
 unction of his youngest son Alfred, who was

\* Hen. Hunt. l. 5.

† Id. *ibid.* Chron. Saxon. p. 76.

‡ Id. *ibid.*



with him in that city \*. In his return to Eng-<sup>A. D. 801.</sup>land, through France, he married the Princess <sup>to 901.</sup>Judith, daughter to Charles the Bald. On his arrival in his own dominions, he met with a very unexpected difficulty. His eldest surviving son, Ethelbald, having his impatient ambition encouraged by some evil counsellors, had resolved to prevent his father's resuming the reins of government, and had formed a very powerful party to assist him in executing that resolution. But this unnatural quarrel was happily terminated without blood, by the moderation of Ethelwolf, who consented that his son should retain the kingdom of Wessex, and contented himself with his other dominions for the remainder of his life, which was only two years †.

Ethelwolf at his death, A. D. 857, left four <sup>The wars of</sup>sons, named *Ethelbald*, *Ethelbert*, *Ethered*, and *Alfred*. <sup>Ethelbald,</sup>By his will he divided his dominions <sup>Ethelbert,</sup>between the two eldest, assigning the western <sup>and Ethe-</sup>parts, as most honourable, to Ethelbald, and the eastern to Ethelbert ‡. The first of these was a very profligate prince, and gave great scandal by marrying his father's widow ||. At his death, which happened A. D. 860, his brother Ethelbert succeeded to his dominions, and thereby became the sovereign of all England. His reign was also short; and, during the course of it, the coasts were incessantly infested by the Danes.

\* Asserius Vit. *Ælfredi*, p. 2.† Id. *ibid.* W. Malms. l. 2. c. 2.‡ Id. *ibid.*

§ Asserius, p. 2.

A. D. 801.  
to 901.

He was succeeded, A. D. 866, by his next brother, Ethered; who, though a good prince, and assisted by his heroic brother, Alfred, hardly enjoyed one moment's tranquillity during his whole reign. The Danes, no longer contented with making desultory descents upon the coasts, came over in greater multitudes, under more honourable leaders, penetrated farther into the country, and attempted to make conquests. A great army of these adventurers landed, A. D. 866, among the East-Angles; who, to preserve themselves from immediate destruction, gave them winter-quarters, and furnished them with a great number of horses in the spring\*. Thus provided, they directed their march northward, passed the Humber, and took the city of York. The Northumbrians at this time were engaged in a civil war, between two competitors for the government, Osbright and Ælla, who had the wisdom to suspend their hostilities, and unite their forces against the common enemy; but were both killed in an attempt to recover York †. Next year, the Danish army leaving York, penetrated into Mercia, and seized Nottingham, where they wintered. Burthred, the tributary king of Mercia, unable to expel these invaders, implored the assistance of Ethered; who, marching with his brother Alfred at the head of a great army, invested the Danes in Nottingham, and, partly by force, and partly by

\* Chron. Saxon. p. 78.

† Id. *ibid.* Asser. p. 51.

treaty, obliged them to evacuate that place, and return into the north \*. Having rested almost a whole year at York, they again left that city; A. D. 870, marched through part of Mercia, marking their way with blood and ruin, entered the country of the East-Angles, and took up their winter-quarters at Thetford †. The East-Angles, finding that all their former submissions could not preserve them from ruin, flew to arms, and being commanded by Edmund, a young prince of distinguished piety and virtue, attacked the Danes; but were totally defeated, and their prince taken and put to death ‡. The Danes, encouraged by these successes, advanced to Reading, which they fortified and made their head-quarters, and threatened the whole country around with destruction. Ethered, in order to deliver his kingdom from those dreadful enemies, who had so long preyed upon its vitals, collected all his forces, and summoned the Mercians and Northumbrians to join him with theirs. But these infatuated nations, taking advantage of his distress to recover their independency, refused to comply with this summons; by which they weakened the hands of the sovereign, and brought ruin upon themselves ||. Not dispirited with this most unseasonable defection, Ethered marched, at the head of his native subjects, to dislodge the Danes;

A. D. 801.  
to 901.

\* Asser. p. 5.

† Id. p. 6.

‡ Id. ibid.

|| W. Malm's. l. 2. c. 3.

A. D. 801.  
to 901,

and, in the course of one year (871), engaged them in five pitched battles, with various success. Being mortally wounded in the last of these battles, this virtuous but unhappy prince soon after ended his life and reign, leaving his subjects and successor in the most dangerous and distressful circumstances\*.

Accession of  
Alfred, and  
his first wars  
with the  
Danes.

Alfred, the youngest and only surviving son of Ethelwolf, succeeded his brother Ethered, A. D. 871, in the twenty-second year of his age. This excellent prince, who is justly called the Great, and hath been long esteemed the pride and glory of the English nation, began his reign under the greatest disadvantages. Many of his cities, towns, and villages, were reduced to ashes, his best provinces almost depopulated, his bravest captains and soldiers slain in battle, and a powerful army of cruel exulting barbarians, the authors of all these calamities, in the very bowels of his country. He was even unsuccessful in his first efforts to deliver his subjects from their enemies, being defeated at the battle of Wilton, which was fought within a month after his accession. The Danes, however, having lost one of their kings, nine of their generals, and prodigious numbers of their men in their late battles, and being no strangers to the courage and conduct of the youthful monarch who opposed them, consented to a peace, and agreed to retire out of the West-Saxon territo-

\* Asser. p. 7.

ries \*. In consequence of this agreement, they <sup>A. D. 801.</sup> evacuated Reading, and retired to London, <sup>to 901.</sup> where they spent the winter †. Burthred, brother-in-law to Alfred, who then governed Mercia, unable to dislodge these troublesome inmates by force, prevailed upon them by many valuable presents, to leave his country; from whence they marched into the kingdom of the East-Angles, and fixed their head-quarters for some time at Torksey. Having destroyed every thing in these parts, they returned, A. D. 874, into Mercia, of which they made an entire conquest, obliging Burthred to abandon his country in despair, and retire to Rome, where he soon after died ‡. This Danish army, which had continued eight years in England, had traversed and almost ruined the whole country to the north of the Thames and Severn, was now become so numerous, by continual accessions of new adventurers, that it was found inconvenient to remain any longer in one body. It divided, therefore, at Repton in Derbyshire; one half, marching northward under the command of a prince named *Haldane*, took possession of the kingdom of Northumberland, and there began to settle and apply to agriculture, A. D. 875; the other half marching southward under the command of Guthrum, Oscitil, and Amund, three chieftains who had lately arrived with many followers, took up their head-quarters at Cam-

\* Chron. Saxon. p. 82. Asser. p. 8.

‡ Id. *ibid.*† Id. *ibid.*

A. D. 801.  
to 901.

bridge \*. Before the Danes left Mercia, they delegated the command of that country to one Ceolwulf, a weak and disloyal nobleman, who had abandoned the service of Alfred, and joined the enemies of his country †. This was the melancholy posture of affairs in England in the beginning of the year 876.

Continuation of his wars.

That part of the Danish army which had wintered at Cambridge, marching from thence in the night, entered the kingdom of Wessex, and penetrated as far as Wareham in Dorsetshire, which they surprised ‡. Alfred, roused by this invasion from the short repose which he had enjoyed since the last peace with the Danes, and finding himself unprepared to meet them in the field, entered into a negociation with them, which ended in a treaty, by which they engaged, and confirmed their engagement by the most solemn oaths, to retire a second time out of the territories of the West-Saxons ||. But these faithless barbarians violated this treaty almost as soon as it was made, by surprising the city of Exeter with their cavalry, to which their whole army marched, A. D. 877 §. They met, however, with a very great loss this year by sea. Being overtaken by a dreadful storm near Swanwic, as they were bringing their fleet from Wareham to Exeter, no fewer than 120 of their ships were wrecked ¶. Alfred being now fully con-

\* Chron. Saxon, p. 82. 83.

Asser, p. 8.

† Id. *ibid.*

‡ Id. *ibid.*

|| Chron. Saxon, p. 83.

Asser, p. 8.

§ Id. *ibid.*

¶ Id. *ibid.*

vinced that nothing could preserve his country A. D. 801. to 901. from being conquered but a brave resistance, collected all his forces, with which he invested Exeter by land, while a fleet which he had prepared, and manned chiefly with Frisian pirates, blocked up the harbour. This fleet having happily defeated a Danish squadron, which brought a reinforcement to the besieged, the Danes in Exeter capitulated, and agreed to evacuate that city, and all the territories of the West-Saxons; which they accordingly did in August this year, and retired into Mercia, where they spent the winter\*. While they remained in Mercia, they received a great reinforcement of their countrymen, which emboldened them to return once more into the kingdom of Wessex; and having seized Chippenham, which was then a royal city, they over-ran the whole country, A. D. 878 †.

The West-Saxons, who, animated by the example and exhortations of their king, had made so noble a stand in defence of their country, after all the rest of England had submitted, were now at last dispirited, thinking it in vain any longer to oppose enemies who were neither bound by treaties, nor diminished by defeats. Some of them fled into foreign countries, some submitted to the conquerors, and some concealed themselves in woods and forests; while the brave Alfred was abandoned by all but a few faithful

\* Asser. p. 9. Chron. Saxon. p. 84.

† Id. ibid.

A. D. 801.  
to 901.

friends, and his own invincible resolution \*. At length, finding it unsafe to retain even these few followers about his person, he dismissed them to wait for better times ; and, putting on the dress of a country-clown, concealed himself in the cottage of a cow-herd †. As every circumstance relating to so great a person in such deep distress appears important and interesting, the following anecdote hath been preserved by several of our ancient historians, and particularly by Asser, who probably heard it from the king's own mouth :—That one day, when he was sitting by the fire in the cottage, where he had concealed himself, trimming his bow and arrows, he was heartily scolded by the good woman of the house (who knew not the quality of her guest) for neglecting to turn some cakes that were toasting ; telling him in great anger, that he would be active enough in eating them, though he would not take the trouble to turn them ‡.—Alfred did not continue long in this ignoble disguise, but as soon as the heat of the search after him was a little abated, he began to look abroad ; and, finding a place convenient for his purpose at the confluence of the Thone and Paret in Somersetshire, he collected a few of the bravest of his nobility, and there built a small fort for their residence and protection. In this place, which he named *Ethelingey*, or *the Isle of Nobles*, he continued about four months, distressing his

\* Chron. Saxon. p. 84. Asser. p. 9.

† Id. *ibid*.

‡ Id. *ibid*.



enemies, and procuring subsistence for himself and followers by frequent excursions \*.

A. D. 801.  
to 901.

While Alfred was thus employed, he received intelligence that Oddune Earl of Devonshire had defeated a party of the Danes, killed their leader, and taken their magical standard called *Reufan*, or, *The Raven* †. Encouraged by this news of the returning spirit and success of his subjects, he resolved to leave his retreat, and make a vigorous effort for the recovery of his crown. But before he assembled his forces, he resolved to gain an exact knowledge of the strength and posture of his enemies. With this view he entered their camp in the disguise of a harper, and diverted them so much with his music and pleasantries, that they kept him several days in their army, introduced him to their general Guthrum, and gave him an opportunity of seeing every thing he desired ‡. Observing with pleasure, that the Danes were entirely off their guard, he dispatched trusty messengers to all the nobility of Somersetshire, Wiltshire, and Hampshire, commanding them to meet him, with all their followers, on a certain day, a Brixton near Selwood forest. These commands were so well obeyed, that Alfred, at the time and place appointed, beheld himself at the head of a numerous army of his subjects, transported with joy at the sight of their beloved king, and determined to die or conquer under his conduct. That he might not give

\* Asser. p. 9.  
Engl. Hist.

† Id. p. 10. Alarid. Beverlun. l. 7. p. 105.  
W. Malms. l. 2. c. 4.

A. D. 801.  
to 901.

their ardour time to cool, he led them directly towards Eddington, where their enemies were encamped. The Danes were surprised beyond measure at the approach of an English army, with King Alfred at their head; and he, falling upon them with great fury before they had time to recover from their surprise, gained a complete victory \*. The shattered remains of the Danish army, with their commander Guthrum, took shelter in an old castle near the field of battle, where they were immediately invested by their victorious enemies, who soon compelled them to surrender at discretion †. On this occasion Alfred acquired as much honour by his clemency as he had done by his valour. Instead of glutting his revenge with the blood of these prostrate wretches, he formed the benevolent design of making them useful and happy. In order to this, he proposed the following terms: That if they would become Christians, and join with him to prevent the ravages of other Danes, he would spare their lives, take them under his protection, and assign them sufficient territories for their residence. These conditions were joyfully accepted by Guthrum and his followers, who were baptized, and settled in East-Anglia and Northumberland, A. D. 880 ‡.

Continuation of the wars between Alfred and the Danes.

From this period Alfred and his subjects enjoyed some repose for several years; which that excellent prince employed in repairing his ruined


\* Chron. Saxon. p. 85. Asser. p. 10.

‡ Chron. Saxon. p. 85. 86. Asser. p. 12.

† Id. *ibid.*

cities, building forts in the most convenient situations for the protection of the coasts, increasing his fleet, training his subjects to the use of arms, and in the execution of many other projects for the security and improvement of his country \*. But this repose, which had several times been a little disturbed by transient descents, was at last destroyed by a very formidable invasion. For the Danes, having all this time been making such deplorable devastations in all the provinces of France, that they had reduced themselves, as well as their enemies, to great distress and want, resolved once more to try their fortunes in England, where they arrived A. D. 893, in a fleet of 330 ships, under their famous leader Hastings †. The far greatest part of this mighty armament disembarked in the south-east corner of Kent, and seizing the fort of Apuldore, made it their head-quarters; while eighty sail, under their chief commander Hastings, entered the Thames, and landed their men at Milton; where they erected a strong fortification, of which some vestiges are still remaining ‡. Alfred was in East-Anglia, regulating the affairs of that country and of Northumberland, when he received the news of this formidable invasion; and before he left these parts, he exacted a new oath of allegiance, and a greater number of hostages from the Danes settled in these two kingdoms||. He then directed his march south-

A. D. 801.  
to 901.




\* Asser. p. 12.

‡ Id. p. 92.

† Chron. Saxon. p. 90.

|| Id. *ibid.*

A. D. 801. wards, collecting his forces as he advanced, and  
 to 901.  encamped near the centre of Kent, and in the  
 middle between the two Danish armies, in order  
 to prevent their junction, and check their ex-  
 cursions. In this posture the three armies  
 remained during the greatest part of the year  
 894; in which innumerable skirmishes happened,  
 between the plundering detachments of the  
 Danes, and parties of the King's army sent out  
 to protect the country \*. At length the great  
 Danish army at Apuldore, having collected a  
 considerable booty, abandoned the fortifications  
 at that place, with a design to pass the Thames,  
 and penetrate into Essex; but were intercepted  
 by the King on their march, and defeated, near  
 Farnham †. About the same time, Hastings,  
 with the army under his command, removed  
 from Milton, and encamped at Beamflete, which  
 he fortified, and where he was afterwards joined  
 by the remains of the other army which had  
 escaped from Farnham. When Alfred was pre-  
 paring to attack the Danes at Beamflete, he re-  
 ceived the disagreeable news, that those of East-  
 Anglia and Northumberland, forgetting all their  
 oaths and obligations, had revolted, and were be-  
 sieging Exeter. Leaving, therefore, some troops  
 in London, to protect that city against the Danes  
 in Essex, he marched with great expedition into  
 the west, and came upon the Danes before  
 Exeter so unexpectedly, that they raised the

\* Chron. Saxon. p. 92.

† Id. ibid.

siege with great precipitation, and fled to their ships\*. In the mean time, the Danes at Beauflete, encouraged by the distance of the King, marched out on a plundering expedition; leaving their wives, children, and booty, in their camp, under a strong guard. The English troops in London having received intelligence of this, and being joined by a party of the citizens, they marched out with great secrecy, attacked the Danish camp, cut the guard in pieces, and got possession of much spoil and many prisoners †. Among these prisoners were the wife and two sons of Hastings, the Danish king or general ‡. Alfred, as he had done on former occasions, made a wise and moderate use of this great advantage. He restored to Hastings his wife and children, on condition of his leaving the kingdom with his followers; which greatly weakened the power of the Danes in England ||. Those who remained behind, roamed up and down the country about two years, sometimes united, and sometimes in separate bodies, inflicting and suffering many evils. At length their numbers being greatly diminished, by frequent skirmishes, and by a dreadful plague which raged in those times, they embarked at different ports of Northumberland, A. D. 897, and returned to the continent §.

From this time Alfred reigned in great honour and felicity, the dread of his enemies, the dar-

A. D. 801.  
to 901.

\* Chron. Saxon. p. 92.

|| M. West. p. 179.

† Id. *ibid.*

‡ Id. *ibid.*

§ Chron. Saxon. p. 96. 97.

Death of  
Alfred.

A. D. 801.  
to 901.



ling of his subjects, and the delight of mankind ; incessantly employed in strengthening, enriching, adorning his dominions, and in securing them against the return of their enemies, by a powerful fleet. But this happy period was not of long duration ; for this excellent prince was carried off by death, October 28. A. D. 901, in the fifty-third year of his age, and thirtieth of his reign \*.

HAVING thus deduced the civil and military history of England, from the beginning of the ninth to the beginning of the tenth century, it may be proper to pause a little here, in order to take a short view of the similar transactions of the other British nations in the same period.

History of  
Wales.

The English, during the greatest part of the ninth century, were so much engaged in defending themselves against the frequent invasions and depredations of the Danes, that they gave but little disturbance to their ancient enemies the Britons ; and these last were still so much divided, and so often involved in civil wars, that they could not take advantage of the distresses of the English. Conon Tindaethy, who for more than half a century had been the most powerful prince in Wales, dying A. D. 817, was succeeded by Eshlt, his only daughter, and her husband, Mervyn Vrych ; in whose time happened the two expeditions of the English into Wales, which

\* Chron. Saxon. p. 99.

have been already mentioned. In the last of these expeditions, Mervin was slain in battle by the Mercians, A. D. 841, and succeeded by his son Roderic Mawr, or Roderic the Great \*.— This prince inherited North Wales from his mother, Powis from his father, and obtained the government of South Wales by his marriage with the heiress of that country; on which account he got the pompous name of *Roderic the Great*. On his death, A. D. 877, his dominions were again divided between his three eldest sons, Anarawd, Cadellh, and Mervyn; of which the first got North Wales, the second South Wales, and the third Powis †. This division, as usual, occasioned very pernicious and lasting disputes between these princes and their posterity.

A. D. 801.  
to 901.

The history of North Britain begins to be a little better known, and more important, in the ninth century, than in any former period. This is chiefly owing to the union of the Scotch and Pictish kingdoms into one monarchy, which happened in the course of that century. It is, however, a little uncertain who was the immediate successor of Eochal, or Achaius, King of Scots, who died A. D. 819. According to the two ancient catalogues published by Father Innes, he was succeeded by a prince named *Dunegal*, who, in one of these catalogues, is called the son of Eochal, and in the other the son of Selvach ‡. But Fordun, and all the

History of  
the Scots  
and Picts.

\* Powel Hist. Wales, p. 18.

† Id. p. 35.

‡ Innes's Essays, Append. No. 4. 5.

A. D. 801. modern Scotch historians, have inserted a king  
 to 901. named *Conval*, (concerning whom they do not pretend to know any thing), between Eochal and Dunegal \*. This Conval, however, seems to have been a creature of Fordun's imagination, invented to fill up a blank space, and increase the number of kings. Upon the whole, it is most probable, that Eochal was succeeded by Dunegal. To embellish the annals of this prince's reign, several of the most modern historians have related a very improbable tale, of a rebellion which was raised against him by Prince Alpine, the son of Eochal, sore against his inclination, being compelled to it by some factious noblemen, who had conspired to raise him, though reluctant, to the throne †. Fordun says not one word of this strange rebellion. What the same authors relate concerning a war carried on by Dunegal against the Picts, in favour of his competitor Alpine, is no less improbable. All that we know with any certainty concerning this prince is, that he died A. D. 831, and was succeeded by Alpine the son of Eochal ‡. Soon after the accession of this prince, the male line of the Pictish royal family becoming extinct, he laid claim to that crown, as being the son of Fergusiana, only sister to Hungus late King of Picts, and consequently nearest heir by the female line ||. Though this claim was evidently well founded, it was rejected by the Picts, who, in order to pre-

\* Fordun, 1. 3. c. 53.

‡ Fordun, 1. 5. c. 2.

† Boeth. 1. 10. Buchan. 1. 5.

|| Boeth. 1. 10. Buchan. 1. 5.



serve themselves from falling under the dominion of their ancient enemies, raised one Feredeth, a nobleman of their own nation, to the throne. Alpine, at the head of a powerful army of his own subjects, marched into Pictavia to assert his right, and was met by the Pictish army near the village of Restennot in Angus, where a bloody battle was fought, in which the Picts were defeated, and their king slain \*. Brude, the eldest son of Feredeth, succeeded his father, but was soon after murdered by his own subjects; and his brother and successor Kenneth shared the same fate in less than a year. The Picts then made choice of a nobleman named *Brude* to be their king, who revived their spirits, and retrieved their affairs, by his conduct and valour. He first fell upon the straggling parties of the Scots, who were plundering the country, and by defeating them, restored the hopes and courage of his subjects. After spending some time in this irregular kind of war, he collected his whole forces, in order to determine this quarrel by a decisive action. The two armies met near Dundee, and immediately engaged with the greatest fury, their hereditary hatred being inflamed by many recent injuries. The battle was very bloody, and victory remained long doubtful; but at length the Scots being thrown into disorder by the appearance of some troops in their rear, fled on all sides, and were pursued

A. D. 801.  
to 901.

\* Buchan. 1. 5.

A. D. 801.  
to 901.

with great slaughter. King Alpine was taken prisoner in the pursuit, beheaded in cold blood at a place called *Pittalpy*, and his head, after being carried through the army on a pole, was set up on the walls of *Abernethy*, the capital city of the Picts\*. This unhappy prince, if we may believe the most ancient Scotch historian, was very brave, but exceedingly rash and headstrong, to which he owed his ruin †.

Continuation of the history of the Scots and Picts.

The Scots were so much dispirited by this great defeat, that *Kenneth* the son of *Alpine*, who succeeded his father A. D. 834, could not prevail upon them for some time to renew the war, and assist him in prosecuting his claim to the Pictish crown. On the other hand, the Picts were prevented from improving the advantage which they had gained, by a violent dissension which broke out in their army. These circumstances occasioned a suspension of hostilities between the two nations, which continued about two years. At length *Kenneth*, impatient of this delay, called an assembly of all the nobility of his kingdom, and endeavoured, by many arguments, to persuade them to an immediate declaration of war. But all his arguments were ineffectual, and they still insisted that some longer time was necessary to recruit their strength and spirits, which had been so much weakened by their late defeat. The King, unwilling to relinquish his design, invited the whole assembly

\* Buchan, l. 5.

† Fordun, l. 5. c. 2.

to an entertainment, which he prolonged till midnight, and then persuaded them to go to rest in his great hall, according to the manners of those times. When the whole company were composed to rest, a person, instructed and prepared by Kenneth, entered the apartment, clothed in the skins of dried fish, which shone in the dark, and, speaking through a trumpet, commanded them to obey their king by declaring war against the Picts, and in the name of God promised them success and victory. Roused from their sleep by these tremendous sounds, and astonished at the shining figure which they beheld, they hastened to acquaint the king with the heavenly admonition, and expressed the greatest ardour for the war\*. The report of this wonderful apparition flew like lightning over the whole kingdom, and excited such impatient keenness for war in every bosom, that Kenneth soon beheld himself at the head of a numerous army of his subjects, importuning him to lead them against the enemy, to fulfil the will of Heaven. The Picts were at this time but ill prepared to resist so dangerous an invasion. Their valiant King Brude had died of vexation, for not being able to compose the dissensions of his subjects, and pursue his victory; and his brother Drust, who had succeeded him, was neither so brave nor so well beloved. This prince, however, collecting his forces, marched to meet

A. D. 801.  
to 901.

\* Boeth. l. 10. Fordun, l. 4. c. 3.

A. D. 801.  
to 901.

the invaders of his country: a battle was fought, in which the Scots obtained a complete victory; and animating each other with this cry, "Remember the death of Alpine!" they killed prodigious numbers of the Picts in the pursuit\*. Soon after this victory, all the provinces of the Pictish kingdom to the north of the Frith of Forth submitted to the conqueror; who, leaving garrisons in the strong places of that country, passed the Forth with his army. But he was presently overtaken by the disagreeable news that the Picts had retaken all their castles, and put his garrisons to the sword. This obliged him to march back into the north, where he recovered the fortresses, and reduced the country to a more perfect subjection. In the mean time the Pictish king, having collected a considerable army of his subjects in the southern and yet unconquered provinces of his kingdom, crossed the rivers Forth and Tay, and encamped at the village of Scoon, on the northern bank of the last of these rivers. At this place the last great battle between the Picts and Scots was fought, in which the Picts were entirely defeated, their king and chief nobility slain, and almost their whole army cut in pieces, or drowned in the river Tay in attempting to escape †. After this great victory, Kenneth met with no more opposition from the Picts, but took possession of their whole kingdom, which he united to his own

\* Buchan. l. 3. sub. fin.

† Id. ibid.

dominions, and thereby became the first monarch of all Scotland, about the year 842\*. There is not the least probability in the tragical accounts given by some Scotch historians, of the total extirpation of the Picts; which would have been equally inhuman and imprudent. There might indeed be some unwarrantable cruelties practised by the Scots in the first heat of conquest; but there is sufficient evidence, that the great body of the Pictish nation survived the downfall of their state, and, mingling with their conquerors, gradually lost their own name†. The victorious Kenneth, after he had reduced the Picts to an entire subjection to his authority, made frequent inroads on the kingdom of Northumberland, and had wars both with the Danes and Cumbrian Britons; but of the particulars of these wars we are not informed‡. This great prince finished his life and reign, in his palace at Fortaviot, February 13. A. D. 854.

A. D. 801.  
to 901.

Dunvenald, the son of Alpine, succeeded his brother Kenneth; and is represented by Fordun, the most ancient Scotch historian, as a brave and warlike prince, who suppressed some insurrections of the discontented Picts, and cultivated peace with all his neighbours||. This character is confirmed by the ancient chronicle published by Father Innes, which acquaints us, that he held a convention of his nobility at Fortaviot, in

Dunvenald  
King of  
Scots.

\* See Innes's Essays, vol. 1. p. 110.

† Id. vol. 2. p. 783.

‡ Id. *ibid.*

|| Fordun, l. 4. c. 15.

A. D. 801.  
to 901.

which he revived the good laws of his predecessors \*. But Boethius and Buchanan give a very different character and history of this prince, representing him as a most abandoned profligate and poltroon, who was defeated and taken prisoner by Osbert and Ella, kings of Northumberland, yielded up the best part of his kingdom to obtain his liberty, and was cast into prison by his own subjects, where he put an end to his life by self-murder †. This account, however, being unsupported by any evidence, and contrary to the testimony of more ancient historians, merits no regard. Dunvenald died in his palace at Belachoir, A. D. 858.

Constantine  
and Eth,  
Kings of  
Scots.

Constantine, the eldest son of Kenneth, the illustrious conqueror of the Picts, mounted the throne of Scotland on the death of his uncle Dunvenald. The Danes, who had made some occasional descents on the coasts of Scotland in the two preceding reigns, now invaded it with a more powerful army, which landed in Fife. Constantine, falling upon one half of this army, when it was separated from the other by the river Leven, defeated that division. Flushed with this victory, he soon after passed the river, and rashly assaulted the other division of the Danes in their camp, which was strongly fortified. Here he met with a repulse; and the greatest part of his army consisting of Picts, who were not yet very hearty in the service, they shamefully fled,

\* Innes, vol. 2. p. 783.

† Boeth. l. 10. Buchan. l. 6.

leaving Constantine in the hands of the enemy, A. D. 801. to 901.  
 who beheaded him in a neighbouring cave, A. D. 874\*. He was succeeded by his brother Eth, surnamed *The Wing-footed*, on account of his swiftness; who reigned little more than one year, being mortally wounded in a battle near Inverury, by his cousin Grig, the son of Dunvenald, who claimed the crown as his right †.

Grig Macdunvenal, denominated by the Gregory the Great, King of Scots. modern Scotch historians, *Gregory the Great*, mounted the throne of Scotland, A. D. 875, and spent the first years of his reign in regulating the internal police of his kingdom, and conciliating the affections of all his subjects. He then reduced the Strath-Cluyd Britons to a more entire obedience to his authority, took possession of the town of Berwick, and even reduced some part of the kingdom of Northumberland ‡. Having acquired great fame by these exploits, he was earnestly intreated by the friends of Donach King of Dublin to come to the protection of that young prince, who was in danger of being dethroned by some ambitious chieftains. In compliance with these intreaties, he transported an army from Galloway into Ireland, defeated the rebels, took the city of Dublin, established Donach on the throne of his ancestors, and then returned home crowned with laurels ||. This great prince, after a glorious reign of near eighteen years, died A. D. 892.

\* Fordun, l. 4. c. 16. Boeth, l. 10. Buchan, l. 6.  
 † Id. *ibid.* ‡ Id. *ibid.* || Id. *ibid.*

A. D. 801.  
to 901.

Dunvenald,  
King of  
Scots.

Dunvenald, the son of Constantine, succeeded Gregory the Great, and maintained with spirit the acquisitions of his predecessor. Towards the conclusion of his reign, the inhabitants of Ross and Moray made war against each other, with great ferocity and much bloodshed. The King, marching into these parts with an army, restored the peace of the country, and put the chief ringleaders in these commotions to death; but did not long survive this event, dying at Forres, A. D. 903\*.

#### SECTION IV.

*The civil and military history of Great Britain, from the accession of Edward the Elder, A. D. 901, to the death of Edward the Martyr, A. D. 978.*

A. D. 901.  
to 978.

Accession of  
Edward the  
Elder.

**E**DWARD, the eldest surviving son of Alfred the Great, succeeded his illustrious father in the throne of England, A. D. 901; though not without opposition from his cousin Ethelwald, the son of Ethelbert, the elder brother of Alfred: Ethered and Alfred had succeeded to the crown by virtue of their father's will, and the universal consent of the people, to the exclusion of Ethelwald, who was then an infant: but being now in the prime of life,

\* Fordun, l. 4. c. 20.



he was not disposed to yield so tamely to one of <sup>A. D. 901.</sup> his own age \*. Having, therefore, collected his <sup>to 978.</sup> partisans, he seized and fortified Winburn : but apprehending that it was not tenable, when Edward with his army had reached Badbury, he made his escape, and retired into Northumberland, and engaged the Danes of that country to espouse his cause †. But before they took the field, and declared openly in his favour, Ethelwald made a trip to the continent; where he spent near three years, collecting an army of adventurers of several nations, with which he landed in England, A. D. 904 ‡. Soon after his arrival, he was joined by great multitudes of Northumbrian and other Danes, which enabled him to over-run all Mercia, plundering and destroying the country as he advanced : but having rashly engaged in a skirmish against a party of Kentish men, he fell in the action; after which his army disbanded ||.

Edward being thus delivered from this dangerous rival, spent several years in reducing the Danes of Essex, East-Anglia, and Mercia, to a thorough obedience to his authority, and in building towns and castles in the most convenient places for keeping them in subjection §. It was still a more difficult task to reduce the Danes of Northumberland to order and submission, on account of their greater numbers and

\* Chron. Saxon. p. 100.  
 || Hen. Hunt. l. 5.

† Id. *ibid.* ‡ Id. *ibid.*  
 § Chron. Saxon. p. 102.

A. D. 901.  
to 978.


greater distance. To accomplish this, Edward fitted out a fleet of one hundred ships in the ports of Kent, with which he sailed towards Northumberland, A. D. 911. The Northumbrian Danes, imagining that his chief force was on board this fleet, instead of staying to defend their own country, marched southwards, in hopes of indemnifying themselves by the spoils of those richer provinces. This artful scheme at first succeeded to their wish: they advanced far into the country, and made a prodigious booty, without meeting with any opposition. But in their return home, they were overtaken at Tetenhall in Staffordshire, by an army of West-Saxons and Mercians, who defeated them, with great slaughter, and recovered all the booty\*. The Northumbrian Danes were so much weakened by the loss which they sustained in this battle, that they remained tolerably quiet for several years. Edward, however, was kept in continual action during his whole reign, by the frequent invasions of the piratical Danes from abroad, and the no less frequent insurrections of their countrymen settled in England. But this brave prince, by his vigilance and activity, repelled all those invasions, and suppressed all these insurrections, before they had done much mischief. In order to prevent the like dangers and disturbances for the future, he built and fortified an incredible number of forts and towns in all

\* Chron. Saxon. p. 203.

parts of England\*. In all these noble toils for the defence and security of his dominions, Edward was greatly assisted by his sister Ethelfleda, widow of Ethered governor of Mercia. This heroic princess (who inherited more of the spirit of the great Alfred than any of his children), despising the humble cares and trifling amusements of her own sex, commanded armies, gained victories, built cities, and performed exploits which would have done honour to the greatest princes †. Having governed Mercia eight years after the death of her husband, she died A. D. 920, and Edward took the government of that country into his own hand ‡. After this he not only secured, but extended his dominions, and by a successful expedition into Wales, A. D. 922, reduced the three princes of that country to a state of subjection; and the next year he brought the Strath-Cluyd Britons into the same condition ||. In the midst of these successes, Edward ended his life and reign at Farington in Berkshire, A. D. 925. This king was very happy in his family, having left behind him five sons, of which three, viz. Athelstan, Edmund, and Edred, were successively Kings of England, and nine daughters, of which four were married to the greatest princes then in Europe §.

Athelstan, the eldest son of Edward, succeeded him in the throne of England, and was

A. D. 901.  
to 978.



\* Chron. Saxon. p. 103—107.

|| Id. p. 110.

† Id. *ibid.*

‡ Id. p. 107.

§ W. Malms l. 2. c. 5.

Accession of  
Athelstan.

A. D. 901.  
to 978.

solemnly crowned at Kingston upon Thames, by Athelm Archbishop of Canterbury\*. Historians, both ancient and modern, are much divided in their opinions about this prince's birth, some denying, and others asserting his legitimacy. On the one hand, there is sufficient evidence, that his mother Egwina was a lady of mean birth, which seems to have given occasion to this dispute about the legitimacy of her son; and, on the other hand, it is no less evident, that Athelstan was treated by his grandfather Alfred the Great, and by his father Edward, with every mark of distinction due to a legitimate prince †. However this may be, a conspiracy is said to have been formed by a nobleman named *Alfred*, and some others, to take King Athelstan prisoner, put out his eyes, and raise one of his brothers to the throne. This plot was happily discovered, and Alfred brought to his trial: but the proof of his guilt not being clear, he was sent to Rome to declare his innocence by oath before the Pope; which he did accordingly; but soon after died, with such circumstances as, in that superstitious age, were esteemed sufficient indications of his guilt ‡.

Makes  
Sithric  
King of  
Northum-  
berland.

Sithric, prince of the Northumbrian Danes, was the only person who enjoyed any shadow of independent authority in England at this time; and Athelstan, in order to attach him firmly to

\* W. Malms. 1. 2. c. 6.  
‡ W. Malms. 1. 2. c. 6.

† See Biograph. Britan. v. 1. p. 60.

his interest, upon his renouncing Paganism, and embracing Christianity, gave him his own sister Edgetha in marriage \*. To render him more worthy of this alliance, and of the title of king, he yielded to him the sovereignty of the whole country from the river Tees to Edinburgh, which seems then to have been the northern extremity of the English territories †. But the success of this wise measure was defeated by the death of Sithric, and the succession of his two sons by a former wife, Anlaff and Guthfert, who renounced Christianity, and cast off all subjection to the King of England. Athelstan, upon this, marched an army into Northumberland, and soon obliged the two rash princes to abandon their country, Anlaff flying into Ireland, and Guthfert to the court of Constantine King of Scotland ‡. Ambassadors were immediately sent to Constantine to demand Guthfert; but that prince, unwilling to violate the laws of hospitality, allowed his guest to escape; and no less unwilling to embroil himself with so powerful an enemy, proposed a personal interview with Athelstan; which accordingly took place at Dackers in Cumberland, where all their differences were compromised in an amicable manner ||.

This amity was neither cordial nor of long continuance. For Constantine, envying the pro-

A. D. 901.  
to 978.

Invades  
Scotland.

\* Alured. Bever. l. 8. p. 109.

† J. Wallingford, apud Gale, l. 1. p. 540.

‡ W. Malms. l. 2. c. 6.

|| Id. ibid.

A. D. 901.  
to 978.

sperity, and dreading the power of Athelstan, formed a confederacy against him, into which Anlaff, the pretender to Northumberland, Ewen Prince of Cumberland, and some other petty princes, entered. Athelstan having received intelligence of this confederacy, invaded Scotland A. D. 934, both by sea and land, before Constantine was prepared for his defence; which obliged that prince to sue for peace, which he obtained upon making certain submissions\*.

The Scots,  
&c. invade  
England.

Athelstan was no sooner returned into his own dominions, than his enemies renewed their confederacy, and acting with greater caution than they had done before, employed four years in making preparations for a formidable invasion of England. At length, all things being ready, the allies united their forces, and invaded England A. D. 938, with a very powerful army, composed of many different nations. Athelstan raised his forces with great expedition, and came within view of his enemies at a place called *Brunanburgh* by our ancient historians; the true situation of which is not certainly known †.

Story of  
Anlaff, one  
of the con-  
federates.

While the two armies lay near this place, Anlaff practised the same stratagem to gain intelligence, which Alfred the Great had formerly practised with so much success. He entered the English camp in the disguise of a strolling minstrel, was introduced to Athelstan's tent, and

\* Hoveden. Annal. Chron. Saxon. p. 111.

† Chron. Saxon. p. 112.

played before him and his chief officers at an entertainment; for which he was rewarded with a piece of money at his departure. An absurd pride would not suffer Anlaff to carry off this money; but when he had got at some distance from the King's tent, and imagined no person observed him, he deposited it in the ground. This action was perceived by a soldier, who, viewing the pretended harper more narrowly, discovered who he was. The soldier had formerly served under Anlaff, and from a principle of honour would not betray his old master; but as soon as he was out of danger, informed Athelstan of his discovery, and at the same time humbly advised him to remove his tent to a considerable distance from the place where it then stood. The wisdom of this advice very soon appeared; for a bishop with his retinue arriving in the camp soon after, unfortunately pitched his tent where the royal pavilion had stood, and the very next night was attacked, and cut in pieces, with all his followers\*.

A. D. 901.  
to 978.

The noise occasioned by this attack on the English camp, brought on a general engagement between the two armies, which continued from morning to night, with incredible fury and prodigious slaughter on both sides. This battle, which was long distinguished by the name of *the great battle*, is described in very pompous strains by the Saxon Chronicle, and all our an-

Battle of  
Brunan-  
burgh, and  
victory of  
Athelstan  
over the  
confede-  
rates.

\* W. Malm. l. 2. c. 6.

A. D. 901. cient historians \*. Without following these  
 to 978. } writers through their long details, which are  
 not very intelligible, it is enough to say, that  
 victory, which was so bravely disputed, and so  
 long doubtful, declared at last in favour of the  
 English; that no fewer than five of the allied  
 princes, and twelve chieftains, were slain; and  
 that Constantine and Anlaff made their escape  
 with great difficulty †. This glorious victory  
 not only reduced all England under the domi-  
 nion of Athelstan, and obliged the princes of  
 Wales, who had been concerned in the late con-  
 spiracy, to submit to pay a very great additional  
 tribute, but it also raised his reputation so high  
 among foreign nations, that the greatest princes  
 in Europe courted his alliance ‡.

Death of  
 Athelstan,  
 and acces-  
 sion of Ed-  
 mund.

Athelstan did not live long to enjoy this great  
 prosperity, but died at Gloucester, A. D. 941;  
 and having never been married, was succeeded  
 in the throne of England by his brother Ed-  
 mund ||.

Edmund  
 defeats the  
 Five Burgh-  
 ers.

This prince was in the bloom of youth, being  
 only eighteen years of age when he began his  
 reign. In the time of Alfred the Great, a co-  
 lony of Danes had been allowed to settle in the  
 five towns of Derby, Nottingham, Leicester,  
 Lincoln, and Stamford, where their posterity still  
 continued under the name of the Five Burghers.

\* Chron. Saxon. p. 112. 113. W. Malms. l. 2. c. 6. Ethelwerd, c. 5.  
 Ingulf. Brompt. p. 839. Huntin. l. 5. &c. &c. † Id. ibid.  
 ‡ Ingulf. Hist. || Chron. Saxon. p. 114.



Edmund, observing that these Five Burghers A. D. 901. to 978. had been ever ready to favour the insurrections of their countrymen, thought it imprudent to suffer them to continue any longer so near the centre of his dominions; and therefore he removed them, A. D. 942, from these towns, and settled them in other places\*.

Anlaff, the famous pretender to the kingdom of Northumberland, who had fled into Ireland after the unfortunate battle of Brunanburgh, hearing of the death of Athelstan, returned into Britain accompanied with his cousin Reginald, and attempted to raise fresh commotions. But Edmund having marched against them before they were prepared, the two princes, with many of their followers, made the most humble submissions; and at the same time declaring their willingness to become Christians, their submissions were accepted, and Edmund stood godfather to them both at their baptism †. It soon appeared that their professions of submission and of Christianity were equally insincere;—which obliged Edmund to march his army a second time into Northumberland, from whence he expelled the two apostate princes, and once more reduced that country to his obedience, A. D. 944 ‡. As the Cumbrian and Strath-Cluyd Britons had constantly assisted the Northumbrian Danes in all their revolts, Edmund marched his

Reduces Northumberland and Cumberland.

\* Chron. Saxon. p. 114. Hen. Hunt. l. 5.

† W. Malms. l. 2. c. 7. ‡ Id. ibid. Chron. Saxon. p. 114.

A. D. 901. army into their country A. D. 945; and having  
 to 978. conquered it, he bestowed it on Malcolm King  
 of Scotland, on condition of his defending the  
 north of England from the insurrections and in-  
 vasions of the Danes\*.

Death of  
 King Ed-  
 mund.

These first measures of Edmund were con-  
 ducted with so much prudence and spirit, that  
 the English had reason to hope for a happy and  
 glorious reign. But these hopes were blasted  
 by the immature death of that young prince,  
 which happened in a very extraordinary man-  
 ner. As he was solemnizing the feast of St  
 Austin, the apostle of the English, at Puckle-  
 church in Gloucestershire, an audacious robber  
 named Leolf had the confidence to enter the  
 hall where the king and his nobles were feast-  
 ing. An officer attempted to turn him out;  
 but Leolf making resistance, the King, flushed  
 with liquor, and inflamed with passion, sprung  
 from his seat, seized him by the hair, and  
 brought him to the ground. The ruffian re-  
 duced to this extremity, drew his dagger, and  
 plunged it into the bosom of his sovereign, who  
 instantly expired †. Thus perished this hopeful  
 prince, A. D. 948, in the seventh year of his  
 reign, and twenty-fourth of his age.

Accession  
 and reign  
 of Edred,

Though Edmund left two infant sons, Edwi  
 and Edgar, he was succeeded by his brother  
 Edred, who mounted the throne without the

\* W. Malms. l. 2. c. 7. Chron. Saxon. p. 115.

† W. Malms. l. 2. c. 7. Hen. Hunt. l. 5.

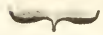
least opposition. It was now become a kind of <sup>A. D. 901-</sup> custom for the Northumbrian Danes to revolt at <sup>to 978.</sup> the accession of every new king, to try his strength and spirit. On this occasion they found, that Edred was no less alert than his predecessors; for, appearing in the heart of their country at the head of an army, before they were ready for resistance, they were obliged to make the most humble submissions to avert the impending storm\*. Malcolm King of Scots was also induced, by the proximity of Edred and his army, to renew his professions of fidelity †. Having thus reduced every thing in the north to perfect order and submission, he returned into the south, in hopes of enjoying the blessings of a lasting peace. But it was not long before he discovered that these hopes were not well founded. For the turbulent Northumbrians, impatient of tranquillity, broke out again into rebellion, first under the conduct of the famous Anlaff, and afterwards under the command of one of their countrymen named *Erie*. Edred, justly incensed at their turbulence and infidelity, desolated their country with fire and sword, divested it for ever of the name of a kingdom, appointing one Osulf, an Englishman, to the government of it, A. D. 952, with the title of *Earl* ‡. From this time Edred was no more disturbed with war; but falling into an infirm state of

\* Hen. Hunt. l. 5. W. Malms. l. 2. c. 7.

† Id. *ibid*.

‡ Nov. Annal. pars prior, p. 243. Hen. Hunt, l. 5.

A. D. 901.  
to 978.



health, he unfortunately resigned his conscience, his treasures, and his authority, into the hands of St Dunstan, by whom they were very much abused. After languishing some time, Edred died in the flower of his youth, A. D. 955\*.

and reign  
of Edwi.

Edwi, the eldest son of the late King Edmund, succeeded his uncle Edred, and was crowned at Kingston, by Odo Archbishop of Canterbury †. Nothing can be more melancholy than the story of this unhappy prince. He was hardly seventeen years of age when he mounted the throne, remarkably beautiful in his person, and not untoward in his dispositions; but a violent passion which he contracted for his cousin, the fair Elgiva, became a source of many misfortunes to them both. His marriage with that princess was opposed by Odo Archbishop of Canterbury, and by the famous St Dunstan, the great patron and idol of the monks of those times, on account of their being within the prohibited degrees of kindred. Edwi, deaf to their advice, surmounted every obstacle, and married the object of his affections; which brought upon him the indignation of Odo, Dunstan, and all their monkish followers, who exclaimed against this marriage as a most horrid and unpardonable crime, and treated both the King and Queen with the most indecent rudeness, breaking in upon their privacies, and tearing them from each other's arms ‡.

\* Hoveden. Annal. pars prior, p. 243. Hen. Hunt. l. 5.

† Hoveden. Annal. p. 244.

‡ W. Malm. l. 2. c. 7.

Edwi, enraged at this intolerable insolence, and excited to vengeance by his beloved Elgiva, banished Dunstan out of the kingdom, and expelled the Benedictine monks from several monasteries, restoring them to the secular canons, their original owners\*. These measures, though just and reasonable, raised the resentment of the irascible monks, and of their mighty patron Archbishop Odo, to the greatest height. That brutal bigot, forgetting all the ties of duty and humanity, seized the Queen by a strong party of armed men, defaced her beauty with a hot iron, and sent her into Ireland †. To put it out of the power of the unhappy Edwi to punish the authors of this most cruel injury, Odo and his monks poisoned the minds of his subjects by their calumnies, and excited the people of Northumberland and Mercia to rebellion, placing his younger brother Edgar, who was then only thirteen years of age, at the head of the insurgents ‡. As Edwi did not expect, so he was not prepared for this event. Edgar, assisted by Dunstan, now returned from banishment, soon made himself master of the whole country to the north of the river Thames; of which he was declared sovereign, with the title of *King of Mercia* ||. To complete the misfortunes of the wretched Edwi, he received intelligence, that his beloved wife Elgiva having recovered from her wounds, and

A. D. 901.  
to 978.



\* W. Malms. l. 2. c. 7.

‡ Id. *ibid.*

† Anglia Sacra, l. 2. p. 84.

|| R. Hoveden. Annal.

A. D. 901. escaped from her keepers, and returned to Eng-  
 to 978. land, had been intercepted at Gloucester, as she  
 was hastening towards him, and put to death,  
 with circumstances of peculiar cruelty \*. He  
 did not long survive this unfortunate object of  
 his affections; for having retired to the king-  
 dom of Wessex, which still continued faithful to  
 his interests, he there died of a broken heart,  
 A. D. 959; by which his brother Edgar became  
 sovereign of all England.

Accession  
 and reign  
 of Edgar  
 the Peace-  
 able.

Though that prince had discovered a criminal  
 impatience to ascend the throne (for which his  
 youth is the best excuse), he filled it with great  
 honour to himself, and advantage to his sub-  
 jects; by which he obtained the title of *The*  
*honour and delight of the English nation* †. He  
 was also surnamed *Edgar the Peaceable*; an ap-  
 pellation which he acquired, by being always so  
 well prepared for war, that neither his own sub-  
 jects, nor other nations, dared to disturb the  
 tranquillity of his dominions. His attention to  
 maritime affairs was the chief glory of his reign,  
 and his fleet was so powerful, and so well con-  
 ducted, that it effectually secured the coasts from  
 all insults, and procured him much respect from  
 neighbouring states and princes ‡. Eight of these  
 princes (among whom was Kenneth III. King of  
 Scots), are said to have attended the court of

\* Anglia Sacra, p. 84.

† W. Malms. l. 2. c. 8.

‡ Alured, Beverlien. l. 8. p. 113. Flor. Wigorn. p. 607. Brompt.  
 p. 869.

Edgar at Chester, and to have rowed him in the royal barge on the river Dee, as a mark of their subjection, according to some historians, or of their regard and friendship, according to others. If this event really happened, it was perhaps no more than a frolic, without any serious meaning\*. The magnificence of his court attracted many foreigners, from different parts of the continent, who are said to have imported the vices of their respective countries, and corrupted the simple manners of the English †. He imposed a new and very uncommon kind of tribute on the princes of Wales; exacting from them, instead of the money and cattle which they paid before, three hundred wolves heads yearly, which occasioned such a keen pursuit of these destructive animals, that their numbers were very much diminished in a very few years ‡. Edgar is also celebrated for his diligence and impartiality in the administration of justice; by which he gave a great check to the too prevailing crimes of theft and robbery §. It must, however, be acknowledged, that as this prince owed much of the prosperity of his reign to the powerful support of St Dunstan and his monks, who were the idols and oracles of the people, so he owes much of his fame with posterity to the pens of monkish historians. These cloistered annalists set no bounds to their abuse of those

\* W. Malm. l. 2. c. 8. Floren. Wigorn. A. D. 973.

† Floren. Wigorn. A. D. 973.

‡ Id. ibid.

§ Id. ibid.

A. D. 901.  
to 978.

princes who were unfriendly to their order, nor to their panegyrics on those who were their patrons and benefactors. According to them, Edgar was not only a brave, wise, and active prince, but also a prodigious saint: a character to which he had not the least pretensions, as appears from the accounts of his very criminal amours, preserved by these very historians\*. This prince, so great in his public, and so exceptionable in his private character, died A. D. 975, in the seventeenth year of his reign, and thirty-third of his life, leaving two sons, Edward and Ethelred, who successively mounted the throne of England.

Dispute  
about the  
succession.

The succession was for some time disputed by the two young princes, or rather by their respective parties. Elfrida, the Queen-dowager, had formed a powerful party to support the pretensions of her son Ethelred, who was then only seven years of age, in hopes of having the administration in her own hands during his minority †. This party pretended that Edward was illegitimate, and that his mother had never been regularly married to the late king. But Edward, by his riper age, his father's last will, and the popularity of St. Dunstan, who espoused his interest, at length prevailed, and was crowned by that bustling prelate ‡.

\* W. Malms. l. 2. c. 8. Hoveden. Brompt. p. 865, &c.

† W. Malms. l. 2. c. 9.

‡ R. Hoveden. Annal.



This young prince (whose short reign was one continued series of ecclesiastical disputes) was of too gentle a disposition for that iron age in which he lived. He shewed no resentment against those who had opposed his succession, treated his rival brother with the greatest kindness, and behaved respectfully to his ambitious stepmother. But all this goodness made no impression on the unrelenting heart of that aspiring woman. Elfrida still meditated the destruction of this amiable prince; and it was not long before the unsuspecting innocence of Edward afforded her an opportunity of executing her design; for as he was hunting one day near Corfe Castle, where she resided, he rode up to the castle, without any attendance, to pay her a passing visit. The treacherous Elfrida received him with great seeming kindness; and upon his declining to alight, presented him with a cup of wine; but as he was drinking, he was stabbed in the back, either by her own hand, or by her order. Edward, finding himself wounded, put spurs to his horse; but fainting through loss of blood, he fell from the saddle, and was dragged along by his foot sticking in the stirrup till he expired\*. Thus fell this amiable young prince, A. D. 979; and though religion was no way concerned in his death, he obtained the name of *Edward the Martyr*, on account of the innocence of his life, and the many miracles which the monks

A. D. 901.  
to 978.Accession,  
reign, and  
death of  
Edward the  
Martyr.

\* W. Malm. I. 2. c. 9.

A. D. 901.  
to 978.



pretended were wrought at his grave\*. The succession of her son Ethelred protected the cruel Elfrida from all punishment for this horrid deed; but though she lived many years after, building monasteries, performing penances, and practising all the tricks of superstition, she never could recover either the peace of her own mind, or the good opinion of the world †.

BEFORE we proceed to give an account of the civil and military transactions of the long and calamitous reign of Ethelred, it may be proper to bring down the history of the other nations of Britain, from the beginning of the tenth century, to this period.

History of  
Wales.

In the beginning of the tenth century, Anarawd, the eldest son of Roderic the Great, was Prince of North Wales, and Cadelh, his second son, Prince of South Wales and Powesland. Cadelh dying A. D. 907, was succeeded in his principality by his eldest son Howel Dha, or Howel the Good, the famous legislator of the Welsh; and about six years after, Anarawd, at his death, was succeeded in his principality of North Wales by his eldest son Edwal Voel ‡. But though these two princes possessed the chief authority in Wales, yet each of them had several brothers, to whom appanages were allotted, and who were a kind of petty sovereigns in their re-

\* W. Malms. l. 2. c. 9.

‡ Powel, Hist. Wales, p. 14. 15.

† Id. *ibid.*

spective districts. This was the occasion of A. D. 901.  
to 978. many wars in Wales, and of much confusion in its history. Edwal Voel, the chief prince of North Wales, was slain in a battle by some Danish pirates, A. D. 939; and though he left no fewer than six sons, yet his cousin Howel Dha was so famous for his wisdom, justice, and other virtues, that he obtained the dominion of all Wales, and retained it to his death, which happened A. D. 948\*.

It must be confessed, that we have no very The Welsh  
tributaries to  
the English. distinct account in history, of the precise time when the princes of Wales became tributaries to the kings of England. It is, however, sufficiently evident, that they were so in the former part of the tenth century. For, by the laws of Howel Dha, the king of Aberfraw, or the chief king of Wales, is appointed to pay a fine of sixty-three pounds of silver to the king of London, when he receives his kingdom from his hand, and a certain number of dogs, hawks, and horses annually †. Some English historians affirm, indeed, that Athelstan, who was cotemporary with Howel Dha, imposed on the prince of North Wales an annual tribute of twenty pounds of gold, three hundred pounds of silver, twenty-five thousand oxen, and an indefinite number of dogs and hawks ‡. But this is quite incredible; and the ancient laws of Wales, which

\* Powel, Hist. Wales, p. 44. †5.

† Leges Hoeli Dha, p. 199.

‡ W. Malm. l. 2. c. 6.

A. D. 901. have been admirably well preserved, are much  
 to 978. better authorities than the testimony of any  
 private historian\*.

History of  
 Wales con-  
 tinued.

The death of Howel Dha was much and justly lamented by the Welsh, as they were thereby disunited, and involved in civil wars. South Wales was divided between Owen, Run, Roderic, and Edwin, the four sons of Howel Dha, and North Wales between Jevaf and Jago, two of the sons of Edwal Voel; and a war was carried on between these near relations, with no little animosity, for several years. In the course of this war, the sons of Howel Dha were several times defeated, and the two brothers, Jevaf and Jago, obtained the sovereignty of all Wales; but soon after, quarrelling between themselves, Jevaf was taken and imprisoned by Jago, A. D. 967. Some years after, Howel, the son of Jevaf, collected a great number of followers, defeated and expelled his uncle Jago, and delivered his father from prison, but did not restore him to his authority. While the princes of North Wales were engaged in these unnatural quarrels, Eneon, the son of Owen the eldest son of Howel Dha, recovered the dominion of South Wales. The Welsh, in this period, were not only much afflicted by these incessant broils among their own princes, but frequently plundered by the piratical Danes, and often invaded by their powerful neighbours the English; which

\* W. Malms. 1. 2. c. 6.

rendered their condition, in spite of all their native valour, very unhappy \*.

A. D. 901.  
to 978.

History of  
Scotland;  
reign of  
Constantine.

Constantine, the son of Eth, and grandson of the illustrious Kenneth, conqueror of the Picts, mounted the throne of Scotland in the third year of the tenth century, and reigned about thirty-five years. He was cotemporary with the two great kings of England, Edward the Elder, and Athelstan, with whom he had several wars; but the circumstances of these wars are so differently related by the Scotch and English historians, that it is very difficult to discover the truth with certainty. The most probable account of these wars, hath been already given in the history of Athelstan. It is further probable, or rather certain, that Constantine had been obliged to relinquish to Athelstan the sovereignty of the low countries, between the rivers Tweed and Forth, which had been chiefly inhabited by Saxons for several centuries, though they had sometimes been under the dominion of the Picts and Scots †. Constantine seems also to have interfered considerably in the affairs of Ireland; but the particulars of these transactions are not distinctly known ‡. We have very different accounts of the time and manner of this prince's death, some historians affirming that he fell in the fatal battle of Brunanburgh, A. D. 938; while others assert, on better authority,

\* Powel, Hist. p. 58—67.

† Ethelred, p. 357. Brompt. p. 83S. Fordun, l. 4. c. 23.

‡ Innes's Essays, vol. 2. p. 786.

A. D. 901. that he made his escape from that battle, and  
 to 978. that he soon after resigned his crown, and re-  
 tired into the monastery of the Culdees at St  
 Andrews, where he spent the five last years of  
 his life\*.

Malcolm I. Upon the resignation of Constantine, Mael,  
 the son of Dunvenald, called by historians *Mal-*  
*colm I.* became king of Scotland; and finding  
 his country much exhausted by the late wars,  
 wisely resolved to cultivate peace with all his  
 neighbours. Edmund King of England having  
 suppressed a rebellion of the Danes of Northum-  
 berland, A. D. 944, and subdued the Cumbrian  
 Britons the year after, gave the government of  
 their country to Malcolm, to engage him in an  
 alliance against the Danes, their common ene-  
 mies †. Malcolm, some years after, with the  
 consent of Edred King of England, transferred  
 this government to Indulf, his presumptive suc-  
 cessor; and from thenceforward Cumberland be-  
 came a kind of appanage to the apparent heirs  
 of the kings of Scotland ‡. This good king was  
 murdered by a gang of robbers, at Ulrine in  
 Moray, A. D. 952.

Indulf. Indulf Prince of Cumberland, son of the late  
 King Constantine, succeeded Malcolm I. in the  
 throne of Scotland, and bestowed his principality  
 on Duff, the son of Malcolm. Indulf continued  
 faithful to his engagements with the English

\* W. Malm. l. 2. c. 6. Ingulf. Hist. Innes's Essays, vol. 2. p. 756.  
 Fordun, l. 4. c. 23.

† W. Malm. l. 2. c. 7. Fordun, l. 4. c. 25.

‡ Id. ibid.

against the Danes, which gained him the favour A. D. 901.  
to 978. of the first, and drew upon him the indignation of the last of these nations. From one of the kings of England, his cotemporaries, (which were Edred, Edwi, and Edgar), he obtained a voluntary cession of the castle and town of Edinburgh, with the fine country between the Tweed and Forth, which from thenceforward was considered as a part of the kingdom of Scotland\*.

The Danes, enraged at this good agreement between the British monarchs, appeared with a great fleet and army on the coast of Scotland; and, after having in vain attempted to land in several places, put out to sea, as if they had designed to abandon the enterprise, but, returning suddenly, they landed without opposition near Cullen, in the country of Boyn. Indulf hastened thither with his army, engaged and defeated the Danes, but was unfortunately killed in the pursuit, A. D. 961 †.

Duff Prince of Cumberland, then became Duff. king of Scotland, and ceded (as was now become the custom) his principality to Culen, the son of Indulf. Nothing can more clearly demonstrate the want of authentic materials to fill up the history of Scotland at this period, than the ridiculous tales of witchcrafts and prodigies which Boece and Buchanan relate in the life of this king ‡. The truth is, we know no more of

\* Innes's Essays, vol. 2. p. 787.

‡ Boeth. l. 11. Buchan. l. 6.

† Fordun, l. 4. c. 25.

A. D. 901. him but this, that he was very active in his en-  
 to 978. deavours to suppress the bands of robbers with  
 which his kingdom was infested; and that he  
 was surprised and slain by some of those lawless  
 miscreants, near the town of Forres, in the fifth  
 year of his reign, A. D. 965\*.

Culen. Culen succeeded Duff, and is represented by  
 all our historians as a libidinous and profligate  
 prince, who was murdered by Eadhard thane of  
 Methwen, for having violated the chastity of his  
 daughter, A. D. 970 †.

Kenneth II. Kenneth II. son of Malcolm I. and brother of  
 the late King Duff, succeeded Culen, and by his  
 wise and vigorous administration, rectified the  
 disorders which had prevailed in the reign of his  
 profligate predecessor. The Danes, who in this  
 period brought so many calamities on England,  
 did not leave Scotland undisturbed; for a great  
 army of that nation landed near Montrose, plun-  
 dered the open country, and besieged the town  
 of Perth. Kenneth having collected an army  
 of his subjects at Stirling, marched to raise the  
 siege. This brought on a battle between the  
 two armies, at Loncarty, near Perth; in which  
 the Scots were in great danger of being defeated,  
 and had already begun to fly, when they were  
 prevailed upon by the threats, reproaches, and  
 example of a husbandman, named *Hay*, and his  
 two sons, to return and renew the fight, by  
 which they obtained a complete victory. The

\* Fordun, l. 4. c. 26.

† Id. c. 27.



king, by the advice of his nobles, rewarded Hay <sup>A. D. 901.</sup> and his sons (from whom the very ancient and <sup>to 978.</sup> noble family of Errol is said to be descended) with a large tract of land in the fertile plains of Gowrie \*. It is, however, a little surprising that Fordun, the most ancient Scotch historian, makes no mention of this Danish invasion, nor of this famous battle of Loncarty. This prince is said to have obtained a formal cession of the country on the north of the Tweed, inhabited by the English, on condition that he allowed the people of that country to use the English laws, and speak the English language †. Kenneth was cut off by a conspiracy in the twenty-fourth year of his reign, A. D. 994, though the manner and circumstances of his death are not well known ‡.

\* Boeth. Hist. l. 11. Buchan. l. 6.

† J. Wallingford, apud Gale, l. 1. p. 545.

‡ Fordun, l. 4. c. 33.

## SECTION V.

*The civil and military history of Great Britain, from the accession of Ethelred the Unready, A. D. 978, to the landing of William Duke of Normandy, A. D. 1066.*

A. D. 978.  
to 1066.

Accession of  
Ethelred the  
Unready.

**T**HE reign of Ethelred, surnamed *the Unready*, who succeeded his brother, Edward the Martyr, A. D. 978, was one of the most calamitous in the English history. These calamities, we are assured by several monkish historians, were foretold by their favourite St Dunstan at the baptism of this prince, and discovered in a very extraordinary manner\*.

Descents of  
the Danes  
on the coasts  
of England.

The piratical Danes, who for more than half a century had given the English very little disturbance, began again to cast their rapacious eyes on this country soon after the accession of this unfortunate king. Their first attempts seem to have been made with diffidence, by a small number of adventurers. In the year 981, a few of these rovers plundered Southampton; and putting their booty on board their fleet, consisting of seven ships, departed with precipitation †. By degrees, these descents upon the English

\* Minxit namque cum baptizaretur in sacro fonte. Unde vir Domini exterminium Anglorum in tempore ejus futurum prædixit. Hen. Hunt. l. 1. W. Malms. l. 2. c. 10.

† Chron. Saxon. p. 125.

coasts became more frequent and more formidable. In the year 991, an English army was defeated near Maldon, and their commander Duke Brithnot slain, by a party of these plunderers \*. Ethelred, instead of revenging this affront, followed the cowardly and imprudent advice of Siricius Archbishop of Canterbury, and gave the victorious Danes a bribe of 10,000*l.* to depart †. This measure was productive of consequences which might easily have been foreseen. Another fleet of Danes appeared upon the English coasts the very next year, and put into different ports, in hopes of being bought off in the same manner. Ethelred, on this occasion, called an assembly of all the great men, both of the clergy and laity; in which it was resolved to collect as great a fleet as possible at London, in order to block up the Danish fleet in some harbour. But the success of these wise and vigorous counsels was prevented by the treachery of Ealfric Duke of Mercia, one of the commanders of the English fleet, who warned the Danes of their danger; which gave them an opportunity to escape, with the loss of only one ship ‡. Ealfric carried his treachery still further, and deserted to the Danes, when the English fleet pursued and engaged them, which prevented their destruction.

Hitherto the Danish depredations had been conducted only by adventurous chieftains; but

Swein King  
of Den-  
mark, and

\* Chron. Saxon, p. 126. W. Malm. l. 2. c. 10.

† Id. *ibid.*

‡ Chron. Saxon, p. 127.

A. D. 978.  
to 1066.

Olave King  
of Norway,  
invade  
England.

in the year 993, England was invaded by a royal fleet and army, commanded by two kings in person, Swein king of Denmark, and Olave King of Norway. These princes sailed up the Humber, landed their men, and plundered Lindsay; after which they marched into Northumberland, where the people and nobility, being for the most part of Danish blood, made very little resistance\*. Having wintered in that country, they embarked in the spring, entered the river Thames, and invested London, in hopes of hastening the conquest of that kingdom, by the reduction of the capital. But being repulsed in all their assaults by the undaunted citizens, they were obliged to raise the siege, and in revenge wasted all the open country with fire and sword. Ethelred could think of no better method of putting a stop to their depredations, than by offering them the sum of 16,000*l.* to desist, and depart the kingdom, which these royal ravagers thought proper to accept; and having spent the winter quietly at Southampton, returned to their respective dominions in the spring, A. D. 995 †.

Descents of  
the Danes.

The calm occasioned by the departure of the two kings was of very short duration. For in the years 997 and 998, armies of Danes landed, and made dreadful devastations in the south-west of England, defeating all the detached parties of the English which attempted to oppose them ‡.

\* Chron. Saxon. p. 127.

† Id. p. 128. Hen. Hunt. 1. 5. p. 205.

‡ Chron. Saxon. p. 129.

In the year 999, these destructive ravagers A. D. 978. to 1066. changed the scene of action, and sailing up the Thames and Medway, defeated an army of Kentishmen near Rochester, and desolated the adjacent country \*. Ethelred collected a fleet and raised an army this year, but they were both so ill conducted, that they served only to exhaust his treasures and oppress his subjects; which obliged him to have recourse again to the wretched expedient of bribing his enemies, who would accept of no less than 24,000l †.

In order to gain the friendship of a nation Marriage of Ethelred and Emma, and massacre of the Danes in England. from whose enmity he and his subjects had sustained so many injuries, Ethelred, being now a widower, demanded in marriage the beautiful Emma, sister to Richard II. Duke of Normandy, of Danish blood; and that princess arriving in England, A. D. 1002, the marriage was consummated ‡. This measure might perhaps have been productive of salutary consequences, if another of a contrary tendency had not been soon after adopted. This was the massacre of the Danes settled in England, who are said to have been butchered by the enraged English, on Sunday, November 13. A. D. 1002, without distinction of rank, age, or sex. Among other persons of distinction who were murdered on this fatal day, was Gunilda, sister to Swein King of Denmark, with her husband and children ||. Some young

\* Chron. Saxon. p. 130.

† Id. ibid. R. Hoveden. pars prior.

‡ Hen. Hunt. l. 6.

|| Chron. Saxon. p. 133. W. Malus. l. 2, c. 10. Hen. Hunt. l. 6.

A. D. 978.  
to 1066.

Danes found means to escape from the general slaughter of their countrymen in London, and carried the dismal news to their sovereign in his own dominions \*. It is easy to imagine what a storm of rage these tidings raised in the bosom of that ferocious prince; which made him pour forth the most direful denunciations of vengeance against the English, and employ the greatest diligence to carry these denunciations into execution. Accordingly, in the spring of A. D. 1003, Swein landed in the south-west of England with a powerful army, took the town of Exeter, and spread desolation far and near †.

War between Swein King of Denmark and the English.

The English, sensible that they could expect no mercy from their fierce enraged enemies, prepared to make a vigorous defence. But the command of the army being imprudently given to Ealfric Duke of Mercia, that hoary traitor once more betrayed his trust; and feigning himself sick when the two armies were on the point of engaging, the English were so dispirited, that they disbanded without fighting ‡. Ealfric dying soon after, was succeeded both in the government of Mercia and the command of the English army by a still greater traitor. This was the infamous Ædric Streon, who had been raised by Ethelred from an inferior station to the highest honours of the state, and married to his own sister ||. This monster of villany and ingratitude

\* Ypod. Newst. p. 427.

† Id. *ibid.* Hen. Hunt l. 6.

† Chron. Saxon. p. 133.

|| W. Mahms. l. 2. c. 10.

discovered all the counsels of his sovereign to the enemy, and, by one means or other, disappointed every scheme that was formed for the defence of his country \*.

A. D. 978.  
to 1066.

It would be tedious and unpleasant to give a minute detail of all the ravages of the Danes, and miseries of the English, in this calamitous period, who for ten successive years were pursued by a continued series of disgraces and disasters. Exeter, Norwich, Oxford, Cambridge, Canterbury, and many other cities, towns, and villages, were reduced to ashes, and the greatest part of their inhabitants buried in their ruins. St Alphage, Archbishop of Canterbury, with almost all his clergy, were murdered in cold blood. The open country was so insecure, that agriculture was neglected, and a famine, no less destructive than the sword, ensued. All the fleets and armies that the wretched English raised for their own defence, were, by various stratagems, betrayed and ruined by the infamous Ædric and his accomplices. If they sometimes purchased a momentary quiet by large sums of money, this served only to accelerate their ruin, by weakening themselves and strengthening their enemies. In a word, Ethelred, despairing of being able to preserve his crown any longer, having sent his queen and two sons before him, retired into Normandy, A. D. 1013; and about the end of that year the city of London opened her gates to

\* W. Malms. l. 2. c. 10.

A. D. 978. the victorious Dane, when it might be said that to 1066. England was completely conquered\*.

Death of  
Swein  
King of  
Denmark,  
and its con-  
sequences.

Swein, King of Denmark, did not live long to enjoy this important conquest, but dying suddenly at Gainsborough, February 3d, A. D. 1014, before he was crowned, he is not commonly reckoned among the kings of England †. This event revived the dejected spirits of the English, and inspired them with the resolution of attempting to deliver their country from the Danish yoke. In order to this, they sent a deputation into Normandy to invite King Ethelred to return into England, and resume the reins of government, promising him their most cheerful obedience and hearty support. The King complied with this invitation; and having sent his son Prince Edward before him, to assure the nobility and people that he would avoid all the errors of his former administration, arrived in the time of Lent, and found a numerous army of his English subjects ready to receive and obey his orders. Ethelred at his first arrival acted with uncommon spirit; and falling upon the Danes unexpectedly as they were plundering the country about Gainsborough, killed great numbers of them, and obliged the rest, with their young King Canute, to retire to their ships, and put to sea. Canute, enraged at this defection of the English, having cruelly mutilated their hostages, and set them

\* Chron. Saxon, p. 133—144. W. Malms. l. 2. c. 10, p. 39.

† W. Malms. l. 2. c. 10, p. 40. Chron. Saxon. p. 144.



on shore at Sandwich, sailed away to take possession of his native kingdom \*.

A. D. 978.  
to 1066.

King Ethelred did not continue long to act in this commendable manner; but falling again under the influence of his brother-in-law, the infamous Ædric Streon, he was by him misguided, betrayed, and ruined. That horrid traitor, at an assembly of the nobility which met this year at Oxford, invited two of the most wealthy and potent earls, Sugfert and Morcar, to an entertainment, where they were cruelly murdered; and their attendants, after making an attempt to revenge their lords, took shelter in a church, where they were burnt to death. It soon appeared, that Ethelred was privy and consenting to all these base and barbarous proceedings, by confiscating the estates of these unhappy noblemen, and thrusting the young and beautiful widow of Earl Sugfert into a monastery. That lady having, at a casual interview, captivated the heart of Prince Edmund, the king's eldest son, he released her from her confinement, and married her without his father's consent †. By these events, the peace of the royal family, and the confidence of the nobility in their king, and in one another, were destroyed, at a time when nothing but the most cordial union could have preserved them all from ruin.

Misconduct  
of King  
Ethelred,  
and treach-  
ery of  
Ædric  
Streon.

Canute King of Denmark, having settled the affairs of his hereditary dominions, returned

War be-  
tween Ca-  
nute King  
Denmark  
and the  
English.

\* Chron. Saxon. p. 145. W. Malms. l. 2. c. 10.

† Chron. Saxon. p. 146.

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to 1066.

about this time to assert his claim to the crown of England, and presently over-run Dorsetshire, Wiltshire, and Somersetshire. King Ethelred being then sick, his brother-in-law Ædric raised one army in Mercia, and his son Prince Edmund another in the north: but when these two armies joined, the Prince received intelligence, that the faithless Ædric had formed a plot against his liberty and life; which obliged him to retire with his forces without fighting the common enemy. Soon after this the traitor Ædric threw off the mask, and openly joined Canute with forty ships of the English navy, whose crews he had corrupted. Canute, strengthened by this accession, advanced into Warwickshire, having brought all the country behind him to submit to his authority. In the mean time, Prince Edmund advanced with a body of troops which he had hastily collected; but when they found that they were not to be joined by the Londoners, who staid at home to defend their own city, they disbanded without fighting, in spite of all the commands and intreaties of their leader\*. The intrepid Edmund, not yet dispirited by all these disappointments, with incredible diligence raised a second army, which was joined by the King at the head of the Londoners; but that weak unfortunate prince was still surrounded with faithless friends, who infused into him such doubts and fears of the fidelity of the English, that he

\* Chron. Saxon. p. 146. 147.

could not be prevailed upon, by the most earnest intreaties of his heroic son, to continue in the army, but hastened back to London. The troops being thus abandoned by their king, could no longer be kept together, but disbanded a second time; which constrained the Prince, with a few faithful followers, to retire into the north, and join his brother-in-law Uhtred Earl of Northumberland. Canute pursued him in his retreat with a formidable army; which soon brought Uhtred to submission, and obliged Edmund to quit the field, and take shelter within the walls of London. Here he found his father King Ethelred at the point of death, who expired April 23. A. D. 1016, leaving his family and subjects in the most distressful circumstances\*.

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to 1066.

The brave Prince Edmund, eldest son of the deceased king, was immediately crowned at London, by Livignus Archbishop of Canterbury, assisted by a very few of the English nobility and clergy, amidst the acclamations of the loyal Londoners. But the far greatest part of the English clergy and nobility attended Canute at Southampton, swore allegiance to him as their king, and abjured all the posterity of Ethelred †. After these ceremonies, both these princes prepared to contend for the crown of England with such spirit and valour, as shewed that neither of them was unworthy of the prize.

\* Chron. Saxon. p. 146. 147. W. Malms. l. 2. c. 10. R. Hoveden. Annal. pars prior. Hen. Hunt. l. 6.

† R. Hoveden. Annal. pars prior, p. 249.

A. D. 978.  
to 1066.

War be-  
tween King  
Edmund  
and King  
Canute.

King Edmund, who from his hardiness in war had obtained the name of *Ironsides*, immediately after his coronation hastened into Wessex, where he had considerable influence; and Canute, taking advantage of his absence, besieged London. But the bravery of the citizens baffled all his efforts; and Edmund having collected some forces, flew to their relief. This obliged Canute to raise the siege; and the two armies meeting at Gillingham in Dorsetshire, a battle was fought, in which the English gained some advantage. There never was a more active or bloody campaign in England than this in the year 1016: for in the course of it, Canute besieged London no less than three times, and was as often forced to raise the siege; and no fewer than five pitched battles were fought with prodigious obstinacy and great effusion of blood\*.

Pacifica-  
tion between  
the two  
kings, and  
death of  
King Ed-  
mund.

The nobility in both armies, dreading the consequences of a quarrel which was carried on with such uncommon fury, and seemed to threaten the total destruction of their country, prevailed upon the two kings to enter upon a treaty, when they were on the point of fighting a sixth battle. After a short negotiation, it was agreed to divide the kingdom between them, allotting Canute the kingdoms of Mercia and Northumberland, which were chiefly inhabited by Danes, and to Edmund all the rest of England †. The brave King Edmund did not many

\* Chron. Saxon. p. 147—150. † Id. ibid. W. Malms. l. 2. c. 10.

days survive this agreement, being murdered at Oxford, November 30. by the contrivance, as it was suspected, of the detestable traitor, Ædric Streon \*. A. D. 978.  
to 1066.

The two infant sons of the brave but unfortunate Edmund, Edwin and Edward, fell into the hands of Canute; who sent them to his friend the King of Sweden, with a request that they might not live to give him any trouble. Though that prince understood the meaning of this request, he was not so base as to comply with it, but caused the two royal victims to be conducted to the court of Solomon King of Hungary, with a request to preserve and educate them according to their birth. Here Edwin the eldest died young; and Edward having married the Princess Agatha, [sister to the Queen of Hungary, had one son and two daughters, of whom we shall hear afterwards †.

After the death of their heroic King Edmund, the English made no further opposition, but quietly submitted to the government of Canute, who was acknowledged King of all England by all the great men both of the clergy and laity, in a general assembly held at London, A.D. 1017. To give some colour of justice to the exclusion of Edmund's two sons and three brothers, it was affirmed by many of the members of this assembly, (though falsely), that the succession of

\* Hen. Hunt. l. 6. p. 208.

† W. Malm. l. 2, c. 10. sub fine. R. Hoveden. pars prior, p. 250.

A. D. 978.  
to 1066.

Canute to the whole kingdom, on the death of Edmund, had been stipulated in the late convention between these two princes \*. To secure the crown which he had thus acquired, Canute rewarded some of his most powerful followers, who had contributed most to his elevation, with the richest governments. Turkill, a great Danish chieftain, was made Duke of East-Anglia; Yric, another powerful nobleman of the same nation, was made Duke of Northumberland; and the traitor Ædric was confirmed in the government of Mercia †. To prevent any insurrection of the English in favour of Edwi, the full brother of the late King Edmund, who was so great a favourite with the common people, that he was called the *Ceorls King*, he first procured the banishment, and afterwards the murder of that prince ‡. Canute was also at much pains to extinguish national animosities, and bring about a thorough reconciliation between his Danish and English subjects, which he at length accomplished ||.

Performs  
some meri-  
torious acts  
of justice.

This politic prince having, by these and the like arts, secured his new-acquired dominion, proceeded to do some very meritorious acts of justice. In the time of the late troubles, several of the English nobles had shamefully betrayed the cause of their king and country. While Canute needed the treason, he cherished the trai-

\* R. Hoveden. Annal. pars prior, p. 250.

† Chron. Saxon. p. 151. R. Hoveden. Annal. p. 250.

‡ Id. ibid.

|| W. Malm. l. 2. c. 11.

tors: but as soon as he found himself in the peaceable possession of the crown of England, he banished some, and put others of them to death, under various pretences\*. Nor was it long before the arch-traitor Ædric met with the fate which he had so often merited: for that shameless villain having one day in council upbraided King Canute with his great services, particularly with the murder of the late King Edmund, which had made way for him to ascend the throne of England, the ferocious Dane was so enraged at his presumption, that he commanded him instantly to be put to death, as having confessed himself guilty of murder and treason †. About the same time he divested his two dangerous and powerful subjects, Turkill Duke of East-Anglia, and Iric Duke of Northumberland, of their estates and honours, and sent them into banishment; by which the whole kingdom was reduced to a state of perfect subjection to his authority ‡. This enabled him to send back the greatest part of his fleet and army into Denmark, retaining only forty ships in England ||.

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to 1066.



Still further to gain the affections of his English subjects, and prevent their making any attempts in favour of the princes of their ancient royal family, Canute, being now a widower, made proposals of marriage to the Queen-dowager Emma, widow of the late King Ethelred, who

King Canute marries Queen Emma.

\* W. Malms. l. 2. c. 11.

† Id. *ibid.*

‡ Id. *ibid.*

|| Chron. Saxon. p. 151.

A. D. 978. resided, with her two sons by that King, Alfred  
 to 1066 and Edward, in the court of her brother Richard  
 Duke of Normandy. That princess, dazzled  
 with the lustre of a crown which she had already  
 worn, accepted of these proposals; and giving  
 her hand to the great enemy of her family, once  
 more ascended the throne of England, A. D.  
 1017\*. By this marriage also, the artful Dane  
 disarmed the resentment of Richard Duke of  
 Normandy, who had declared himself the pro-  
 tector of the two young princes Alfred and  
 Edward, and threatened to attempt their resto-  
 ration to the throne of their ancestors.

Canute's  
 voyage into  
 Denmark,  
 and return  
 into Eng-  
 and.

By all these prudent measures, Canute, not  
 unjustly called *the Great*, found himself so firmly  
 seated on the throne of England, that he ven-  
 tured, A. D. 1019, to make a voyage into his  
 native kingdom of Denmark, which was then at  
 war with Sweden, and carried with him a body  
 of English troops, commanded by Earl Godwin.  
 These troops soon met with a favourable oppor-  
 tunity of displaying their valour, and shewing  
 their attachment to their new sovereign. Being  
 stationed nearest to the enemy's camp, they  
 assaulted it in the night, and gained a complete  
 victory, without the least assistance from the  
 Danes †. This brave action greatly endeared  
 the English in general to the King, and procured  
 Godwin the highest marks of the royal favour,

\* Chron. Saxon. p. 151.

† W. Malm. l. 2. c. 11. Hen. Hunt. l. 6.



and laid the foundation of his future greatness\*. A. D. 978. to 1066.  
 Having spent about a year in Denmark, and finished the war with Sweden, Canute returned into England A. D. 1020; and found every thing in the most profound tranquillity, which continued several years; and which he spent in making good laws, building churches and monasteries, and in other popular and pious works †.

Canute made a prosperous expedition into Norway, A. D. 1028, with a fleet of fifty ships, and got possession of that kingdom, by expelling the good King Olaus, who had lost the affections of his subjects, by his imprudent zeal, and vain endeavours to restrain them from piracy ‡.

A prince who was so great and prosperous, the sovereign of so many kingdoms, could not want flatterers; and some of his courtiers, it is said, carried their adulation so far as to declare in his presence, that nothing in nature dared to disobey his commands. To confound these pernicious sycophants, he ordered his chair to be placed upon the beach near Southampton, one day when the tide was coming in, and sitting down in it, commanded the waves, with an air of authority, to approach no nearer. But the rising billows, regardless of his commands, advanced with their usual rapidity, and obliged his majesty to retire; who turning to his flatterers,

\* W. Malms. l. 2. c. 11. Hen. Hunt. l. 6.

† Chron. Saxon. p. 152. W. Malms. l. 2. c. 11.

‡ Hen. Hunt. l. 6. R. d. Ducto ad an. 1028. Chron. Mail. p. 155.

A. D. 978. "Learn," said he, "from this example, the  
to 1066. "insignificancy of all human power; and that  
"the word of God alone is omnipotent\*." A  
truth sufficiently obvious, but not much in-  
culcated by monarchs in the circle of their  
flatterers.

Canute's  
journey to  
Rome.

Though Canute was a wise and great prince, he was not superior to that wretched degrading superstition which reigned in that age of darkness in which he lived. Influenced chiefly by this, he made a journey to Rome, A. D. 1031, attended by a numerous and splendid train of his nobility, and lavished greater sums of money upon the churches and clergy in that city than any prince had ever done. In return for this pious liberality, he obtained some additional privileges to the English college at Rome,—a small abatement in the price of the palls of the English archbishops,—and, what he valued more than all the rest, a plenary pardon of all his sins, and the special friendship of St. Peter †.

Canute's  
expedition  
into Cum-  
berland.

The kings of Scotland had constantly refused to pay the ignominious tax called *Danegelt* for the province of Cumberland, which they had received from the crown of England. Canute, determined no longer to admit of this refusal, after his return from Rome, raised an army, and marched into the north, A. D. 1031, in order to compel Malcolm King of Scots to pay that

\* Higden. p. 276. Anglia Sacra, vol. 1. p. 232.

† Hen. Hunt. l. 6. W. Malms. l. 2. c. 11.

tax, or to deprive him of that province. But this quarrel was compromised without bloodshed, by Malcolm's resigning Cumberland to Duncan, his grandson and heir, who agreed to pay the demanded tribute \*.

A. D. 978.  
to 1066.

From this time Canute and all his kingdoms enjoyed a profound peace to the time of his death, which happened at Shaftsbury, November 12. A. D. 1035 †. He left two sons, named *Swein* and *Harold*, the former by a concubine, and the latter by his first wife; and one son, named *Hardicanute*, by Queen Emma. This last prince should have succeeded to the crown of England, if the marriage-settlement of his royal parents had been observed: but being at a distance in Denmark (as Swein was in Norway) at his father's death, and Harold being then in England, he stepped into the vacant throne, and seized his father's treasures ‡. He was supported in this attempt chiefly by the Danes in the north, and the citizens of London; while the English in general, with Earl Godwin at their head, declared for Hardicanute the son of Emma; and the nation was threatened with all the horrors of a civil war. This, however, was prevented by a partition of the kingdom between the two brothers; by which it was agreed, that Harold should keep possession of London, and all the country to the north of

Death of  
Canute,  
and ac-  
cession of  
Harold.

\* Fordun, l. 4. c. 11.

† Chron. Saxon. p. 154.

‡ Hen. Hunt. l. 6. R. Hoveden. Annal. pars prior.

A. D. 978.  
to 1066.

the Thames; and that all to the south of that river should be ceded to Hardicanute; whose share, till his arrival, should be governed by his mother Queen Emma, who fixed her residence at Winchester\*. This princess, finding herself so agreeably seated, and possessed of so much power, invited Alfred and Edward, her two sons by King Ethelred, to come to her in England; and these princes having lately lost their uncle and patron, Robert Duke of Normandy, at whose court they had long resided, joyfully accepted of this invitation, and came over with a numerous retinue. This journey proved fatal to Alfred, the eldest and most active of these princes. For Harold, suspecting that Alfred designed to assert his right to the crown of England, earnestly wished to have him destroyed; and in order to accomplish this, by the advice of Earl Godwin (whom he had secretly gained to his interest), he invited him, with great appearance of cordiality, to his court. As the unhappy unsuspecting prince was on his way thither, he was intercepted and taken prisoner near Gilford, by Earl Godwin and his followers, who put the greatest part of his attendants to death, with every circumstance of cruelty †. This prince was carried first to Gillingham, where his eyes were put out, and afterwards confined in the monastery of Ely, where he died ‡. As soon as Queen Emma

\* Chron. Saxon, p. 154. Hen. Hunt. l. 6.

† R. Hoveden. Annal. Alured. Beverl. l. 8. p. 58.

‡ Id. ibid. Lelan. Collectan. vol. 1. p. 241.

and Prince Edward received intelligence of the deplorable fate of the unfortunate Alfred, they fled out of England; the former to the court of Baldwin Earl of Flanders, and the latter into Normandy; and Harold took possession of the whole kingdom, A. D. 1037. He did not, however, enjoy the fruits of his cruelty and ambition very long, for he died April 14. A. D. 1039\*. This prince was remarkable for his great agility, and swiftness in walking and running; which procured him the surname of *Hare-foot*, by which he is known in history.

A. D. 978.  
to 1066.

Hardicanute King of Denmark happened to be in Flanders on a visit to his mother Queen Emma, when he received the news of Harold's death, and an invitation from the nobility of England to come and take possession of that kingdom †. He joyfully complied with this invitation: and arriving at Sandwich a few days before Midsummer, in a fleet of forty ships, was received with the loudest acclamations by people of all ranks ‡. This joy was not of long duration: for the English soon found that their new king was a ferocious and arbitrary prince, who made his own violent passions, and not the laws of reason or of his country, the rule of his administration. His rage against his predecessor Harold was so implacable that he commanded his body to be taken out of the grave, first be-

Accession  
of Hardi-  
canute.

\* Chron. Saxon. p. 155.

† R. Hoveden. Annal.

‡ R. Hoveden. Annal. Chron. Saxon. p. 156.

A. D. 978.  
to 1066.

headed, and then thrown into the Thames; and the great Earl Godwin, if we may believe some of our ancient historians, was so mean-spirited, as to assist the common hangman in executing these commands \*. This mighty Earl, who was unquestionably the greatest and most powerful subject that ever England beheld, besides these humbling compliances with the tyrant's will, was obliged to employ the intercession of all his friends, and the most valuable bribes, to obliterate the remembrance of the part he had acted under the former reign; particularly in the affair of Prince Alfred's murder. One of these bribes discovers Godwin's ingenuity, as well as his great wealth. It was a galley of admirable workmanship, and beautifully gilded, with a crew of eighty of the handsomest young men, magnificently dressed, each of them having on each arm a bracelet of gold, weighing sixteen ounces; while all their swords, lances, battle-axes, helmets, and shields, glittered with gold and silver †.

Destruction  
of Worcester,  
and  
death of  
Hardicanute.

Hardicanute forfeited his popularity soon after his accession, by imposing a heavy tax for the payment of his Danish fleet and army; which became still more odious by the rigorous manner in which it was collected, and a grievous famine which raged at that same time ‡. The people of Worcester having killed two of the

\* R. Hoveden. Annal. pars prior, p. 251.

† Id. ibid.

‡ Chron. Saxon. p. 156.

collectors of this tax, in a popular tumult, this tyrant was so enraged, that he gave orders to the Earls Leofric, Seward and Godwin, to destroy that city, and exterminate the inhabitants. The first part of these orders was executed; but the people having got some previous notice, made their escape into an island in the Severn, from whence they afterwards returned, and rebuilt their city\*. Prince Edward, the only surviving son of King Ethelred and Queen Emma, arrived in England from Normandy, A. D. 1040, and was kindly received by his uterine brother Hardicanute†. Though this king was naturally robust and hardy, as his name imports, he abandoned himself to such excesses in eating and drinking, as impaired his health, and hastened his death, which happened at Lambeth, June 8. A. D. 1041, when he was carousing at the wedding of a Danish nobleman ‡.

A. D. 978.  
to 1066.



The violences of Harold and Hardicanute had rendered the Danish government so disagreeable to the English, that they were transported with joy at the sudden death of this last prince, and unanimously determined to restore the line of their own ancient princes. Edward, surnamed *the Exile*, the son of King Edmund Ironside, was the undoubted heir of that line; but having resided from his infancy in the court of Hungary, he was at so great a distance, and

Accession  
of Edward  
the Con-  
fessor.

\* R. Hoveden. Annal. Simón Dunelm. p. 181.

† Chron. Saxon.

‡ Id. *ibid.* Hoveden. Annal.

A. D. 678.  
to 1066.

so little known in England, that he was hardly ever thought of on this occasion; and all men turned their eyes on Edward, the son of King Ethelred and Queen Emma, who was then in the kingdom. This prince, naturally timid and unambitious, dreading a violent opposition from the Danes, was struck with terror, and meditated an escape into Normandy; when the great Earl Godwin espoused his cause, and engaged to raise him to the throne, on condition that he married his daughter, and protected him and his family in the possession of all their estates and honours\*. Edward having agreed to these conditions, was acknowledged as king in an assembly of the states at Gillingham, chiefly through the great eloquence, power, and interest of Earl Godwin†. The kingdom was so much afflicted at this time with a great famine, and mortality both of men and cattle, that the King's coronation was delayed till the year after, when it was performed at Winchester on Easter-day, by Eadsig Archbishop of Canterbury‡.

Hokeday.

The English, in their first transports of joy at seeing a prince of their ancient royal family on the throne, were guilty of some outrages against the Danes, which obliged some of them to abandon the country; but as the bulk of that nation quietly submitted to a revolution which they could not prevent, it was attended

\* W. Malms. l. 2. c. 13.

† Id. *ibid.*

‡ Id. *ibid.*



with very little bloodshed\*. The remembrance A. D. 978. to 1066. of this revolution was long preserved in England, by an anniversary festival called *Hokeday*, on which the common people assembled in great crowds, and acted a representation of the insults and indignities which the Danes suffered on this occasion †.

Edward, at his accession, finding the crown Edward enriches the crown. much impoverished by the profuse grants of the late kings, made a general revocation of these grants; by which he obtained a great accession both of wealth and power ‡. This was indeed a severe blow to many families; but as it fell chiefly upon the Danes, they met with little pity and no redress. He also filled his coffers, and increased his revenues, by seizing the treasures, and confiscating the estates, of his mother Queen Emma, who, he pretended, had treated him very unkindly in his adversity ||. These methods of enriching the crown, however exceptionable in themselves, became popular, by enabling Edward to take off the odious and ignominious tax called *Danegelt*, under which the English had groaned so long.

Edward fulfilled his engagements to Earl Godwin, by marrying his daughter Edgitha, Edward's marriage. A. D. 1043 §. But though this lady was one of the

\* W. Malms. l. 2. c. 13.

† Spelman. Gloss. p. 294.

‡ Leges Edward. Confess. c. 16.

|| Anglia Sacra, vol. 1. p. 236. W. Malms. l. 2. c. 13.

§ Chron. Saxon. p. 157.

A. D. 978.  
to 1066.

most amiable and accomplished of her sex, both in mind and person, it was an unhappy and unfruitful marriage, owing, if we may believe our monkish historians, to a vow of chastity which the King had made; for which he is highly commended by those writers, esteemed a saint, and surnamed *the Confessor* \*.

Normans  
promoted  
by Ed-  
ward.

It was in some respects a misfortune, and the occasion of no little trouble both to Edward and his subjects, that he had been educated, and had spent his youthful years abroad, in the court of Normandy, where he had contracted many friendships, and received many favours. It was natural for the companions of his youth to come over to congratulate him on his exaltation to the throne of England, in hopes of sharing with him in his prosperity, as they had assisted him in his adversity. In these expectations they were not mistaken: the grateful monarch received them kindly, loaded them with favours, and advanced some of them to the most honourable stations both in church and state. The court of England in a little time was crowded with Normans; who, basking in the sunshine of royal favour, did not behave with that modesty and self-denial, which prudence would have dictated. In particular, one Robert, a Norman monk, a man of learning and abilities, became the declared favourite of Edward, and was raised by

\* Ingulf. Hist. W. Malms. l. 2. c. 13. Anglia Sacra, vol. 1. p. 241.

him to the see of Canterbury, and the chief direction of all affairs \*. It is easy to imagine, that this state of things was not very agreeable to the English nobles in general. But Earl Godwin, who thought himself entitled to the first place in the favour and confidence of his sovereign and son-in-law, was enraged beyond measure at the Archbishop and other foreign favourites.

A. D. 978.  
to 1066.

An incident happened, A. D. 1050, which blew up these secret discontents into an open flame. Eustace Earl of Bologne, who had married Goda, King Edward's sister, paid a visit to his brother-in-law the King of England; and having finished his business, set out on his return home in September this year †. When he arrived at Dover, a quarrel arose between the townsmen and his retinue, about their lodgings, in which twenty of the townsmen and nineteen of the Earl's people were killed, and many wounded on both sides. Eustace having made his escape, with a few followers, hastened back to court, and gave the King a very unfair representation of what had happened, laying the whole blame on the people of Dover, and demanding satisfaction ‡. Edward, believing this representation, was greatly incensed at the people of Dover, and in a fit of passion commanded Earl Godwin to raise an army, and in-

Earl Godwin and his sons banished.

\* Ingulf. Hist. Hen. II. l. 6.

† W. Malms. l. 2. c. 13.

‡ Chron. Saxon. p. 163.

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to 1066.

flict exemplary vengeance on that town\*. The earl, unwilling to be the destroyer of those whom it was his duty to protect, declined executing this rigorous and unjust command; and proposed that the people of Dover should be heard before they were punished. This refusal threw the King into a more violent passion; which Godwin disregarded, and retired from court to prosecute another business, which he imagined was of more importance †. The Welsh, about this time, had made incursions in Herefordshire (of which Swain, Earl Godwin's eldest son, was governor), and built a fort in it, from which they plundered the country. Godwin and his sons raised an army to expel these invaders, and destroy their fort. The King in the mean time held a great council of the nobility at Gloucester; where he was attended by the Earls Seward, Leofric, and the other northern chieftains, with their numerous followers; and having been persuaded by the Welsh and his foreign favourites, that the army raised by Godwin and his sons was designed to act against himself, he laboured earnestly to prevail upon the nobility to assist him with their forces in destroying the Godwin family. Earl Godwin and his sons being informed of these hostile intentions of the King, determined, though with reluctance, to stand upon their defence, and repel

\* Chron. Saxon. p. 163.

† W. Mals. I. 2. c. 13.

force by force if they were attacked\*. The English nobility about the King advised him not to push matters to extremity, but to call another great council to meet at London in September, to determine all these differences †. All the nobility of the south and north of England attended this council, with their followers, which made a great army. Earl Godwin and his sons being summoned to appear before this assembly, to answer for their late conduct, demanded hostages to be given them for the safety of their persons; which were denied. The council then proceeded to judge them in their absence, outlawed Swain, the eldest son of Godwin, and condemned that Earl and his other sons to surrender themselves, or depart the kingdom in five days. These unfortunate noblemen chose rather to abandon their country, than trust their persons in the hands of their enemies. Godwin, with his three sons, Swain, Gurth, and Tosti, took shelter in the court of Baldwin Earl of Flanders, whose daughter Tosti had married; and Harold and Leofwin, his two other sons, retired into Ireland ‡. Even the fair and innocent Edgitha, though partner of the throne and bed of Edward, was involved in the ruin of her family, being stripped of every thing by her ungenerous husband, and thrust into a monastery ||. All the immense possessions of God-

A. D. 978.  
to 1066.

\* W. Malms. l. 2. c. 13.

‡ Chron. Saxon. p. 161.

† Id. *ibid.*

|| W. Malms.

A. D. 978. win and his sons were confiscated, their places  
 to 1066. } of power and trust bestowed upon others, chiefly  
 on the Norman favourites; and the greatness of  
 this mighty family, so late the envy of their  
 fellow-subjects, and terror of their sovereign,  
 seemed to be quite subverted, and laid in  
 ruins\*.

William  
 Duke of  
 Normandy  
 visits Eng-  
 land.

Soon after the banishment of Earl Godwin and his sons, when the Norman interest was triumphant at the Court of England, William Duke of Normandy paid a visit to his cousin King Edward; from whom he received the most honourable entertainment, and many rich presents, in return for the generous protection and support which the Duke's family had given him in his adversity. It was in this visit that Robert the Norman, Archbishop of Canterbury, is said to have given William the first hint of Edward's intention of making him his successor; an intention which was probably suggested by that prelate †.

The God-  
 win family  
 restored.


Though Earl Godwin and his sons had been obliged to yield to the torrent, and forsake their country, they were men of too much spirit to sit down quietly, without attempting to revenge the injuries, and repair the losses which they had suffered. They had still many friends and much treasure, with which they soon procured a fleet in the ports of Flanders, and put to sea in the beginning of summer A. D. 1052, in order to

\* Chron. Saxon. p. 164.

† Wau Hist. con. p. 448.

invade England. As Edward had expected this, he had provided a superior fleet, with which he prevented their landing in England, and obliged them to put back to Flanders. The royal fleet then returned to Sandwich; and the two Norman Earls, Ralph and Oddo, who commanded it, imagining that no further attempts would be made that year, laid up their ships, and dismissed their sailors. As soon as Godwin received intelligence of this, he put to sea; and being joined near the Isle of Wight by his son Harold, with a fleet of nine ships from Ireland, they entered all the harbours on the coast, raised heavy contributions, and pressed all the ships and sailors into their service. By these means having collected a great fleet and army, they entered the river Thames, and boldly approached London, where the King lay with his army. Edward, instigated by his Norman confidants, for some time stood firm, and seemed determined to risk a battle; but the English nobility interposing, a negotiation was set on foot, which soon terminated in a peace on these conditions:— That Earl Godwin, his sons, and followers, should be restored to all their estates and honours, and should give hostages to the King for their future loyalty;—and that the Norman favourites, who had been the occasion of all these troubles, should leave the kingdom. This peace was confirmed the day after in a great council held at London; in which Earl Godwin and his sons were declared innocent of the crimes with

A. D. 978.  
to 1066.



A. D. 978.  
to 1066.



which they had been charged, and publicly received into the King's favour. At the same time Queen Edgitha was restored to her liberty and former rank \*. The obnoxious Normans made their escape with great secrecy and precipitation, for fear of being torn in pieces by the populace.

Earl Godwin's death.

The great Earl Godwin did not long survive to enjoy this happy change in the circumstances of his affairs and family. He died suddenly April 15. A. D. 1053, as he was sitting at table with the King; and was succeeded in his honours and great offices by his eldest surviving son Harold; besides whom, he left by his only wife, the lady Githa, daughter of Canute the Great, four other sons, all possessed of many estates and dignities †.

Ambition of Harold.

Harold, now at the head of the Godwin family, was not inferior to his father in power and wealth, and superior to him in virtue and abilities. Beholding the throne filled by a childless prince, in the decline of life, without any one in the kingdom who had any pretensions to succeed him, the true heir at a great distance, and almost quite forgotten, he soon began to cast ambitious eyes on the crown; and to secure the succession to it became the great object of all his designs and actions ‡. He paid great court

\* Chron. Saxon. p. 165—168. R. Hoveden. Annal. Hidgen, p. 279. Alured. Beverlien. p. 8.

† Chron. Saxon. p. 168. See Biographia Britannica, art. Godwin.

‡ Ingulf. Hist.



to Edward, in hopes of engaging him to appoint him his successor; he laboured earnestly to add to the number of his friends, and increase his treasures, sometimes by means not very honourable\*. He gained great credit, soon after his father's death, by a successful expedition into Wales †. Some events happened not long after, which seemed to favour the views and encourage the hopes of Harold. Seward Earl of Northumberland, and Leofric Earl of Mercia, who were the most powerful noblemen in England, and might have formed a dangerous opposition to his elevation to the throne, were both removed by death, A. D. 1055, and Harold obtained the earldom of Northumberland for his brother Tosti, and that of East-Anglia for himself; by which means about two-thirds of all England came under the dominion of his family ‡.

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to 1066.

Though Edward was not ignorant of the ambitious views of Harold, and did not favour them; yet he knew not how to take any effectual measures for their disappointment. Sometimes he inclined to nominate William Duke of Normandy his successor, as one who would be most able to dispute the throne with Harold. At other times he was disposed to recall his nephew Prince Edward, son of King Edmund Ironside, whose title was unquestionable, in hopes that the English would unite in supporting the

Prince Edward comes from Hungary into England, and dies soon after.

\* Hen. Hunt. l. 6.

† Simon Dunchn.

‡ Chron. Saxon. p. 169. Hen. Hunt. l. 6.

A. D. 978.  
to 1066.

line of their ancient kings. After much balancing, he embraced this last measure as most just and honourable, and dispatched Aldred Bishop of Worcester to the court of Hungary, to conduct Edward and his family into England. That unfortunate prince arrived in his native country, A. D. 1057, after he had lived about forty years in exile, and died within less than a month after his arrival; leaving an infant son, named *Edgar Atheling*; and two daughters, Margaret, afterwards Queen of Scotland, and Christina, who became a nun\*. The hopes of Harold, which had been a little damped by the arrival of Prince Edward, were revived again by his death, and the tender age and unpromising genius of his son.

Voyage of  
Earl Harold  
into Nor-  
mandy.

There was one obstacle in Harold's way to the throne, which it seemed difficult to remove. Ulnoth, one of his brothers, and a nephew named *Haquin*, had been given to Edward as hostages at the late pacification, who had sent them to William Duke of Normandy, where they were still detained †. Harold often importuned the King for the release of these precious pledges; and at last obtained a commission, according to some of our historians, to make a voyage into Normandy to procure their freedom; though other historians assign other rea-

\* Chron. Saxon. p. 169. W. Malms. l. 2. c. 13.

† Id. *ibid.*

sons for this voyage \*. However this may be, A. D. 978.  
to 1066. he set out with a numerous and splendid retinue; and after meeting with some disasters, arrived at the court of Normandy. William was not ignorant of the mighty power of Harold, and strongly suspected his ambitious views; and was therefore in some doubt whether he should destroy him as a rival, or gain him for a friend. Embracing this last counsel, he entertained him in the most friendly manner, made him many valuable presents, and still greater promises, if he would assist him in mounting the throne of England on the demise of Edward. Harold, seeing himself in the hands of his rival, promised every thing that was desired, and even confirmed his promises with the most solemn oaths. William, to attach him still more firmly to his interests, engaged to load him with additional honours, and to give him his own daughter in marriage. At his departure, he gave him up the youngest of the hostages, and promised to send the other †. This is the most plausible account of this strange affair; but it must be confessed, that it is far from being satisfactory; and there seems to be some secret in this transaction, which none of our historians have penetrated. One thing, however, is certain, that Harold was no sooner out of William's reach, than he totally disregarded all his

\* W. Malm. l. 2. c. 12. Hoveden, Annal. Brompt. p. 917. Higden, l. 6. Hen. Hunt. l. 6.

† Id. *ibid.*

A. D. 978. promises and oaths, and proceeded with re-  
 to 1066. doubled ardour to secure his own succession to  
 the throne of England.

Expedition  
 of Earl Ha-  
 rold into  
 Wales.

The Welsh having renewed their incursions  
 A. D. 1064, under their enterprising Prince  
 Griffith, Harold, in conjunction with his bro-  
 ther Tosti, Earl of Northumberland, invaded  
 Wales both by sea and land. This invasion was  
 planned with so much prudence, and prosecuted  
 with so much vigour, that the Welsh, to pre-  
 serve themselves from that destruction with  
 which they were threatened, seized their own  
 prince, who had been the occasion of the war,  
 cut off his head, and sent it to Harold, with an  
 offer to submit to the government of any per-  
 son he should think proper to appoint\*. By  
 this action, so honourable and advantageous to  
 his country, Harold's reputation and popularity  
 were much increased.

Earl Tosti  
 expelled.


Though Tosti, Earl of Northumberland, had  
 done good service in the late expedition into  
 Wales, and on some other occasions, he was a  
 man of violent passions, and had been guilty of  
 many acts of cruelty and oppression in his go-  
 vernment; and the Northumbrians, finding no  
 end or redress of their grievances, broke out  
 into open rebellion against him, killed about two  
 hundred of his retainers, the instruments of his  
 oppressions, seized his treasures, and drove him  
 out of their country, A. D. 1064. The expelled

\* Chron. Saxon. p. 170. W. Malms. 1, 2, c. 13. Hen. Hunt. 1. 6.

Earl hastened to the King, and made loud complaints of the injury which he had received; and Edward, too hastily believing the justice of these complaints, commanded Harold to raise an army, restore his brother to his government, and punish the Northumbrians, who had chosen Morcar, the son of Alfgar Duke of Mercia, for their earl. When Harold approached the borders of Northumberland with his army, he was met by a deputation from the insurgents, who gave him a detail of the many cruelties and oppressions of which their late earl had been guilty; and represented in a firm tone, that though they were willing to submit to legal government, they were determined to die with their swords in their hands, rather than suffer his restoration. Harold, convinced of the justice of their representations, abandoned his brother's cause, prevailed with the King to pardon the Northumbrians, and confirm Morcar in the earldom. Tosti, despairing of his restoration to his government, and enraged beyond measure at the conduct of his brother Harold, retired to the court of Baldwin Earl of Flanders, his father-in-law\*.

Harold, soon after this transaction, procured the government of Mercia for Edwin, Earl Morcar's brother, and also married Edgiva, the sister of these two noblemen. By these just and prudent measures, he gained the hearts of the people

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to 1066.



Harold  
married.

\* Chron. Saxon. p. 171. W. Malm. l. 2. c. 13. Hen. Hunt. l. 6.

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to 1066.

of Mercia and Northumberland, and attached the two powerful Earls Edwin and Morcar most firmly to his interest\*.

Death of  
Edward the  
Confessor,  
and acces-  
sion of  
Harold.

When Harold was thus in the zenith of his power and popularity, the throne became vacant by the death of Edward the Confessor, January 5.

A. D. 1066. On the very next day he was buried with great solemnity, in his new church of St Peter's, Westminster, all the members of a great council which he had summoned for the dedication of that church attending his funeral†. On that same busy day Earl Harold was crowned King of England in St Paul's, by Aldred Archbishop of York, with as much quiet and unanimity, as if his title to the crown had been as clear and indisputable as it was defective‡. He alleged, indeed, that the late King had appointed him his successor; but of this he was never able to produce sufficient evidence||. The truth is, that Harold owed his elevation to the throne to his own great power and wealth, his intimate connections with the chief nobility, the favour of the clergy, the love of the citizens of London, and his general popularity. This popularity was so great, that though Edgar Atheling, the undoubted heir of the crown, was on the spot, his name was hardly mentioned on this occasion §.

\* Order. Vitalis, p. 492.

† Chron. Saxon. p. 171. W. Malms. l. 2. c. 13. Hen. Huot. l. 6.  
Hoveden. Annal. Ingulf. Hist. ‡ Id. *ibid.*

|| Hoveden. Annal. Alured. Bever. l. 8. p. 122.

§ Chron. Saxon. p. 172. W. Malms. l. 2. c. 13. sub fine.

Harold endeavoured to secure his crown by the same popular arts by which he had obtained it; and his administration is acknowledged to have been wise, and just, and gracious \*. He was not so weak as to expect the peaceable enjoyment of the glittering prize which he had obtained; for though he seems to have been under no apprehensions from the young, weak, and friendless Edgar, he was not so easy with respect to his own brother Tosti, and the Duke of Normandy, knowing the implacable resentment of the one, and the power and ambition of the other. It was therefore one of his first cares to provide a fleet and army to defend himself against these dangerous enemies. It was not long before ambassadors arrived from the Duke of Normandy, who reproached Harold, in their master's name, for the breach of his oath; and required him, in a peremptory tone, to descend from that throne which he had usurped. To which Harold returned this firm and prudent answer, That his oath was both unlawful and involuntary, and therefore not binding; and that he was determined to defend the throne to which he had been raised by the unanimous suffrage of the nobility, clergy, and people †. William, on receiving this answer, hastened his preparations for an invasion of England, in order to obtain by force what he could not obtain by negociation.

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to 1066.

His endeavours to preserve his crown.

\* Alured. Beverl. l. 8. p. 122. W. Mahms. l. 2. c. 13

† Id. ibid. l. 3. Ingulf. Hist.

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to 1066.

Attempts  
to dethrone  
Harold de-  
feated.

The banished Earl of Northumberland was almost frantic with rage and envy when he heard of his brother's elevation to the throne of England. He flew to the Duke of Normandy, who had married Matilda, his wife's sister, and urged him to hasten his preparations for pulling down their common enemy\*. He sent messengers into Denmark and Norway, to rouse the piratical adventurers of those countries to renew their incursions; and impatient to be in action, he collected a small fleet in the ports of Flanders, with which he sailed towards England about the beginning of May, and attempted to make descents on several parts of the coasts, but was every where repulsed with loss †. Upon this ill success, being deserted by many of his sailors, he retired into Scotland, and earnestly solicited Malcolm King of Scots to espouse his quarrel; but in vain ‡. His messengers had been more successful in Norway, and had engaged Harold Harfagar, King of that country, to invade England with his whole force; and that prince approaching the Northumbrian coast about the beginning of September, with a fleet of three hundred ships, was joined by Tosti with his fleet from Scotland. These two commanders entered the Humber, landed their forces, and advanced towards York; near which city they were encountered, September 19. by the two Earls Edwin

\* Order. Vital. p. 492.

† Chron. Saxon. p. 172. W. Malms. l. 2. c. 13. Hoveden. Annales.

‡ Id. ibid.



and Morcar. The conflict was at first bloody, and the victory for some time doubtful; but at length the earls were defeated, and the city of York surrendered to the conquerors. But their triumph was of very short duration; for King Harold having received intelligence of this invasion, marched his army with great expedition into the north, and came up with the enemy September 24. near Stanford-bridge; where he obtained a complete victory, killed both Earl Tosti and the King of Norway, cut almost their whole army in pieces, took all their spoils, and suffered only twenty ships of their whole fleet to escape\*.

By this great victory, Harold was delivered from two of his most dangerous enemies, crowned with laurels, and laden with spoils. But this year (the most important and eventful in the annals of England) was big with the most sudden and mighty reverses of fortune that are to be found in history. While Harold was celebrating his victory at York, he received intelligence, that William Duke of Normandy had landed at Pevensey in Sussex, on September 25. at the head of an army of 60,000 men; which soon after deprived him of his crown and life, and brought about another great revolution, which will be the subject of the third book of this work †.

A. D. 978.  
to 1066.

Landing of  
William  
Duke of  
Normandy.

\* Hoveden, Annal. Chron. Saxon. p. 172. W. Malms. 1. 2. c. 13.  
† Chron. Saxon. p. 172. W. Malms. 1. 3. Hen. Hunt. 1. 7.

A. D. 978.  
to 1066.

It is now necessary to give a very brief deduction of the civil and military affairs of Wales and Scotland, from A. D. 978. to 1066.

At the beginning of this period, Owen ap Howel Dha was Prince of South Wales, and Howel ap Iwaf Prince of North Wales\*. Eneon, the eldest son of Owen, who was an excellent prince, lost his life A. D. 983, in attempting to suppress an insurrection in Guentland, leaving two sons, Edwin and Theodore; and the year after, Howel was slain in making an incursion into England, and succeeded by his brother Cadwallon in the principality of North Wales †. Cadwallon defeated and killed his cousin Ionaval, the son of his eldest brother Meyric, and right heir to the principality; but was himself defeated and slain the year after by Meredyth ap Owen, who thereby got possession of North Wales. Owen Prince of South Wales dying A. D. 987, his youngest son Meredyth, who had conquered North Wales, seized also South Wales, excluding his two nephews, Edwin and Theodore, the sons of his elder brother Eneon. As Meredyth was an usurper of North Wales from Edwal ap Meyric, and of South Wales from Edwin ap Eneon, his reign was one continued scene of war and confusion; and the Danes taking advantage of these intestine broils, obliged him to pay a tribute of one penny for every man in Wales ‡,

\* Powel, Hist. Wales, p. 65.

‡ Id. p. 70.

† Id. p. 67.

which was called *the tribute of the black army* \*. A. D. 978. to 1066. Meredith, after a turbulent and unhappy reign, died, A. D. 998, leaving only one daughter, named *Angarad*, who married Lhwelyn ap Sithfylht, a nobleman descended by his mother from the ancient princes of North Wales.

The death of Prince Meredith without male issue, and the infancy of Iago, the son of Edwal, occasioned fresh disputes about the succession. At length an adventurer, named *Acdan ap Ble-gored*, whose birth was so obscure that even the Welsh genealogists cannot inform us who was his grandfather, triumphed over all his rivals, and became Prince of North Wales, A. D. 1003, and kept possession of it to A. D. 1015, when he was slain in battle with his four sons, by Lhwelyn ap Sithfylht †. Wales enjoyed great prosperity under the government of Lhwelyn. “The earth brought forth double; the people prospered in all their affairs, and multiplied wonderfully; the cattle increased in great number; so that there was neither beggar nor poor man from the south to the north sea ‡.” This Prince was slain in battle, A. D. 1021, by Howel ap Edwin ap Eneon ap Owen ap Howel Dha, the right heir of the principality of South Wales. Though Lhwelyn left a son named *Gryffyth*, he was succeeded in the government of North Wales by Iago ap Edwal ap Meyric ap

\* Powel, Hist. Wales, p. 71.

† Id. p. 84.

. † Id. p. 83.

A. D. 978. Edwal Voel, the right heir of that principality \*.  
 to 1066. } The government of South Wales was long disputed between Howel, the right heir, and an usurper named *Rythereh ap Iestyn*, who fell in battle, A. D. 1032; by which Howel obtained possession of the territories of his ancestors †. Gryffyth, the son of Lhwelyn late Prince of North Wales, was very young when his father was killed; but as soon as he arrived at the manly age, he collected an army of adventurers, and the friends of his family, A. D. 1037; with which he defeated and killed Iago ap Edwal, and got possession of North Wales; to which he soon after added South Wales, by the expulsion of its Prince Howel ‡. This Gryffyth ap Lhwelyn, Prince of all Wales, was one of the bravest princes that ever reigned in that country. He not only defended his own dominions against all his enemies with undaunted courage, but he made frequent incursions into England. In one of these, A. D. 1055, he first plundered, and then burnt Hereford, and carried away many captives and much spoil ||. At length the inroads of this bold invader became so frequent and destructive, that Harold, who aspired to the crown of England, thought he could do nothing more popular than to put an effectual stop to them; which he accomplished in the manner above related §. After the death of Gryffyth,

\* Powel, Hist. Wales, 87.

† Id. ibid.

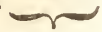
‡ Id. p. 91.

|| Id. p. 979. Simeon Danelm. R. Hoveden. Annal.

§ See p. 150.

King Edward, to whom the Welsh had yielded the nomination of their Prince, appointed Blethyn and Rywalhan, the sons of the Princess Angharat, and uterine brothers to Gryffyth, to be governors or princes of North Wales; while Meredyth ap Owen ap Edwin was, by the same authority, appointed Prince of South Wales; and these three were Princes of Wales when William Duke of Normandy landed with his army in England, A. D. 1066\*.

A. D. 978.  
to 1066.



It cannot be denied by any unprejudiced friend of truth, that the history of Scotland, in this period, is very dark and doubtful;—that many of the narratives of its modern writers are not supported by sufficient evidence, and will hardly bear a critical investigation. This darkness and uncertainty is owing to various causes; but chiefly to the loss of records, chronicles, and other historical monuments in the long and cruel wars between the Scotch and English in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and to the too hasty destruction of monasteries, and their libraries, at the Reformation †. A few fragments, which bear the marks of genuine antiquity, have escaped the general wreck, and yield a little light, which becomes gradually more clear as we approach the conclusion of this period ‡.

History of  
Scotland.

Though Kenneth II. at his death, A. D. 994, Constantine. left a son named *Malcolm*, Prince of Cumberland, he was succeeded in the throne of Scotland by

\* Powel's Hist. p. 103.  
p. 552—586.

† See Innes's Critical Essays,  
‡ Id. in Append.

A. D. 978.  
to 1066.

Constantine, the son of Culen, his immediate predecessor, according to the frequent custom of those times \*. This was the occasion of a civil war between Malcolm and Constantine; in the course of which the latter was slain in a battle which was fought at Cramond, A. D. 996 †.

Grime.

But Malcolm, who was not present in this battle, did not reap any advantage from this victory. For Grime, the son of the late King Duff, collecting the scattered remains of Constantine's army, hastened to Scone, and was there advanced to the throne by his followers. Malcolm, who was then in Cumberland, was much provoked at this second exclusion from his father's throne, and prosecuted the war with so much fury, that the unhappy country was threatened with destruction. To prevent this, Fothad, a pious and much respected Bishop, interposed, and laboured to bring about a peace; which he at length accomplished on these terms: "That  
" Grime should enjoy the kingdom for his life;  
" and that Malcolm should succeed him; and  
" that from thenceforward, the rule of succession  
" established by the late King Kenneth, viz. that  
" a father should be succeeded by his son, rather  
" than by his nephew, should be inviolably  
" observed ‡." After this peace had continued about eight years, the war was rekindled; and Grime being mortally wounded in a battle on

\* Fordun, l. 4. c. 34. Chron. Mailros. A. D. 994.

† Id. ibid. Buchan. l. 6.

‡ Id. ibid.

Ascension-day, A. D. 1004, died the day after, A. D. 978. to 1066. and was succeeded by Malcolm, with the consent of all parties\*.

Malcolm II. while he was Prince of Cumberland, never would consent to pay the ignominious tax of Danegelt, which involved him in continual quarrels with the Danes. They even pursued him into his new dominions, after his accession to the throne of Scotland; but were defeated by an army commanded by his grandson Duncan. Provoked at this defeat, they infested the coasts of Scotland for some years with frequent descents, fought several battles with various success, and at length gained some footing in the countries of Moray and Buchan; but were soon after forced to evacuate these countries, with a promise never to return †. After the departure of these unwelcome guests, Scotland enjoyed a profound peace for about twenty years: a thing not very common in those turbulent unsettled times.

King Malcolm II. if we may believe some Fabulous story. historians, was a prince of the most unbounded liberality, and gave away all the crown-lands to his nobility as a reward for their bravery against the Danes; reserving no property to himself and his successors but the Mute-hill of Scone ‡. But this is both incredible in itself, and contradicted by the subsequent narrations of these very

\* Buchan. l. 6. Fordun, l. 4. c. 40.

† Boeth. l. 2. Buchan. l. 6.

‡ See Maitland's Hist. Scotl. vol. 1. p. 319. Fordun, l. 4. c. 43.

A. D. 978. writers, who tell us of bishopricks erected, mo-  
 to 1066. nasteries built, and endowed with many lands,  
 by this King (after he is supposed to have de-  
 nuded himself of all his possessions), and by his  
 immediate successors. Malcolm was surprised  
 and slain by some conspirators in the castle of  
 Glamis, A. D. 1034, in the eightieth year of his  
 life, and the thirtieth of his reign\*.

Duncan. Duncan Prince of Cumberland, son to Beatrix,  
 the eldest daughter of King Malcolm, and Crynyn  
 Abthane of the isles, succeeded his grandfather  
 in the throne of Scotland. The beginning of  
 this prince's reign was disturbed by an insurrec-  
 tion, raised chiefly by one Macdowal, a powerful  
 chieftain in the western isles, assisted by many  
 adventurers from Ireland, and the neighbouring  
 coasts of Scotland, where they committed great  
 ravages. But these insurgents were defeated,  
 and almost all cut in pieces, by Bancho thane  
 of Lochaber, and Macbeth the King's cousin,  
 son of Doaca, the late King Malcolm's youngest  
 daughter, and Finele thane of Angus †. Soon  
 after the suppression of this insurrection, Swein  
 King of Norway invaded Scotland with a great  
 fleet and army, and defeated Duncan in a bloody  
 battle near Culross, who retired with the remains  
 of his army to Perth; which was immediately  
 invested by the victors. The Scots being hard  
 pressed, proposed an accommodation; and while  
 the conditions of it were negotiating, sent a pre-

\* Fordun, l. 4. c. 41.

† Buchanan, l. 7.



sent of provisions, and great quantities of liquors, to the king of Norway and his army. This proved to them, as it was intended, a fatal present; for drinking plentifully, according to their custom, they were not only intoxicated, but thrown into a profound sleep, by the somniferous quality of the liquor, in which nightshade had been infused. When the Norwegians were in this condition, the Scots sallied out, cut the greatest part of them in pieces; and King Swein being carried to his ships in a state of insensibility by some of his attendants, was preserved with great difficulty\*. It must, however, be confessed that Fordun, the most ancient Scotch historian, makes no mention, either of the above rebellion or invasion; but expressly affirms, that Scotland enjoyed a profound peace, both from foreign and domestic enemies, during the whole reign of King Duncan †. However this may be, it is universally acknowledged that Duncan was a just and good prince, but of too mild and gentle a spirit for the times in which he lived. This encouraged his bold ambitious cousin Macbeth to form a plot for depriving him of his crown and life; which he executed at Inverness, A. D. 1040, and was immediately after crowned king of Scotland by his followers, to the exclusion of Malcolm Canmore, Prince of Cumberland, and Donald Bane, the two sons of the murdered king ‡.

A. D. 970.  
to 1066.

\* Boet. l. 2. Buchan. l. 7.

† Fordun, l. 4. c. 44.

‡ Id. c. 44. 45. Boet. l. 12. Buch. l. 7.

A. D. 978.  
to 1066.

Macbeth.

These two young princes, having heard of their father's death, raised some forces to avenge his murder, and assert their own rights; but finding themselves too weak to contend with the usurper, they left the kingdom to preserve their lives. Malcolm retired into his principality of Cumberland, and Donald into the western isles\*. Macbeth being now in the peaceable possession of the throne, endeavoured to secure it by a just and popular administration, protecting his subjects from the lawless violence of robbers, and the oppressions of the nobility. By these means the first ten years of his reign were very happy, being undisturbed, either by intestine commotions or foreign invasions. By degrees, however, Macbeth departed from this wise and just course of government, and degenerated into a suspicious and cruel tyrant. Becoming jealous of Bancho thane of Lochaber, who had been the chief instrument of his elevation to the throne, he invited him with his son Fleance to an entertainment, and appointed certain assassins to kill them both in their return home; by whom Bancho was actually slain, and Fleance made his escape with great difficulty †. Several noblemen, who were secretly in the interest of Malcolm Prince of Cumberland, hearing of the fate of Bancho, abandoned their country, and retired into the territories of that prince, for their own preservation. Macduff thane of

\* Buchan. l. 7.

† Buet. l. 2. Buchan. l. 7.

Fife was one of these fugitives, who retired with <sup>A. D. 978:</sup> so much precipitation, that he left his wife and <sup>to 1066.</sup> children behind him, who were all put to death by Macbeth, and his estate confiscated \*. These exiles, and particularly Macduff, earnestly intreated Malcolm to raise an army, and invade Scotland, in order to vindicate his own right and theirs, and to take vengeance on the tyrant for their common injuries. The Prince, after some hesitation, complied with their intreaties; and having obtained a considerable aid from Edward the Confessor, King of England, commanded by the famous Seward Earl of Northumberland, he entered Scotland at the head of a powerful army, A. D. 1054 †. Macbeth, who was a brave and warlike prince, was not wanting to himself on this occasion; but raising all his forces, encountered the invaders in several actions; in one of which Earl Seward lost his eldest son, a young nobleman of great hopes ‡. By degrees, all the low countries submitted to Malcolm, and Macbeth retired into the Highlands, trusting much to the difficulty of the country, and the strength of his castle of Dunsinnan. Near this place, a decisive battle was fought, A. D. 1057, in which Macbeth was defeated, and slain by the hands of Macduff, and the greatest part of his army cut in pieces ||. A few of Macbeth's

\* Fordun, l. 4. c. 16.

† Id. l. 5. c. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. R. Hoveden. Annal.

‡ Id. ibid. Hen. Hunt. l. 6.

|| Fordun, l. 5. c. 7. Boet. l. 12. Buchan. l. 7.

A. D. 978. most zealous partizans, who escaped from this  
to 1066. battle, despairing of mercy from the conqueror,  
proclaimed Lulach, the son of the late usurper,  
king. But Lulach, who was a weak prince, was  
defeated and slain at Strathbolgie, about four  
months after the battle of Dunsinnan\*. Upon  
this all Scotland submitted with joy to Malcolm,  
who was crowned at Scone, amidst the acclama-  
tions of an infinite multitude of people of all  
ranks. This prince, who was surnamed *Can-  
more*, or *Great Head*, filled the throne of Scot-  
land when William Duke of Normandy landed  
with his army in England, A. D. 1066; and  
therefore the events of his reign fall more pro-  
perly to be related in the first chapter of the  
third book of this work.

\* Fordun, l. 5. c. 8.

THE  
HISTORY  
OF  
GREAT BRITAIN.

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BOOK II.

CHAP. II.

THE HISTORY OF RELIGION IN BRITAIN, FROM THE ARRIVAL OF THE SAXONS, A. D. 449, TO THE LANDING OF WILLIAM DUKE OF NORMANDY, A. D. 1066.

THE arrival of the Saxons in Britain was as fatal to the sacred as to the secular interests of those who invited them ; and it brought about as great a revolution in the religious as in the civil state of this island. For the Saxons, who came over under Hengist and Horsa, and those who followed them at different times, and under different leaders, being all Heathens and idolaters, extirpated the Christian religion, with its professors, wherever their arms prevailed, and introduced their own absurd and impious superstitions in its place. At length, however, these

Plan of this chapter.

Pagan invaders were by degrees converted to Christianity, and from thenceforward joined with the other inhabitants of this island in the profession of that holy religion. In order, therefore, to give our readers a distinct view of the state of religion in Britain during this long period, it will be necessary to lay before them,—1. A very brief delineation of the religion of the Anglo-Saxons while they continued Heathens, and of the state of the British churches in those unhappy times;—2. An account of the conversion of the several states of the heptarchy to the Christian religion;—and, 3. The church history of all the nations of Britain, from the conversion of the Saxons to the landing of the Normans.

## SECTION I.

*The history and delineation of the Religion of the Heathen Saxons, from their arrival in Britain, A. D. 449, to the coming of Austin for their conversion, A. D. 596, with a brief account of the state of the Christian churches in that period.*

Cent. V.

Plan of this section.

As the Anglo-Saxons, who settled in Britain in the fifth and sixth centuries, came from the north-west corner of Germany, contiguous to Denmark, we have reason to believe that their religion was the same, or very nearly the same, with that of the Pagan Danes. In delineating

the Pagan religion of the Anglo-Saxons and Danes, we shall give a very brief account of its priests, who taught its principles, and performed its sacred rites; of the religious principles which they taught; of the deities whom they worshipped; of the various acts of worship which they paid to these deities, with their times, places, and other circumstances. This was the order observed in describing the Druidism of the ancient Britons\*; and there is no reason to deviate from it on this occasion.

It must be confessed, that it is impossible to give so satisfactory an account of the Saxon and Danish priests as we did of the British Druids; because those priests were almost quite unknown to the Greek and Roman writers. Julius Cæsar positively affirms, “That the Germans had no Druids to preside over the rites of their religion †.” By this he cannot mean that the Germans had no priests, but only that their priests were not called Druids, and were not in all respects the same with those of the Gauls and Britons. This assertion of Cæsar hath indeed been called in question by several modern authors; but the positive testimony of such a writer as Cæsar, who had so good an opportunity of knowing the truth of what he testified, is more to be regarded than the vague conjectures of a thousand moderns ‡. Though Tacitus frequently

\* See vol. I. p. 135.

† Cæsar, de Bel. Gal. l. 6.

‡ Flus Shædus, p. 254. Frikius, p. 44. Keyser, p. 378.

Cent. V. mentions the priests of the ancient Germans, he never calls them Druids, as he doth those of the ancient Britons; and Cluverius, one of the most learned of the German antiquaries, confesseth, that he had not been able to discover the name of those priests\*. The conjectures of the two learned authors mentioned below, concerning this matter, are not supported by sufficient evidence †.

Their hierarchy.

We know not, with any certainty, what were the different degrees and orders in the hierarchy of the Saxon and Danish priests, or whether, like the Druids, they were divided into several classes, which performed distinct parts in their religious rites. In a celebrated temple of Odin, or Wodin, the chief deity of both these nations, it is said, there were twelve Drottes of superior dignity, who presided over all the affairs of religion, and governed all the other priests ‡. There was one who bore the name, and exercised the office, of the chief priest in the kingdom of Northumberland, and probably in each of the other kingdoms of the heptarchy ||.

\* Tacit. Annal. l. 4. c. 13. Cluver. German. Antiq. p. 166.

† Mr Mallet, in his Introduction to the history of Denmark, c. 4. conjectures, that the Heathen priests among the Danes were called *Drottes*, and that there is some affinity between *Drottes* and *Druids*. But the etymologies of these two words are totally different. Dr Macpherson, [Dissertat. 19. thinks that *Coiffi* was the name of the priests among the Heathen Saxons; but it seems rather to be the proper name of a particular person.

‡ Mallet, Introduc. Hist. Denmark, c. 7. Bedæ Hist. Eccles. l. 2. c. 13.

|| Mallet, *ibid.* c. 7.



The priesthood among the Danes and Saxons, Cent. V.  
 as among many other ancient nations, was confined to certain families, and descended from father to son \*. The heathen Danes and Saxons had also priestesses, who officiated in the temples of their female deities; and Frigga, their chief goddess, was served by kings' daughters, and ladies of the highest ranks †.

The Germans, as we are assured by Cæsar, Their power and honours.  
 were not such bigots as the Gauls and Britons, but rather a little lukewarm in religious matters; and, in consequence of this, their priests did not enjoy so many honours, nor accumulate so much wealth, as the Druids ‡. We hear nothing of the Danish or Saxon priests acting the part of legislators and supreme judges among these haughty nations, obliging the greatest kings, and most powerful states, to submit to their decisions. The chief-priest of the Northumbrians complained bitterly that he had reaped very little honour or advantage from all his devotions to the gods; which made him suspect, that the gods whom he worshipped had no power to reward their votaries. “There is not one of your subjects,” said this high-priest to King Edwin, “who hath served the gods with so much devotion as I have done; and yet there are many of them who have received more ample rewards and greater honours, and have

\* Mallet, Introd. Hist. Denmark, c. 7.

† Cæsar, de Bel. Gal. l. 6.

‡ Id. *ibid.*

Cent. V.

“ prospered much better in all their affairs. If  
 “ these gods had any power, would they not  
 “ exert it in my favour, who have worshipped  
 “ them with so much zeal\*?” Tacitus indeed  
 acquaints us, that certain priests of the god of  
 war attended the armies of the ancient Ger-  
 mans, and flogged the soldiers when they com-  
 mitted any crime †. But this was certainly no  
 very honourable, and probably no very lucrative  
 office. The Danish and Saxon priests were not  
 only exempted from war, but even prohibited  
 to appear in arms, or so much as to mount a  
 horse ‡. But this must be considered as a mark  
 of disrespect rather than of honour, as riding and  
 wearing arms were the most honourable badges  
 of distinction among those warlike nations.  
 Their priestesses enjoyed much greater authori-  
 ty and higher honours among the ancient Ger-  
 mans, and their posterity in this island, than  
 their priests. Some of these consecrated females  
 were consulted as infallible oracles, and almost  
 worshipped as divinities ||; but this was as much  
 owing to their gallantry, and the high opinion  
 they entertained of the fair sex in general, as to  
 their devotion.

Their doc-  
 trines better  
 known than  
 those of the  
 Danes.

The religious principles of the ancient Ger-  
 mans, Danes, and other northern nations, are  
 said to have been originally very pure and

\* Bedæ Hist. Eccles. i. 2. c. 13.

† Tacit. de Morib. German. c. 7.

‡ Bedæ Hist. Eccles. i. 2. c. 13.

|| Cluver. German. Antiq. p. 165.

rational; but, like those of other heathen nations, were gradually corrupted by the invention of many absurd and extravagant fables. These principles, however, are better known than those of many other nations of antiquity; because their priests did not affect that mysterious secrecy which was observed by the Druids and other ancient priests: and a very curious system of their fabulous theology, called the *Edda*, hath lately been presented to the public in the English language\*. To this system we must refer such of our readers as are not satisfied with the following very brief abstract of their religious principles.

Cent. V.


The ancient Germans, Danes, and other northern nations, were not unacquainted with the great doctrine of one Supreme Deity; “the author of every thing that existeth; the eternal, the ancient, the living and awful being; the searcher into concealed things; the being that never changeth; who liveth and governeth during the ages, directeth every thing which is high, and every thing which is low †.” Of this glorious Being, they esteemed it impious to make any visible representation, or to imagine it possible that he could be confined within the walls of temples ‡. But these great truths had been in some measure lost and corrupted by the introduction of a multiplicity of gods and

Their religious principles.

\* See Northern Antiquities, vol. 2.

† Mallet, Introd. Hist. Den. c. 5.

‡ Tacit. de Mor. German. c. 9.

Cent. V.  images, before the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons and Danes in England, as will by and by appear. The Saxon and Danish priests believed and taught the immortality of the human soul, and a state of rewards and punishments after death; rejecting the Druidical doctrine of the transmigration of souls as an absurd fiction\*. The place of rewards they call *Valhalla*, where the heroes spent the day in martial sports, and the night in feasting on the flesh of the boar scrimner, and drinking large draughts of beer or mead out of the skulls of their enemies whom they had slain in battle, presented to them by beautiful young virgins, who waited upon them at table †. The place of punishment they called *Niflheim*, or, *The Abode of Evil*, where Hela dwelt; whose palace was *Anguish*, her table *Famine*, her waiters *Expectation* and *Delay*, the threshold of her door *Precipice*, her bed *Leanness*, and her looks struck *terror* into all beholders ‡. In the former of those places, all brave and good men, and in the latter, all cowards and bad men, were to reside to the end of this world, when the heavens and the earth, and even the gods themselves, were to be consumed by fire ||. After this general conflagration, a new and more glorious world was to arise out of the ashes of the former; the heroes, with all good and just men, were to be admitted into

\* Mallet Introd. c. 6. Keyser Antiq. Septent. p. 117.

† Id. *ibid.*

‡ Id. *ibid.*

|| Edda Island, fable 23.

Gimle, a palace built of shining gold, far more beautiful than Valhalla; and cowards, assassins, false swearers, and adulterers, were to be confined in Nastrande, a palace built of the carcasses of serpents, far more dismal than Niflheim\*. The moral precepts which were most inculcated by the Saxon and Danish priests, were these three,—to worship the gods,—to do no wrong,—and, to fight bravely in battle †. Their knowledge in morality, however, was not confined to these three heads, but they occasionally recommended many other virtues; and it will not be easy to find, among compositions merely human, a more beautiful collection of prudential and moral maxims than in the *Hovamaal*, or sublime discourse, ascribed to Odin, the chief deity of the heathen Danes and Saxons ‡.

Cent. V.



Odin is believed to have been the name of the one true God among the first colonies who came from the East, and peopled Germany and Scandinavia, and among their posterity for several ages ||. But at length a mighty conqueror, the leader of a new army of adventurers from the East, over-run the north of Europe, erected a great empire, assumed the name of *Odin*, and claimed the honours which had been formerly paid to that deity §. From thenceforward this

Their gods.

Odin.

\* Mallet, c. 5.

† Keysler Antiq. Septent. p. 124. &amp;c.

‡ See Northern Antiquities, v. 2. p. 206.

|| Cluver. Ger. Antiq. p. 183. Mallet, Introduct. c. 6.

§ Id. *ibid.*

Cent. V.

deified mortal, under the name of *Odin* or *Wodin*, became the chief object of the idolatrous worship of the Saxons and Danes in this island, as well as of many other nations. Having been a mighty and successful warrior, he was believed to be the god of war, who gave victory, and revived courage in the conflict \*. Having civilized, in some measure, the countries which he conquered, and introduced arts formerly unknown, he was also worshipped as the god of arts and artists. In a word, to this Odin his deluded worshippers impiously ascribed all the attributes which belong only to the true God: to him they built magnificent temples, offered many sacrifices, and consecrated the fourth day of the week, which is still called by his name in England, and in all the other countries where he was formerly worshipped †. Notwithstanding all this, the founders of all the kingdoms of the Anglo-Saxon heptarchy pretended to be descended from Wodin, and some of them at the distance only of a few generations ‡.

The goddess Frea.


Next to Odin, *Frea*, or *Frigga*, his wife, was the most revered divinity among the Heathen Saxons, Danes, and other northern nations. As Odin was believed to be the father, *Frea* was esteemed the mother of all the other gods ||. In the most ancient times *Frea* was the same

\* Edda Island, fable 10.

† Id. ib.

‡ Chron. Saxon. p. 13. 15. 19. 20. 25. 69. 77.

|| Edda, fable 10.

with the goddess Herthus, or Earth, who was so devoutly worshipped by the Angli and other German nations\*. But when Odin, the conqueror of the north, usurped the honours due only to the true Odin, his wife Frea usurped those which had been formerly paid to mother Earth. She was worshipped as the goddess of love and pleasure, who bestowed on her votaries a variety of delights, particularly happy marriages and easy child-births †. To Frea the sixth day of the week was consecrated, which still bears her name. Cent. V. 

Thor, the eldest and bravest of the sons of Odin and Frea, was, after his parents, the greatest god of the Saxons and Danes while they continued Heathens. They believed, that Thor reigned over all the ærial regions, which composed his immense palace, consisting of five hundred and forty halls; that he launched the thunder, pointed the lightning, and directed the meteors, winds, and storms ‡. To him they addressed their prayers for favourable winds, refreshing rains, and fruitful seasons; and to him the fifth day of the week, which still bears his name, was consecrated. Thor.

Besides these three greatest divinities, the Saxons and Danes had a prodigious number of inferior gods and goddesses, to whom they paid some kind of religious homage. Of these it Inferior deities.

\* Tacit. de Morib. German. c. 40.

† Mallet, Introd. c. 6.

‡ Edda, fable 11.

Cent. V.

will be sufficient to name a few. Balder, the second son of Odin and Frea, was the god of light; Niord, the god of waters; Tyr, the god of champions; Brage, the god of orators and poets; and Heimdal was the door-keeper of the gods, and the guardian of the rainbow\*. A malevolent, cunning, and powerful spirit, named *Loke*, was by some esteemed a god, by others an enemy both to gods and men, by all an object of many superstitious terrors †. Frea and Odin had eleven daughters, who were all goddesses, viz. Eira, the goddess of medicine; Gefione, of virginity; Fulla, of dress; Freya, of true love; Lofna, of reconciliation; Vara, of vows; Snotra, of good manners; Gna, the messenger of Frea, &c. ‡ In a word, all the nations of the north, and amongst others the Danes and Saxons, believed that the sun, moon, stars, air, earth, sea, rivers, lakes, woods, mountains, &c. were inhabited and ruled by certain genii, who were capable of doing much good or much hurt to mankind; and on that account were entitled to some degree of veneration ||. Such were the vain imaginary deities our unhappy ancestors, in the times of darkness, worshipped. It now only remains to inquire, what were the various acts, and other circumstances, of that worship.

\* Mallet, Introd. c. 6.

† Id. *ibid.*† Id. *ibid.*

|| Id. c. 5.



The acts of worship paid to their gods by the Heathen Danes and Saxons were these four; songs of praise and thanksgiving,—prayers and supplication,—offerings and sacrifices,—incantations, and rites of divination; in order to express their admiration of their perfections, and gratitude for their benefits,—to obtain those blessings from them which they desired;—to appease their displeasure, and gain their love,—and to penetrate into their designs.

Cent. V.

Rites of  
worship.

Mankind have been always apt to form their ideas of the dispositions of the deities whom they worshipped, from those which they felt in their own bosoms. Conscious that nothing was more soothing to themselves than the voice of praise, expressions of gratitude and admiration; these they constantly offered to the objects of their worship. The songs of praise composed in honour of Odin, and sung at the solemnities of his worship, were almost innumerable; and in those songs, no fewer than one hundred and twenty-six honourable epithets were bestowed on that god\*. All the other gods and goddesses had many songs composed and sung in their praise, with a number of epithets, in proportion to the powers ascribed to them, and the degrees of veneration in which they were held by their worshippers †.

Songs of  
praise.

\* Northern Antiquities, v. 2. p. 189.

† Id. ibid. Tacit. de Morib. German. c. 2.

Cent. V.  
 Prayers.

Prayers constituted a very considerable part of the worship which the Pagan Danes and Saxons paid to their divinities; and it was one of the chief functions of their priests, to instruct them in the powers and properties of their several gods and goddesses, and in the prayers which they were to make to them according to their respective powers. To Odin they were directed to pray for victory in battle; to Frigga, for success in love and courtship; to Thor, to avert his thunderbolts from themselves, and point them against their enemies; to Niord, for prosperous voyages and success in fishing; to Freya, for favourable seasons and plentiful crops, &c. \* They boasted much of their exact knowledge of the attributes and functions of their several gods, and of the prayers that were to be put up to each of them; and to this they ascribed their prosperity and success in their undertakings †. But when they did not obtain a favourable answer to their prayers, they were not afraid to testify their displeasure against the gods, by shooting their arrows and throwing their darts towards heaven ‡.

Sacrifices.

The Danes and Saxons were not sparing of their offerings and sacrifices, to gain the favour and appease the anger of their gods; and it was another branch of the duty of their priests to

\* Edda Island, Fable 12. 13.

† Id. ibid.

‡ Olai Magni Hist. 1. 3. c.9.

Cent. V.


instruct them what kind of oblations were most acceptable to their several deities. To Odin they taught the people to sacrifice horses, dogs, and falcons, and on some occasions cocks, and a fat bull, being all brave and fierce animals; to Frigga the largest hogs; and to Thor fat oxen and horses\*. These victims were slain before the altar, their blood received into a vessel prepared for that purpose, and some part of it sprinkled on the assembly: the intrails were inspected by the priests, to discover the will of the gods from their appearances: some of the flesh was burnt on the altar, and on the rest the priests and people feasted †. At these feasts, their favourite liquors, beer and ale, were not forgotten; of which they drank deep and frequent draughts to the honour of their gods, putting up some wish or prayer at every draught. In times of famine, or other national calamities, or at the eve of some dangerous war, the Danes and Saxons, as well as other Heathen nations, offered human sacrifices to their gods, believing them to be more acceptable than any other. These unhappy victims were commonly chosen from among criminals, captives, or slaves; but on some pressing occasions, persons of the highest dignity were not spared ‡.

No nations in the world were more addicted to divination, or made greater efforts to pene-

\* Mallet. Introd. c. 7.

‡ Id. ibid.

† Id. ibid.

Cent. V. trate into futurity, and discover the counsels of heaven, than the ancient Danes and Saxons. Besides those arts of divination practised by their priests, in common with those of other nations, they had many others peculiar to themselves, which may be seen in the authors quoted below\*. They gave great credit to the predictions of certain old women, who pretended to consult the dead, to converse with familiar spirits, and to have many other ways of discovering the will of the gods, and the issue of important undertakings. Some of these women became so famous for their responses, that they were consulted by the greatest states as infallible oracles, and even revered as goddesses, who, if they had lived a few ages later, would have been burnt for witches †.

Their  
temples.

In very ancient times, the Saxons, Danes, and other northern nations, had no covered temples, but worshipped their gods in sacred groves and circles of rude stones. By degrees, however, they began to build temples, in imitation of other nations, and at length erected some of incredible grandeur and magnificence ‡. In each of these temples there was a chapel, which was esteemed the most holy place, where the images

\* Tacit. de Morib. German. c. 9. 10. Cluver. Antiq. Ger. l. 1. c. 36. Keysler Antiq. Septent. p. 323. &c. Northern Antiquities, vol. 1. c. 7.

† Tacit. de Morib. Ger. c. 8. Casar. Bel. Gal. l. 1. c. 50. Keysler, p. 59.

‡ Olai Magni Hist. l. 3. c. 6.

Cent. V.



of the gods were set upon a kind of altar; before which stood another altar, plated with iron, for the holy fire, which burnt perpetually; and near it a vase for receiving the blood of the victims, and a brush for sprinkling it upon the people\*.

Images.

About the same time that the Danes, Saxons, and other northern nations began to build temples, they began also to set up the statues or images of their gods in these temples. The image of Odin was crowned, and completely armed, with a drawn sword in his right hand; that of Frigga was an hermaphrodite, a bow in one hand, and a sword in the other; that of Thor was crowned with stars, and armed with a ponderous club; and those of the other gods had emblems suited to their respective attributes †. There were many such temples adorned with idols in different parts of England, while the Anglo-Saxons continued heathens, but they were all destroyed at their conversion to Christianity ‡.

Festivals.

Though the sacred fire was kept perpetually burning, and sacrifices were frequently, perhaps daily, offered in the temples of the Danes and Saxons; yet there were certain great festivals that were celebrated with peculiar solemnity. One of the greatest of these festivals was cele-

\* Mallet, vol. 1. c. 7.

† Mallet, *Introduct.* c. 7. *Verstegan's Restitution*, &c. c. 3.

‡ *Bede Hist. Eccl.* l. 2. c. 13.

Cent. V. } brated at the winter solstice, which was the Mother Night, both on account of this festival, and of its being the beginning of the Anglo-Saxon year. This feast was also called *Iule*, a name by which the Christian festival of Christmas, observed about the same season of the year, is still known in many parts of Scotland, and in some parts of England. The heathen Iule was celebrated in honour of the God Thor, not only with sacrifices, but with feasting, drinking, dancing, and every possible expression of mirth and joy \*. The second great festival was kept during the first quarter of the second moon of the year, in honour of the goddess Frea, much in the same manner with the former \*. The third and greatest festival was celebrated in honour of Odin, in the beginning of the spring, before they set out on their warlike expeditions, in order to obtain victory from that god of battles. Besides these three great festivals, in honour of their three greatest gods, they kept many others, at different seasons, in honour of their inferior deities †.

Differences between the Paganism of the Saxons and Danes, and that of the ancient Britons.

Such was the vain, absurd, and cruel superstition which reigned in all those parts of England possessed by the Saxons and Danes before their conversion to Christianity. The intelligent reader must observe, that though it bore a general resemblance in many particulars to the Druidism of the ancient Britons, it differed from it greatly

\* Mallet, c. 7.

† Id. *ibid.*

‡ Id. *ibid.*

in not a few respects. The Saxon and Danish priests were neither held in such profound veneration, nor enjoyed so much power, especially in civil affairs, as the Druids: their speculative opinions in many things were very different; as were also the objects, the seasons, and ceremonies, of their worship.

In the period between the arrival and the conversion of the Saxons, the Christian religion was professed by all the other nations of Britain, except the northern Picts, among whom it was also introduced by the famous St. Columba, A. D. 565 \*. It must, however, be confessed, that the church-history of the Britons, Scots, and Picts, is very imperfect in this period; either because their clergy in those calamitous times had no leisure to write memoirs of their transactions, or because those memoirs have been lost.

After the departure of Germanus, the British churches were governed with great prudence, and preserved from the contagion of heresy, by some of his disciples. Among these, Dubritius and Iltutus were most distinguished for their learning, as well as for their zeal and piety. Dubritius was first Bishop of Landaff, and afterwards Archbishop of Caerleon; and had the chief direction of two schools for the education of young persons for the service of the church †. Iltutus presided over a famous seminary of learn-

Cent. v.

Church history of the Britons, Scots, and Picts, imperfect.

Church history of the Britons.

\* Bed. Hist. Eccles. l. 3. c. 4.

† Usser. Primord. Brit. Eccles. p. 445.

Cent. V. ing, at a place which, from him, is still called *Lantuet*, or *the Church of Illut*, in Glamorgan-shire \*. In these academies many excellent persons, who arrived at the highest dignities in the church, both at home and abroad, received their education; as Samson Archbishop of Dol in Bretagne; St. Magloire, his successor in that see; Maclovius Bishop of St. Malo; Daniel Bishop of Bangor; St. Theleau Bishop of Landaff; St. David, Bishop of Menevia; and many others †. The British church, therefore, amidst all the calamities of this period, flourished considerably both in piety and learning, under the ministry of Illutus, Dubritius, their pupils and successors. It cannot be denied, indeed, that Gildas, who flourished in those times, hath left a very dismal picture of the ignorance and irreligion of the British clergy. But Gildas was evidently a man of a querulous and gloomy temper, who painted every thing in the most unfavourable colours; and many of the clergy were probably far inferior to the eminent persons named above in sanctity or knowledge ‡.

British  
Councils.

Several British synods were assembled in this period; but we know very little with certainty of their transactions. Some of these seem to have been mixed assemblies of the most considerable men both in church and state, for regulating civil as well as ecclesiastical affairs ||.

\* Leland. Collect. v. 2. p. 42.

† Godwin de præsul. Angliæ, p. 600. 61.

|| Spelman. concil. vol. 1. p. 60. 617.

‡ Gild. Epist.



In one of these mixed assemblies, A. D. 465, <sup>Cent. V.</sup> King Vortigern is said to have been dethroned, and Ambrosius chosen King; in another, A. D. 512, Dubritius was translated from Landaff to Caerleon, and St. Theleau appointed Bishop of Landaff in his room; and in a third, A. D. 516, the famous King Arthur was crowned, and his uncle St. David appointed Archbishop of Caerleon; who soon after removed the seat of his see to Menevia, which was afterwards, from him, called *St. David's*\*. This celebrated Archbishop held an ecclesiastical synod of all the British clergy, A. D. 519, for extirpating the remains, and preventing the revival, of the Pelagian heresy. Oudocius Bishop of Landaff held three provincial synods of the clergy of his diocese, for inflicting the censures of the church against certain powerful delinquents. But the transactions of those synods reflect very little honour on the British princes or clergy concerned in them; as they shew the former to have been guilty of the most horrid acts of perfidy and cruelty, and the latter to have been ready enough to accept of liberal donations to the church, as the most solid evidences of their repentance †.


The church-history of the Scots and Picts, in this period, is even more imperfect than that of the Britons. A few years before the arrival of the Saxons, Palladius, a Greek by birth, is said to have been ordained a Bishop by Celestine

Church-history of the Scots and Picts.

\* Spelman. Concil. vol. 1, p. 60. 61.

† Id. *ibid.*

Cent. V.


 Bishop of Rome, and sent to the Scots who believed in Christ\*. One chief design of this mission seems to have been, to preserve the Christian Scots from the infection of the Pelagian heresy, which was so zealously propagated by their countryman Celestius. It is not certainly known how long Palladius continued among the Scots, nor who succeeded him in the direction of their ecclesiastical affairs; though it is unquestionable that there must have been a considerable interval between his departure or death, and the arrival of the famous St. Columba from Ireland, about the middle of the sixth century †. This extraordinary person soon gained so great an ascendant, both over princes and people, that he became a kind of dictator among the Scots and Picts, in civil as well as religious matters, for more than thirty years ‡. Having obtained a grant of the small island Hii, one of the Ebudæ, he there built a monastery, which was long considered as the mother and queen of all the monasteries in Scotland; and its abbots, though only presbyters, were respected as the chief ecclesiastical persons among the Scots, out of regard to its founder St. Columba, who was a presbyter, and not a bishop ||. In this monastery many excellent persons received their education, and were sent from thence, not only to instruct the Scots and Picts, but even to convert the Saxons, as we shall see in the next section.

\* Bed. Hist. Eccles. l. 1. c. 13.

† Id. l. 3. c. 4.

‡ Adaman. Vita St. Columb.

|| Bed. Hist. Eccles. l. 3. c. 4.

We know of no very remarkable change that happened in the doctrine, discipline, or worship of the British churches, between the arrival and conversion of the Saxons; those of the south still adhering to the Gallic ritual, which had been introduced among them by St. Germanus Bishop of Auxere, and those of the north to that which had been introduced by their first instructors.

Cent. V.

## SECTION II.

*The history of Religion in Great Britain, from the arrival of Austin, A. D. 596, to A. D. 700.*

THE SAXONS, at their coming into Britain, were not only Pagans, but they were animated with the most violent hatred against Christianity. This appeared by their murdering the Christian clergy without mercy, and destroying their places of worship, whenever they fell into their hands \*. Their enmity against the Christian religion was kept alive, and even more inflamed, by their long and bloody contests with the Britons, who were Christians. But when the fierceness of these contests abated, and they began to make treaties of peace, and form alliances with the ancient inhabitants of the country, and with the other Christians, their animosity against the Christian religion gradually diminished; they

Cent. VI.

Circumstances which paved the way for the introduction of Christianity.

\* Bed. Hist. Eccles. l. 1. c. 15.

Cent. VI. became better acquainted with it, and looked upon it with a more favourable eye. The marriage of Ethelbert King of Kent, A. D. 570, with BIRTHA, daughter of Cherebert King of France, a Christian princess of great virtue and merit, contributed not a little to abate the prejudices of that prince and his subjects against her religion; for the free exercise of which she had made stipulations in the marriage-contract\*. For this purpose, she was allowed the use of a small church without the walls of Canterbury, where Luidhart, a French bishop, who came over in her retinue, with other clergymen, publicly performed all the rites of the Christian worship †. By these, and other means, many of the Anglo-Saxons, particularly in the kingdom of Kent, were brought to entertain so favourable an opinion of the Christian religion, that they were very desirous of being better instructed in its principles ‡.

Arrival and success of Austin and his companions.

When the Anglo-Saxons were thus disposed to give the gospel a fair hearing, Providence provided them with instructors. St. Gregory (who was advanced to the papal chair, A. D. 590), prompted by his zeal for religion, and having his compassion excited by the sight of some beautiful English youths exposed to sale in the streets of Rome, resolved to attempt the conversion of their countrymen, who, he was told, were still

\* Bed. Hist. Eccles. l. 1. c. 25.

‡ Gregor. Epist. l. 5. epist. 58. 59.

† Id. *ibid.*

Heathens\*. With this view, he appointed Cent. VI. Austin, or Augustin, a monk of the convent of St. Andrew's at Rome, with forty other monks, to go into England, and endeavour to bring the people of that country to the knowledge and profession of Christianity †. These missionaries accordingly set out on their journey; but before they proceeded far, beginning to reflect on the great distance of the country, the ferocious character of its inhabitants, and their own ignorance of the language of those they were appointed to instruct, they made a stop, and sent back Austin their leader, to represent these difficulties to St. Gregory, and obtain his permission for their return to Rome. But Gregory rejected their request, and sent them by Austin an animating letter, exhorting them to despise all dangers and difficulties, and proceed boldly in their glorious undertaking, for which they would obtain an immortal reward in heaven ‡. By the same messenger, he furnished them with letters of recommendation to the King, Queen, and several bishops of France; who received them kindly, and provided them with all necessaries, particularly with interpreters, who understood the language of the Anglo-Saxons, which was then nearly the same with that of the Franks ||. Thus encouraged and provided, Austin, with his companions, sailed from France, A. D. 596,

\* Bed. Hist. Eccles. l. 1. c. 23. l. 2. c. 1.

‡ Gregor. Epist. l. 4. epist. 57.

|| Id. l. 5. epist. 54. Bed. l. 1. c. 23. 24.

† Id. *ibid.*

Cent. VI.

and landed in the Isle of Thanet ; from whence they immediately dispatched one of their interpreters, to acquaint King Ethelbert with the news and design of their coming. That prince soon after gave them an audience in the open air, and having heard their message, replied, that he could not without further consideration abandon the religion of his ancestors ; but as they had come so far on a friendly errand, he assigned them a place of residence in the city of Canterbury, and allowed them to use their best endeavours to convert his subjects\*. The missionaries having thus obtained the royal licence, entered the city of Canterbury in solemn procession ; carrying before them the picture of Christ and a silver cross, and singing the following hymn : “ We beseech thee, O Lord ! of thy mercy let thy wrath and anger be turned away from this city, and from thy holy place ; for we have sinned. Hallelujah ! ” In this manner they proceeded to the place of their residence, and immediately entered on the labours of their mission, which were crowned with such success, that in a very short time the King, and great multitudes of his subjects, were converted ; of whom Austin baptized no fewer than ten thousand on Christmas day †. Things bearing this favourable aspect, Austin made a journey into France ; and was there, by the Archbishop of

\* Bed. l. i. c. 25.

† Gervas. Act. Pontific. Cant. apud decem script. col. 1632.

Arles, consecrated Archbishop of the English, Cent. VI. hoping that this new dignity would give additional influence to his exhortations\*. About the same time he dispatched two of his companions to Rome, to acquaint St. Gregory with the joyful tidings of the conversion of the English; and with them he sent several questions in writing, to which he desired answers, for the regulation of his future conduct †. Some of these questions are so trifling, and others so indelicate, that it would be very improper to insert a translation of them in this place: they may be found at full length, with St. Gregory's answers, in the authors quoted below ‡.


Gregory received the news of Austin's success Cent. VII. in England with great joy; and resolving to New Mis- neglect nothing in his power to render it still sionaries, greater, he sent back his messengers, and with &c. sent to them Mellitus, Justus, Paulinus, and several England. others, to assist in propagating the knowledge of the gospel among the English. With these new missionaries he sent recommendatory letters to several princes and bishops of France, and to the King and Queen of Kent, with certain prudential admonitions to Austin, a model for the government of the church of England, and a valuable present of books, vestments, sacred utensils, and holy relics ||. One of the advices which Gre-

\* Bed. Hist. l. 1. c. 27.

† Id. ibid.

‡ Bed. Hist. Eccles. l. 1. c. 27. Spelman. Con. tom. 1. p. 95.

|| Bed. Hist. Eccles. l. 1. c. 28—33. Spelman. Con. t. 1. p. 81—105.

Cent. VII.  gory gave to Austin was, not to destroy the Heathen temples of the English, but only to remove the images of their gods, to wash the walls with holy water, to erect altars, and deposit relics in them, and so convert them into Christian churches; not only to save the expence of building new ones, but that the people might be more easily prevailed upon to frequent those places of worship to which they had been accustomed. He directs him further, to accommodate the ceremonies of the Christian worship, as much as possible, to those of the Heathen, that the people might not be much startled at the change; and in particular, he advises him to allow the Christian converts, on certain festivals, to kill and eat a great number of oxen to the glory of God, as they had formerly done to the honour of the devil\*. These admonitions, which were but too well observed, introduced the grossest corruptions into the Christian worship, and shew how much the apostles of the sixth and seventh centuries had departed from the simplicity and sincerity of those of the first.

St. Gregory's model of government for the church of England.

Though Gregory's model for the government of the church of England was never put in execution, the following very brief account of it may not be unacceptable. In a letter to Austin with which he sent him the pall (an ornament peculiar to metropolitans), he directs him to ordain twelve bishops in his own province of

\* Bed. Hist. l. 1. c. 30.



Canterbury ; to send a bishop to York ; and as Cent. VII. soon as the English in the north were converted, to ordain twelve other bishops in those parts as suffragans to the see of York, to whose bishop he would then send the pall. He ordains, that as long as Austin lived he should enjoy the primacy over all the bishops of both provinces, as well as over all the British bishops ; but that after his death the metropolitical see should be removed from Canterbury to London ; and that from thenceforward, the Archbishops of London and York should have precedency, according to the seniority of their consecrations \*. But though these directions might have great influence on Austin and his clergy who had come from Rome, they were so little regarded by the English, and so absolutely opposed by the Britons, that they were never executed.

Austin, who seems to have been naturally vain enough, was much elated by those marks of distinction which he received from Rome, and laboured with great earnestness to establish his metropolitical authority over the British churches. Austin's attempts to subject the British churches to his authority. With this view, he held two councils with the British bishops and clergy ; in which he proposed to them, that if they would acknowledge him for their metropolitan ; conform to the church of Rome in the time of keeping Easter, and the manner of administering baptism ; and join with the Roman clergy in preaching to the English,

\* Bed. l. i. c. 29.

Cent. VII. he would bear with them in other things\*. But the Britons, strongly attached to their own ancient customs, and greatly irritated at the pride of Austin, who did not so much as rise from his seat to receive them at their coming into council, rejected all his proposals; which put this meek apostle into so violent a passion, that he threatened them with the wrath of heaven, and the hostilities of the English †. What influence this good man had in drawing down the wrath of Heaven on the unhappy Britons, it is not easy to determine; but we have good reason to suspect, that he had but too much hand in kindling the flames of war which soon after broke out between them and their ancient enemies the English, and involved them in very great calamities.

Austin  
consecrates  
bishops,  
and dies.

Austin, after he had failed in his attempts of reducing the British churches under his authority, applied himself to enlarge and regulate the church of England. He consecrated Justus to be Bishop of Rochester, Mellitus to be Bishop of the East Saxons, and Laurentius to be his own successor in the see of Canterbury ‡. These consecrations were performed A. D. 604; and Austin died either that year or the year after, leaving the knowledge and profession of Christianity among the English confined within the narrow limits of the little kingdom of Kent ||.

\* Bcd. 1. 2. c. 2. Spel. Con. t. 1. p. 104.

† Id. ibid.

‡ Id. 1. 2. c. 3.

|| Anglia Sacra, t. 1. p. 91.

Laurentius, the successor of Austin, made a new effort to bring the British Christians to adopt the usages of the church of Rome, by writing pastoral letters both to them and to the Scots, earnestly intreating them to conform to the rites of the Roman church, particularly as to the time of keeping Easter\*. But these letters made no impression on those to whom they were addressed.

Cent VII.  
 Laurentius  
 succeeds  
 Austin.

Mellitus was more successful in his endeavours to convert the East-Saxons, who inhabited the countries of Essex and Middlesex, and were under the immediate government of Seber, sister's son to Ethelbert King of Kent, to whom he was tributary. That Prince, by the preaching of Mellitus, and the influence of his royal uncle, was persuaded to embrace the Christian religion; in which he was imitated by so many of his subjects, that a bishop's see was established at London, which was then the capital of that little state †. Mellitus, the first bishop of this see, made a journey to Rome, A. D. 610, to consult with Boniface IV. who then filled the papal chair, about the affairs of the church of England, and was present at a council which was then celebrated in that city; and at his return brought with him the decrees of that council, together with letters from the Pope to Ethelbert King of Kent, and Laurentius Archbishop of Canterbury †.

Mellitus  
 converts  
 the king-  
 dom of  
 Essex.

\* Bed. Hist. Eccles. l. 2. c. 4.

† Id. l. 2. c. 1.

† Id. l. 2. c. 3.

Cent. VII.

Apostasy  
of the  
English,  
and their  
recovery.

Not long after the return of Mellitus from Rome, the infant church of England was involved in very great calamities, and threatened with total ruin. For Ethelbert King of Kent dying February 24. A. D. 616, his son and successor Eadbald married his father's widow, and renounced Christianity, which did not tolerate such incestuous marriages; and his defection occasioned the apostacy of the greatest part of his subjects\*. Seber, King of the East-Saxons, did not long survive his uncle, but dying that same year, was succeeded by his three sons; who having never been Christians, restored the Pagan worship in their dominions, and obliged Mellitus to retire into Kent †.

Here the three Bishops, Laurentius, Justus, and Mellitus, held a consultation concerning the present posture of affairs; and being of opinion, that the cause of Christianity among the English was desperate, they resolved to retire into France, and reserve themselves for better times. In consequence of this resolution, Justus and Mellitus actually departed; but while Laurentius was preparing to follow them, Eadbald King of Kent, struck with remorse for his criminal conduct, repudiated his mother-in-law, returned to the profession of Christianity, and encouraged Laurentius to resume the duties of his office, and invite his brethren to return; who accordingly came back about a year after their departure.

\* Bed. Hist. Eccles. l. 2. c. 5.

† Id. *ibid.*

Justus was restored to the see of Rochester; but Cent. VII. the East-Saxons continuing in their apostacy, Mellitus did not recover his bishopric of London\*. However, Laurentius Archbishop of Canterbury dying A. D. 619, Mellitus was advanced to the archiepiscopal chair; in which he sat about six years, and was succeeded by Justus Bishop of Rochester, A. D. 624 †.


About this time an event happened that paved Conversion of the Northumbrians. the way for the further propagation of the gospel in England. This was the marriage of Edwin King of Northumberland to Edelburga, daughter of Ethelbert King of Kent; who being a Christian princess, had the free exercise of the Christian religion secured to her and her household; and Paulinus being consecrated a bishop by Justus, accompanied her into Northumberland ‡. This prelate was not only allowed to perform the duties of his sacred function in the Queen's family, but to preach the gospel to as many as were willing to hear it. His labours for some time were not very successful; but King Edwin, who was a wise and great prince, having, after long consideration, and many consultations with his council, embraced the Christian religion, his example was followed by Coiffi the High-priest, and many of his nobility, and great multitudes of the common people ||. Paulinus commonly followed the court, which resided sometimes in

\* Bed. Hist. Eccles. l. 2. c. 5.

‡ Bed. l. 2. c. 9.

† Godwin de Præsul. Ang. p. 58.

|| Id. c. 11.

Cent. VII.  Bernicia, and sometimes in Deira, preaching and baptizing his converts in some neighbouring stream or fountain. The crowds of these converts at last became so great, that Paulinus is said to have baptized no fewer than twelve thousand in one day in the river Swale\*. By the influence of Edwin, and the ministry of Paulinus, Carpwald King of the East-Angles, and many of his subjects, particularly in Lincolnshire, were converted †. To reward these mighty services, Edwin erected a bishop's see at York for Paulinus, and even obtained an archbishop's pall for him from Pope Honorius ‡.

Apostacy of  
the Northumbrians.

But when things bore this favourable aspect, the church of Northumberland was almost entirely ruined in a moment, by the deplorable fall of the great King Edwin and his army in battle, A. D. 633 ||. The apostacy of the Northumbrians was so general, and the distractions of their country so great after that fatal event, that Paulinus found himself obliged to abandon his scattered flock, and retire into Kent, where he was appointed Bishop of Rochester.

Honorius,  
Archbishop  
of Canterbury.

Justus, Archbishop of Canterbury, dying A. D. 633, he was succeeded by Honorius, a disciple of St. Gregory, who was consecrated by Paulinus at Lincoln §. This prelate was the first in England who began to divide his diocese into parishes, and fix a residing clergyman in each;

\* Nennius apud xv. script. p. 117.

† Id. c. 17.

|| Id. c. 20.

‡ Bed. l. 2. c. 16.

§ Id. c. 18.

as before his time the clergy resided either in monasteries or bishops' houses, and made occasional journeys into other parts, preaching and administering the sacraments \*.

The churches of Northumberland and East-Anglia did not continue long in a state of desolation; for King Oswald, who had lived many years among the Scots, by whom he was kindly entertained, and instructed in the knowledge of Christianity, having recovered the kingdom of Northumberland, sent into Scotland for Christian clergy to instruct and convert his subjects. Aidan, one of the most pious and learned of these Scotch missionaries, was appointed the first Bishop of Lindisfarne, or Holy-Island; to which place the bishop's seat was removed from York †. By the labours of Aidan, and many other Scotch monks who followed him into England, the Northumbrians were soon restored to the knowledge and profession of Christianity ‡. As the East-Angles had apostatized at the same time, they were restored in the same manner with the Northumbrians. For Sigebert, a prince of their royal family, having lived some time in exile among the Franks, and been by them converted to Christianity, at his restoration to his kingdom, brought with him Felix, a Burgundian priest, who was appointed the first Bishop of the

Cent. VII.

Northumbrians return to Christianity.

\* Godwin, p. 59.

‡ Id. c. 5.

† Ecd. l. 3. c. 3.

Cent. VII. East-Angles, and had his see fixed at a place called *Domnoc* \*.

Kingdom of  
Wessex  
converted.

About the same time that Christianity was thus restored among the Northumbrians and East-Angles, it began to be preached to the West-Saxons by Berinus, a missionary from Rome †. The arrival of Oswald King of Northumberland, at the court of Cynigisel, King of Wessex, A. D. 635, to marry the daughter of that prince, contributed greatly to the success of Berinus: for by his persuasion, Cynigisel not only embraced the Christian religion, but also founded an episcopal see at Dorchester; of which Berinus was the first Bishop ‡.

East Saxons  
return to  
Christianity.

When the East-Saxons had continued about forty years in a state of apostacy, Sigebert their King was persuaded to embrace Christianity by his friend Oswi King of Northumberland; and great multitudes of his subjects were converted by the ministry of Chad, a Northumbrian priest, who was consecrated Bishop of London by Finan Bishop of Lindisfarne ||.


Kingdom of  
Mercia con-  
verted.

Though the middle parts of England, which constituted the powerful kingdom of Mercia, were surrounded by Christian states on all hands, they continued a long time in Pagan darkness. These parts, however, were at length visited by the light of the gospel, about the middle of the

\* Bed. l. 2. c. 15.  
‡ Id. *ibid*.

† Id. c. 7.  
|| Id. l. 2. c. 22.



seventh century, in the following manner\* :— Cent. VII.  
 Piada, the eldest son of Penda King of Mercia,   
 having visited the court of Oswi King of Northumberland in order to marry Alchflida, the daughter of that prince, was there converted to Christianity, with all his followers. At his return home, he carried with him four clergymen, named *Chad*, *Adda*, *Belle*, and *Diurma*, who preached the gospel in Mercia with great success; and the last of these, who was a Scotchman, was consecrated the first Bishop of the Mercians by Bishop Finanus †.

From the above account, it appears that the English in the kingdoms of Kent and Wessex were converted to and instructed in the Christian religion by missionaries from Rome and France; while those of Mercia and Northumberland received the light of the gospel from preachers of the Scotch nation. All these different teachers established the rites and usages of the churches from whence they came, in those which they planted; which gave rise to many controversies between the English churches in the south, and those in the north, about their respective customs; particularly about the time of keeping Easter, and the form of the ecclesiastical tonsure. The churches planted by the Roman missionaries kept Easter on the first Sunday after the fourteenth and before the twenty-second day of the first moon after the vernal

Disputes  
about the  
time of  
keeping  
Easter.

\* Bed. l. 2. c. 21.

† Id. *ibid.*

Cent. VII. equinox; and those planted by the Scotch kept that festival on the first Sunday after the thirteenth and before the twenty-first day of the same moon\*. By this means, when the fourteenth day of that moon happened to be a Sunday, those of the Scotch communion celebrated the feast of Easter on that day; whereas those of the Romish communion did not celebrate theirs till the Sunday after. The Roman clergy in the south of England, animated with the haughty intolerant spirit of the church from whence they came, were not contented with enjoying their own customs in peace, but labour'd with much violence to impose them upon the Britons, Scots, and northern English, who were all abundantly tenacious of their own usages. At length a famous council was summoned by Oswi King of Northumberland, at Whitby in Yorkshire, A. D. 664, to determine this mighty controversy, which occasioned no little confusion in his own family, his Queen and son following the Roman ritual, while he observed the Scotch. The principal champions on the Romish side at this council were, Agelbert Bishop of the West Saxons, with Agatho, James, Romanus, and Wilfred, priests; while Colman Bishop of Lindisfarne, with some of his clergy, managed the argument on the other side. The Scotch orators maintained, That their manner of celebrating Easter was prescribed by St. John the beloved

\* Bed. l. 3. c. 25.

disciple; and the Romanists affirmed, with equal Cent. VII. confidence, that theirs was instituted by St. Peter, the prince of the apostles, and the door-keeper of heaven. Oswi was struck with this last circumstance; and both parties acknowledging that Peter kept the keys of heaven, the King declared that he was determined not to disoblige this celestial porter upon any account, but to observe all his institutions to the utmost of his power, for fear he should turn his back upon him when he came to the gate of heaven. This sagacious declaration was applauded by the whole assembly, and the Roman orators obtained a complete victory; at which Bishop Colman, and many of his clergy, were so much offended, that they left England, and returned into their native country \*. Though venerable Bede censures these Scotch clergy with great severity, for the abominable error into which they had fallen about the time of keeping Easter, he commends them very much for their great learning, piety, and virtue; particularly for their contempt of riches, and their great diligence in their ministerial offices, which made some little atonement for their most pernicious heresy †. After the departure of Colman, one Tuda was chosen Bishop of the Northumbrians; but he dying not long after, Wilfred, who had been preceptor to Alchfred Prince of Northumberland, and the chief speaker on the victorious side at the late

\* Bed. 1. 3. c. 25.

† Id. c. 26.

Cent. VII. council of Whitby, was elected in his room, and sent into France to receive consecration. He was accordingly consecrated by his friend Agilbertus, now Archbishop of Paris; but making too long a stay abroad, his see was filled up in his absence by Ceada, a Scotchman, but of the Roman communion, who was consecrated by Wini, the first Bishop of Winchester\*.

Theodore  
Archbishop  
of Canter-  
bury.

After Oswi King of Northumberland embraced the Roman customs, he became zealous in his endeavours to bring all the English churches to a conformity with and obedience to the church of Rome. With this view, he joined with Egbert King of Kent, in sending Wighart, elect of Canterbury, to Rome, to be consecrated according to the Roman ritual. Wighart was received and treated with great respect at Rome, but died before his consecration, of the plague, which then raged in that city †. Upon this Vitalian, who then filled the papal chair, took a bold step, and made choice of one Theodore, a native of Tarsus in Cilicia, a man of courage, learning, and good sense, to fill the place for which Wighart was designed, and consecrated him Archbishop of Canterbury, 25th March, A. D. 668 ‡. Theodore having received the clerical tonsure after the Roman form, set out for England, where he arrived in May 669, and

\* Eddii Vita Wilfredi, apud xv. script. p. 58.

† Bed. l. 3. c. 29.

‡ Id. l. 4. c. 1.

was favourably received by Egbert King of Kent, Cent. VII. and the other English princes. Soon after his arrival, the new archbishop visited all the English churches, consecrated bishops where they were wanting, and reduced every thing to a perfect conformity to the church of Rome. In this progress he terminated the dispute between Ceada and Wilfred about the bishopric of the Northumbrians, by translating Ceada to the see of Litchfield, and establishing Wilfred at York, which was now again become the seat of the bishop of Northumberland\*.

Still further to consolidate this union of the English churches with each other, and with the church of Rome, Theodore summoned a council of the English bishops, with their chief clergy, to meet at Hartford, A. D. 673. At this council, besides the metropolitan, Bisi Bishop of the East-Angles, Lutherius Bishop of the West-Saxons, Winfred Bishop of the Mercians, and Putta Bishop of Rochester, were present in person, and Wilfred Bishop of York by proxy. Theodore, who presided in this synod, produced a copy of the canons which he had brought with him from Rome, and pointed out ten of them which were peculiarly necessary to be observed, in order to establish a perfect uniformity among all the English churches; to which he demanded and obtained the consent of all the members †.

\* Bed. l. 4. c. 2.

† Id. l. 4. c. 5. Spelman. Concil. t. I. p. 152.

Cent. VII.

Auricular  
confession  
introduced.

Besides this union among the English churches, and conformity to the church of Rome, which was brought about by Theodore, with the consent and authority of the English kings, this prelate introduced several new doctrines and practices that were formerly unknown. One of the most important of these innovations was the introduction of auricular confession to a priest, as necessary to absolution: directly contrary to the doctrine of the Scotch missionaries, who taught, that confession to God was sufficient\*.

Theodore  
exerciseth  
his metro-  
political au-  
thority.

Theodore having, by his own address, and the favourable disposition of the English princes of that time, obtained a tacit recognition of his own metropolitical power over all the English churches, began to exercise it with no little severity, by deposing Winfred Bishop of the Mercians, A. D. 676, for some slight act of disobedience to his authority, which is not mentioned †. In his room he consecrated Sexulf, founder of the abbey of Peterborough, and about the same time raised Erconwald to the see of London ‡.

New  
bishoprics  
erected.

By the ninth canon of the council of Hartford, it was proposed, that new bishoprics should be erected where they were most wanted: but though this was one of the most reasonable regulations in the whole collection, the bishops, dreading the diminution of their power and wealth by the division of their bishoprics, did

\* Egberti Institut. Eccles. p. 281.

† Id. ibid.

‡ Bed. l. 4. c. 6.

not consent to its immediate execution, but re- Cent. VII.  
ferred it to more mature consideration \*. Till  
about this time, there was but one bishopric  
in each of the six kingdoms of the heptarchy  
which had embraced the Christian religion, ex-  
cept that of Kent, which had two. Some of  
these bishoprics were of very great extent;  
particularly that of York, which comprehended  
all the countries between the Humber and the  
frith of Forth. Wilfred Bishop of that see, na-  
turally vain and ostentatious, exceeded even the  
kings of those times in magnificence and ex-  
pence; which excited the indignation of his  
sovereign Egfred King of Northumberland. This  
prince, in order to humble the pride of this  
haughty prelate, as well as for the good of his  
subjects, resolved to divide his enormous bishop-  
ric; and two new bishops, Bosa and Eata, were  
consecrated by Theodore for the Northumbrian  
territories †. Wilfred was not of a temper to  
sit down tamely with this diminution of his re-  
venues and authority: he repaired to court, and  
boldly accusing the King and Archbishop of in-  
justice, appealed from them to the Pope: a thing  
so new and unheard of, that it excited a loud  
laugh in all who were present, who could not  
believe him to be serious ‡. But this ecclesias-  
tical knight-errant soon convinced them that he  
was in earnest, by setting out on his journey to

\* Spelm. Concil. t. 1. p. 153.

† Eddii Vita Wilfredi, c. 24.

‡ Bed. 1. 4. c. 12.

Cent. VII. Rome, accompanied by a prodigious crowd of monks, who resolved to follow his fortunes\*. After his departure, Bosa was fixed at York, and Eata at Lindisfarne; and not long after, two more bishops were consecrated for the Northumbrian kingdom, Tunberet and Trunwin; of whom the former was fixed at Hexam, and the latter at Abercorn, which was then within the kingdom of Northumberland †. Wilfred, after meeting with many strange adventures in his journey, arrived at Rome, and presented a petition to Pope Agatho, in a council of fifty bishops and abbots then sitting, representing the injury which had been done him by Theodore, in dismembering his bishopric without his consent, and praying for redress. This petition, from so distant a corner of the church, was received with uncommon favour by the Pope and council; who made a decree, restoring Wilfred to his see, and ordering those who had been thrust into it to be expelled. With this decree Wilfred hastened back into England, and presented it to Egfred King of Northumberland; who was so far from restoring him to his bishopric, that he committed him to prison. So little were the decrees of Rome at that time regarded in England ‡.

Council of  
Hatfield.

About the same time the Pope sent John, precentor of St Peter's, into England, to examine

\* Eddii Vita Wilfredi, c. 25.

† Bed. l. 4, c. 12.

‡ Bed. l. 4, c. 13. Spelm. Concil. t. 1, p. 160.



the sentiments of the English churches concerning the heresy of the Monothelites, which made a mighty noise. Theodore, to satisfy the Pope in this particular, summoned a synod to meet at Hatfield, September 15. A. D. 680; in which a confession of the faith of the church of England, (which was perfectly orthodox), was drawn up, and transmitted to Rome\*. The legate had also a private commission to promote the restoration of Wilfred to his bishopric, and his reconciliation with Theodore: but in this he had no success.

Cent. VII.

The bishopric of Mercia, which was seated at Litchfield, and comprehended all the dominions of the Mercian kings, was dismembered about this time; and out of it no fewer than four new bishoprics were erected, viz. those of Worcester, Leicester, Hereford, and Sydnacester †.

New  
bishoprics  
erected.

When Wilfred, the ejected Bishop of York, had continued near a year in prison, he obtained his liberty, by the earnest intercession of Æbbe, abbess of Coldingham, and aunt to King Egfred, upon this condition, That he should immediately abandon the territories of Northumberland ‡. But the resentment and influence of Egfred were so great, that the unhappy Wilfred could find no shelter in any of the Christian kingdoms of the heptarchy, which obliged him to retire into the little kingdom of

Kingdom of  
Sussex con-  
verted by  
Wilfred.

\* Spelm. Concil. t. 1. p. 168.

‡ Eddii Vita Wilfredi, c. 31.

† Higden. Polychron. p. 241.

Cent. VII. *Sussex, which was still unconverted.* Here he met with a very kind reception from Ethelwalch, the reigning King, and Æbæ his Queen, who were both Christians, and gave all possible encouragement to him and his companions to preach the gospel to their subjects, who were Pagans. Wilfred, by his learning and eloquence, assisted by the influence of the King and Queen, persuaded many of the nobility to embrace the Christian religion, while his companions were no less successful with the common people. To reward and encourage Wilfred and his fellow-labourers, the King bestowed upon him a considerable tract of country in the peninsula of Selsey, with all the cattle and slaves upon it; where he built a monastery, and founded a bishop's see, which was afterwards removed to Chichester\*. While Wilfred resided in these parts, he was the instrument, by the ministry of some of his followers, of converting the inhabitants of the isle of Wight, and obtained a grant of the third part of that island, from Ceadwalla, King of Wessex †. In this manner was the last of the seven Saxon states in England brought into the bosom of the Christian church, about ninety years after the arrival of Austin, and a little before the end of the seventh century.

Continuation of Wilfred's history.

The success of Wilfred in the conversion of the South-Saxons regained him the favour and

\* Bed. l. 4, c. 13.

† Id. c. 16.

friendship of Theodore Archbishop of Canter- Cent. VII.  
 bury, who recommended him, in the warmest }  
 manner, to Ethelred King of Mercia, and to  
 Alfred, who had succeeded his brother Egfred  
 in the kingdom of Northumberland, A. D. 685\*.  
 This last prince, having no personal enmity  
 against Wilfred, permitted him to return into  
 his dominions, A. D. 687, and bestowed upon  
 him the bishopric of Hexam, which was then  
 vacant; to which (if we may believe Eddius,  
 the writer of his life), he afterwards added the  
 see of York, and monastery of Rippon †. But  
 this ambitious and restless prelate soon forfeited  
 the favour and incurred the displeasure of King  
 Alfred, by refusing to subscribe the canons of  
 the councils of Hartford and Hatfield, and by  
 daily advancing claims to those immense pos-  
 sessions which he had when he was sole bishop  
 of the Northumbrian kingdom, and held be-  
 sides, no fewer than twelve abbeys. In the pro-  
 secution of those claims, which could not be  
 granted, he at length became so clamorous and  
 turbulent, that King Alfred was provoked to  
 expel him out of his dominions, about five  
 years after his return. Upon this second expul-  
 sion, Wilfred retired into Mercia, where he was  
 kindly received by King Ethelred, who bestowed  
 upon him the vacant see of Leicester; where  
 we must leave him for a little ‡.

\* Eddii Vita Wilfredi, c. 42.

‡ Id. c. 41.

† Id. c. 43.

Cent. VII.

Actions  
and death  
of Theo-  
dore.

Theodore Archbishop of Canterbury died in the twenty-third year of his pontificate, and eighty-ninth of his age, A. D. 690\*. After this see had remained two years vacant, it was filled by Brightwald, an English monk, who governed it thirty-eight years and six months †. Theodore was certainly one of the greatest men that ever filled the chair of Canterbury. By his influence, all the English churches were united, and brought to a perfect uniformity in discipline and worship;—too large bishoprics were divided, and many new ones erected;—great men were encouraged to build parish churches, by declaring them and their successors patrons of those churches ‡;—a regular provision was made for the clergy in all the kingdoms of the heptarchy, by the imposition of a certain tax or kirk-shot upon every village, from which the most obscure ones were not exempted ||. By these and other wise regulations introduced by this great prelate, the church of England became a regular compact body, furnished with a competent number of bishops and inferior clergy under their metropolitan the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Monasteries of the seventh century.

In the course of the seventh century, many monasteries were founded in all parts of England. These monasteries were at first designed,

\* Godwin de Præsul. Angl. p. 61.

† Bed. Ed. Wheelock, p. 399.

|| Bed. Epist. ad Egberet. p. 307.

† Id. *ibid.*

in some places, for the seats of bishops and their clergy; in others, for the residence of secular priests, who preached and administered the sacraments over all the neighbouring country; and in all places they were seminaries of learning for the education of youth. No vows of celibacy or poverty were required of the priests who inhabited these monasteries; though towards the end of this century, celibacy was strongly recommended to the English monks and clergy, by Theodore in his Penitentials\*. These monasteries being generally well built and well endowed, were by far the most comfortable places of residence in those times; which engaged such numbers of persons of all ranks and characters to crowd into them, that they soon became intolerable grievances †. The fondness of the monastic life was very much increased by an impious doctrine, which began to be broached about the end of this century, “That as soon as any person  
 “ put on the habit of a monk, all the sins of his  
 “ former life were forgiven ‡.” This engaged many princes and great men (who have sometimes as many sins as their inferiors) to put on the monastic habit, and end their days in monasteries.

Superstition, in various forms, made great progress in the seventh century; particularly an extravagant veneration for relics, in which the

Cent. VII.


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\* Theod. Penitent. p. 7.

† Bed. Epist. ad Egbert.

‡ Theod. Capit. Labb. Concil. t. 6. col. 1875.

Supersti-  
tions in-  
troduced.

Cent. VII.  Romish priests drove a very gainful trade, as few good Christians thought themselves safe from the machinations of the devil, unless they carried the relics of some saint about their persons; and no church could be dedicated without a decent quantity of this sacred trumpery\*. Stories of dreams, visions, and miracles, were propagated without a blush by the clergy, and believed without a doubt by the laity †. Extraordinary watchings, fastings, and other arts of tormenting the body, in order to save the soul, became frequent and fashionable; and it began to be believed that a journey to Rome was the most direct road to heaven ‡.

State of  
the British  
and Scotch  
churches.

We know of no important changes that happened in the British churches in the seventh century; during which they had little or no communication either with Rome or Canterbury, but continued to adhere to their ancient doctrines and primitive modes of worship. Some of the Britons, particularly those of Cornwall, it is said, were converted to the Catholic Easter about the end of this century, by the writings of Aldhelm, afterwards Bishop of Sherburn; but it is probable, that the victorious arms of the West-Saxon kings contributed as much to this conversion as the writings of that prelate ||. The churches of the Scots and Picts were in the same situation with those of the Britons in the seventh

\* Spelm. Concil. t. i. p. 99. 104.

† Id. *ibid.*

‡ Vide Bed. *passim*.

|| Bed. l. 5. c. 16.

century; unconnected with the churches of Cent. VII. Rome and England, they persevered in their ancient usages with the greatest constancy. Adamnan Abbot of Iona, having been sent ambassador to Alfred King of Northumberland, about the end of this century, was converted to the Catholic Easter, and after his return laboured with much earnestness, and some success, to convert his countrymen\*.

## SECTION III.

*History of Religion in Great Britain, from A. D. 700,  
to A. D. 800.*

**T**HE peace of the church of England was again Cent. VIII. disturbed in the beginning of the eighth century by the famous Wilfred, ejected bishop of The history of Wilfred continued. York. This turbulent prelate was far from being contented with the see of Leicester bestowed upon him by the king of Mercia, but made unwearied efforts to recover his former high station and great possessions in the kingdom of Northumberland, which still more inflamed the resentment of King Alfred. This prince, with Brithwald Archbishop of Canterbury, assembled a synod of English bishops and clergy, A. D. 701, to which they invited Wilfred, resolving to prevail upon him, either by persuasions or threats,

\* Bed. l. 5. c. 16.

Cent. VIII. to retire into a private station. He appeared before the synod, but treated all their persuasions and threats with equal scorn; upon which he was deprived of all his preferments, except the Abbey of Rippon, which was left him for a retreat. Wilfred protested against this sentence, and appealed to the Pope; which so incensed King Alfred against him, that he would have commanded his guards to cut him in pieces, if the bishops had not interposed\*. These prelates, however, were so much displeased with the refractory behaviour of Wilfred, that they inflicted upon him the highest censures of the church; and both he and his followers were held in such execration, that if any of them made the sign of the cross on the dishes upon a table, (a ceremony then used before meat), they were immediately thrown to the dogs †. The condemned, excommunicated prelate, departed from Onesterfield, where the synod was held, into Mercia, in order to discover what impression these proceedings had made on the mind of King Ethelred. After complaining to that prince of the injustice which had been done him, he earnestly requested to know whether or not he designed to deprive him of the revenues of the bishopric and monasteries which he had given him in his dominions? To which he received this favourable answer, That he would not deprive him of these

\* Spelm. Cencil. t. I. p. 202. Eddii Vita Wilfredi, p. 76. c. 46.

† Id. c. 47.



revenues, until the final sentence of the Pope <sup>Cent. VIII.</sup> was known\*. Encouraged by this assurance, he set out on his journey to Rome, where he arrived, A. D. 702; and, falling upon his knees, presented his petition to the Pope, addressed, "To the Apostolic Lord, the thrice-blessed and " universal Bishop, Pope John," and couched in the most flattering and artful terms. Wilfred was very graciously received, and lodged and entertained, with all his followers, at the public expence. The Archbishop had also sent deputies to Rome, to defend the sentence of the synod, who were not received with equal favour. These deputies accused Wilfred of refusing to subscribe the canons of the two synods of Hartford and Hatfield; to which he replied, that he was willing to subscribe the canons of those synods, as far as they were agreeable to the canons of the church of Rome, and the will of the Pope. The deputies accused him further of being guilty of refusing to submit to the sentence of his metropolitan, and his bishops, in the synod of Onesterfield, and of appealing to a foreign judge, which by the laws of England was a capital crime. But though this was a crime in England, it appeared a most meritorious act at Rome. After both parties had pleaded their cause at full length, and the Pope had taken some time to consider of it, with a council which was then sitting, a day was appointed for

\* Eddii Vita Wilfredi, p. 76, c. 17.

Cent. VIII. pronouncing sentence. When that day arrived, the Pope appeared in great state, surrounded by the council of bishops; and both parties being present, pronounced his sentence, reversing that of the synod of Onesterfield, and declaring Wilfred entirely innocent of all the crimes laid to his charge. With this sentence Wilfred returned in triumph into England, was reconciled to Brightwald Archbishop of Canterbury, and kindly received by Ethelred King of Mercia. But King Alfred, and his immediate successor Eadwulf, treated the papal sentence with contempt, and would not permit Wilfred to enter their dominions\*.

History of  
Wilfred  
finished.

Though Wilfred had been thus repulsed by these two kings of Northumberland, he never relinquished his pretensions in that kingdom; and his hopes of making these pretensions good began to revive on the accession of Osred, a child of eight years of age, to that throne, A. D. 704. By his interest with the Archbishop, and with Berechtfred, who had the chief direction of affairs in the kingdom of Northumberland, he procured a council to be called in the north, for the final determination of all those disputes which had subsisted almost forty years, and had occasioned infinite trouble to himself and to his country. This council, which was very numerous, was held in the open air, on the banks of the river Nidd in Yorkshire, A. D. 705.

\* Eddii Vita Wilfredi, c. 45—58.

Archbishop Brightwald, who presided in it, laid <sup>Cent. VIII.</sup> before the council a copy of the Pope's sentence in favour of Wilfred, with his letter to the late King Alfred, requiring the restitution of his dignities and possessions in Northumberland, with which that prince had not complied; and asked the members of the council, what they thought was most proper to be done for terminating these long and fatal disputes? The bishops at first discovered no disposition to comply with the Pope's sentence, who, they said, had no right to reverse the sentence of an English synod, or to lay any commands on an English king.—But at length, by the intreaties of Brightwald, Berehtfred, Elflæda, Abbess of Whitby, and others, this tedious affair was compromised in this manner:—John of Beverly, Bishop of Hexam, was translated to York, which was then vacant; and the bishopric of Hexam, with the abbey of Rippon, were bestowed on Wilfred, with which he remained contented. This famous prelate survived that decision only about four years; and dying A. D. 709, at his monastery of Oundle in Nottinghamshire, he was buried with great funeral pomp at his abbey of Rippon in Yorkshire\*. Wilfred was certainly one of the most extraordinary men of the age in which he lived. On the one hand, he was graceful in his person, engaging in his manners, learned, eloquent, and regular in his conduct, which

\* Eddii Vita Wilfredi, c. 58—65.

Cent. VIII. gained him many powerful friends; but, on the other hand, he was ambitious, restless, and inflexible, which raised him up no less powerful enemies, and involved both himself and his country in perpetual broils.

Several kings become monks.

The humour of making pilgrimages to Rome, and of retiring into monasteries, still increasing, Coinred King of Mercia laid down his sceptre, and took up the pilgrim's staff, A. D. 709, and travelled to Rome, accompanied by Offa, a young prince of the royal family of the East-Saxons, where they both became monks\*. Not long after, Ina, the victorious King of the West-Saxons, imitated their example, and ended his life in a cloister at Rome, where he founded a house for the entertainment of English pilgrims, and the education of English youth †. This prince, and his cotemporary Withred King of Kent, were great friends to the clergy, and made several laws for the security of their persons, privileges, and revenues ‡.

State of the church of England at the death of venerable Bede.

The churches of the several English kingdoms enjoyed so much internal peace for many years after the death of Wilfred, that they furnish few materials of importance for their ecclesiastical history; which for a long time consists of little more than the names and succession of bishops in the several sees, with which it would be improper to swell this work. When the venerable

\* Bed. l. 5. c. 19.

† Chron. Saxon. p. 53.

‡ Spelm. Concil. t. i. p. 182—199.

historian Bede concludes his excellent history of Cent. VIII. the church of England, A. D. 731, he acquaints us, that it was then governed by sixteen bishops, who had their seats at the following places:—  
 Canterbury, Rochester, London, Dunwich, Helmham, Winchester, Sherburn, Litchfield, Leicester, Hereford, Worcester, Sydnacester, York, Holy Island, Hexham, and Withern\*. There was no bishop in the little kingdom of Sussex at this time; but Sigelm was consecrated Bishop of Selsey a few years after; which made the number of bishops in England, before the middle of the eighth century, seventeen †.

Upon the death of Wilfred, the second Bishop of York, A. D. 731, Egbert, brother to Eadbert King of Northumberland, was advanced to that see. This prelate, by his royal birth and great merit, recovered the dignity of a metropolitan, which had been enjoyed by Paulinus the first Bishop of York, and obtained a pall from Rome as a badge of that dignity †.

Nothelmus Archbishop of Canterbury dying A. D. 740, Cuthbert Bishop of Hereford was translated to that see. An intimate friendship had long subsisted between Cuthbert and his countryman Winfred, who had assumed the name of *Boniface*, and was become Archbishop of Mentz. As soon as Boniface received the news of the advancement of his friend to the primacy

Egbert  
Archbishop  
of York.

Letter of  
Boniface  
Archbishop  
of Mentz,  
to Cuthbert  
Archbishop  
of Canter-  
bury.

\* Bed. Hist. Eccles. l. 5. c. 23.

† Godwin de Præsul. p. 518.

‡ Id. t. 2. p. 14.

Cent. VIII. of England, he wrote him a very long letter; in which, after many professions of esteem and friendship, and most vehement exhortations to the faithful discharge of the duties of his high office, he points out several things in the state of the church of England which required reformation; particularly the gaudy dress and intemperate lives of the clergy; the sacrilege of great men in seizing the government of monasteries, and obliging the monks to perform the most servile work in building their castles, &c.; a thing unknown in any other part of the Christian world. He exhorts him also to put a stop to the nuns, and other good ladies of England, leaving their country, and going in pilgrimage to Rome; because they were generally debauched before they returned, and many of them became common prostitutes in the cities of France and Italy. To remedy all these evils, he advises him to call a council, and for his direction sends him a copy of the canons of a synod, which had been lately held at Mentz, in which he had presided in quality of the Pope's legate. For as Boniface had received his preferment in the church by the favour of the Pope, he was a zealous advocate for his supremacy, and had contributed very much to bring the churches of Germany under the obedience of the see of Rome; and seems to wish that his friend Cuthbert would act the same part in England\*.

\* Spelm. Concil. t. 1. p. 237.

This letter, it is probable, engaged Cuthbert Cent. VIII. to assemble a council of the bishops and chief Council of Cloveshoos. clergy of his province, which met at Cloveshoos, or Clyff, in Kent, A. D. 747. Edelbald King of Mercia, with all the great men of his court, Cuthbert Archbishop of Canterbury, with eleven bishops of his province, together with many abbots, abbesses, and other clergy, were present at this council; in which no fewer than thirty canons were made for the Reformation of the lives of the clergy of all ranks, and the regulation of all the affairs of the church of England. The canons of this council, which were for the most part taken from those of the council of Mentz, transmitted by Boniface, contain many wise and judicious regulations, considering the age in which they were made. It is, however, very worthy of our attention, that the council of Cloveshoos made a very important alteration in the canon concerning the unity of the church. The canon of the council of Mentz on this subject runs thus:—"We have agreed in our synod  
 " in the confession of the Catholic faith, and  
 " agreed to continue in unity and subjection to  
 " the church of Rome; and desire to be sub-  
 " ject to St. Peter and his vicar, to the end of  
 " our lives, that we may be esteemed members  
 " of that church committed to St. Peter's  
 " care\*." But the canon of the council of Cloveshoos was couched in the following general

† Lab. Concil. t. 6. col. 1544.

Cent. VIII. terms, without so much as mentioning the church  
 { or Bishop of Rome: “ That sincere love and  
 “ Christian unity and affection ought to be  
 “ amongst all the clergy in the world, in deed  
 “ and judgment (without flattery of any one’s  
 “ person), as the servants of one Lord, and  
 “ fellow-labourers in the same gospel: so that,  
 “ however separated by the distance of place,  
 “ they may notwithstanding be united in the  
 “ same judgment, and serve God in one spirit,  
 “ in the same faith, hope, and charity; daily  
 “ praying for each other, that every one may  
 “ faithfully persevere to the end, in the dis-  
 “ charge of his holy function\*.” This remark-  
 able caution in the language of this canon, is a  
 sufficient proof, that the clergy of England  
 were not as yet disposed to bend their necks to the  
 intolerable and ignominious yoke of Rome. So  
 careful were they in this council to guard against  
 the inroachments of the Pope on the independ-  
 ency of the church of England, that applications  
 to Rome for advice in difficult cases were dis-  
 couraged by the twenty-fifth canon, and bishops  
 directed to apply only to their metropolitan in a  
 provincial synod †. Many excellent advices are  
 given to the bishops, clergy, and people, in the  
 canons of this council. Bishops are directed to  
 visit all parts of their dioceses once every year,  
 for preaching and performing the other duties of  
 their sacred function;—to keep a watchful eye

\* Spel. Concil. t. 1. p. 246.

† Id. ibid.



over the conduct of the inferior clergy, who still, Cent. VIII. for the most part, lived in monasteries; and to be very careful in examining into the morals and learning of those whom they admitted into holy orders. Abbots are commanded to take care that the clergy, in their respective houses, should be studious, sober, and decent in their dress and deportment. The clergy are enjoined to be diligent in visiting, preaching, and baptizing; to learn to construe in their own language the creed and Lord's prayer, and the words used in the celebration of mass, and in the office of baptism. The people are exhorted, to get the creed and Lord's prayer by heart,—to the religious observation of the Lord's day,—to frequent communion, to confession, fasting, and almsgiving. Several very singular directions are given, in the twenty-seventh canon, to the common people who did not understand Latin, about the manner of their joining in the public prayers and songs of the church, which were all in that language: in particular, they are allowed to affix any meaning to the words they pleased in their own minds, and to pray in their hearts for any thing they wanted, no matter how foreign to the real sense of the public prayers\*. A curious salve for the absurd practice of praying in an unknown tongue! This canon also contains the following short form of prayer for the dead: " Lord, according to the greatness of thy mercy, grant

\* Spl. Concil. t. 1. p. 216.

Cent. VIII. “ rest to his soul, and for thy infinite pity vouch-  
 safe to him the joys of eternal light with thy  
 “ saints.” About this time, some great men,  
 who were not very fond of going through the  
 fasting and prayers enjoined them by their con-  
 fessors, proposed to hire poor people to fast and  
 pray in their stead. This was certainly a very  
 lucky thought ; but it had not the good fortune  
 to meet with the approbation of this council.

Quarrels  
 about the  
 bodies of  
 the arch-  
 bishops.

Cuthbert Archbishop of Canterbury died A. D.  
 758. All his predecessors had been interred by  
 the monks of St Augustin, in their monastery,  
 without the walls of Canterbury, who now con-  
 sidered the corpses of their departed prelates as a  
 kind of perquisite to which they had a right.  
 Cuthbert, for what reason we know not, formed  
 the design of depriving them of his remains ; and  
 for that purpose obtained a formal permission  
 from Eadbert King of Kent to be buried in his  
 own cathedral. When he found his end ap-  
 proaching, he directed his domestics to put his  
 body into the grave as soon as he expired, and  
 before they published his death ; which they ac-  
 cordingly performed. When the monks of St.  
 Augustin, on hearing of the Archbishop’s death,  
 came in solemn procession to take possession of  
 his remains, they were told, that he was already  
 buried ; at which they were so provoked, that  
 they called him a rogue, a fox, a viper, and all  
 the opprobrious names they could invent\*.

\* Godwin de Præsul. Aug. p. 65.

Bregwin, who was a native of Saxony, but edu-<sup>Cent. VIII.</sup>  
cated in England, was placed in the archiepisco-  
pal chair, when it had been about a year vacant ;  
and he filled it only three years, dying August  
24. A. D. 762. By his own direction, he was  
buried in the same place, and in the same precipi-  
tate manner with his predecessor. When Lam-  
bert, Abbot of St. Augustin's, came with a body  
of armed men to seize the body of the Arch-  
bishop as his lawful property, and found himself  
anticipated a second time, he took the matter in  
a very serious light, and made a solemn appeal  
to the Pope, to interpose his authority for pre-  
venting such clandestine funerals for the future.  
This mighty bustle about the lifeless bodies of  
these prelates, may appear to us ridiculous; but  
the monks of St. Augustin knew very well what  
they were about, and how much it redounded to  
the reputation and interest of their society, to be  
in possession of the remains of those primates in  
that superstitious age, when relics were the most  
valuable treasures. The canons of Christ's church,  
who had the privilege of chusing the Archbishop,  
and had been concerned in smuggling their two  
late ones into their graves, were so much alarm-  
ed at Lambert's appeal to the Pope against them,  
that, in order to mitigate his zeal in the cause of  
their rivals, they chose him to fill the vacant  
chair. This artful conduct had its desired effect ;  
Lambert was appeased, and desisted from pro-  
secuting his appeal\*.

\* Godwin de Prasul. Ang. p. 65.

Cent. VIII.

The Pope obtains a great accession of power and territories.

About the middle of the eighth century, several great and sudden revolutions happened in Italy, and in the state of the church of Rome, which in their consequences very much affected all the Christian world. Though the emperors of the East, who resided at Constantinople, were nominal sovereigns of Rome and Italy, the distance of their situation, and other circumstances, rendered their authority feeble and precarious. When the Emperor Leo Isaurus published his famous edict, A. D. 730, against the use and worship of images, commanding them to be removed out of the churches, the bishops of Rome opposed the execution of that edict with great vehemence, and encouraged the chief cities of Italy to shake off all subjection to the emperors of the East. But they were soon punished for this revolt by Astulphus King of Lombardy, who over-ran the greatest part of Italy, and threatened the destruction of the church of Rome. In this extremity Stephen II. who was then Pope, A. D. 752, earnestly implored the protection of Pepin King of France; who, marching at the head of a powerful army into Italy, A. D. 753, defeated Astulphus, and recovered all the countries which he had conquered. But instead of restoring those countries to the emperors of the East, their ancient sovereigns, he bestowed the city and territories of Rome, the exarchate of Ravenna, and several other cities, on the Pope; which raised him from the very brink of ruin to be a powerful temporal prince, and enabled him

and his successors to prosecute their claims to spiritual dominion over the Christian world with greater spirit and success \*.

Cent. VIII.

Egbert, the first English Archbishop of York, one of the best and most learned prelates of his age, after having governed that see with great dignity about thirty-six years, died A. D. 767; and was succeeded by Adelbert, who makes no distinguished figure in history †.


Death of Egbert Archbishop of York.

While Lambert filled the archiepiscopal chair of Canterbury, a considerable revolution happened in the government of the church of England. Offa King of Mercia, who was by far the most powerful prince of the heptarchy, thinking it inconvenient and dishonourable for the bishops of his kingdom to be subject to the metropolitical authority of the archbishops of Canterbury, resolved to erect the see of Litchfield, his capital, into an archbishopric. Lambert opposed the execution of this design as much as possible; but Offa's superior power and wealth at length prevailed, and Hegbert Bishop of Litchfield was declared an archbishop by the Pope, A. D. 787, and the sees of Worcester, Hereford, Leicester, Sydnacester, Helmham, and Dunwich, dismembered from the province of Canterbury, and put under the jurisdiction of the new archbishop. Hegbert dying soon after his elevation, was succeeded by Adulph, who received a pall, the dis-

Litchfield made the see of an archbishop.

\* Inett's Hist. Engl. Church, c. 12.

† Godwin de Præsul. Ang. t. 2. p. 15.

Cent. VIII. distinguishing badge of the archiepiscopal dignity,  
 from Pope Adrian I. \*

Council of  
 Calcuith.

The Pope about this time sent Gregory Bishop of Ostia, and Theophilact Bishop of Todi, as his legates into England, to visit the several English churches. These legates acquainted the Pope, by a letter, that they had arrived safe in England, and waited upon Lambert Archbishop of Canterbury, and executed their commission; which was, probably, to obtain his consent to the dismembering of his province:—That they had then repaired to the court of Offa King of Mercia, who received them with great joy, and very much approved of all they had proposed:—That because the country was very extensive, in order to do their business with the greater expedition, they had separated; Theophilact remaining in Mercia, to attend a great council of that kingdom, while Gregory proceeded to the court of Oswald King of Northumberland, who also called a council of the nobility and chief clergy of his kingdom:—That they, the legates, had laid the regulations or canons which they had brought with them from Rome before both these councils; by whom they had been maturely considered, and universally approved, and subscribed by the kings of Mercia and Northumberland, with all the chief nobility, bishops, and clergy of England. The Mercian synod met at a place named *Calcuith*; which is the reason that these

\* *Anglia Sacra*, t. I. p. 129.

regulations are commonly called *the canons of the council of Calcuith* \*. These canons, which are twenty in number, contain a kind of system of the ecclesiastical politics of those times, in which we may discern the clergy beginning to advance several new claims, such as, a divine right to the tenth of all the possessions of the laity, and an exemption from being tried and punished by the civil magistrates †. To support this last claim, several texts of Scripture are most shamefully misinterpreted. The legates, after their arrival in England, observed several peculiarities which they disapproved, and therefore prohibited in these canons; such as,—the priests celebrating mass without shoes or stockings, and with chalices made of horn;—the bishops sitting on the bench with the aldermen, and judging in civil and criminal causes;—and the people still retaining many Pagan practices, as sorceries, divinations, &c. ‡. It is said to have been in this council of Calcuith, that Lambert Archbishop of Canterbury gave his consent to the erection of Litchfield into an archbishopric; but if this was true, it appears that his pride was not abated by this great diminution of his power; for his name stands in the subscription of the canons before that of Offa King of Mercia.

The great controversy about the use of images in churches, and the degree of homage that was

Controversy  
about the  
worship of  
images.

\* Spelman Concil. t. I. p. 291.

‡ Id. Canon 10. 3.

† Id. Canon 11. 17.

Cent. VIII. to be paid to them, which had raged with incredible violence on the continent for more than sixty years, began to be agitated in England towards the end of this century. Two succeeding emperors of the East, Leo Isaurus, and his son Constantine Copronimus, exerted all their power to prevent the worship, by abolishing the use of images in churches; while several succeeding popes, their cotemporaries, supported the cause of images with at least equal zeal. In the East, the influence of the emperors at length prevailed; and both the use and adoration of images were condemned by a council of three hundred and thirty-eight bishops, at Constantinople, A. D. 754\*. But in the West, the authority of the bishops of Rome gained the ascendant. Italy revolted from the emperors, images were retained, and too much regarded, not to say adored. When this controversy seemed to be at an end in the East, and images were cast out of almost all the churches, a great revolution happened at the death of the Emperor Leo IV. by the administration falling into the hands of his widow the Empress Irene, in the minority of her son. This princess (who was one of the worst of women) formed the design of restoring the use and worship of images in the East; which she communicated to Pope Adrian, for his advice and assistance. When all matters were properly prepared, a council was summoned to meet

\* Lab. Cœn. t. 6. col. 1661.



at Constantinople, A. D. 786; but being pre-<sup>Cent. VIII.</sup>vented by a tumult from sitting in that city, it met the year after at Nice. This council (which consisted of about one hundred and fifty bishops, and is commonly called the second council of Nice) reversed the acts of the late council of Constantinople against images, and decreed both the use and adoration of them, with a few frivolous distinctions \*. The acts of this council were received with great joy at Rome, and a copy of them sent into France, where they did not meet with so favourable a reception; for though the churches of France allowed the use, they prohibited the worship of images with great strictness. Charlemagne King of France put these acts into the hands of a select number of bishops, who drew up an elaborate confutation of them in four books, which were published in the King's name, and are commonly called the *Caroline books* †. Charlemagne sent a copy of the canons of the council of Nice to his friend and ally Offa King of Mercia, to be communicated to the English bishops; by whom they were condemned, “ as containing many things “ contrary to the true catholic faith, especially “ the worship of images, which the catholic “ church utterly detested and abhorred ‡.” The English bishops employed their learned countryman Alcuinus to write against this council; and

\* Du Pin, Eccles. Hist. cent. 8.

‡ M. Westminster, ad an. 793.

† Id. *ibid.*

Cent. VIII. transmitted his book, with their own opinion, to the King of France \*. From this detail, it is sufficiently evident, that though images and pictures had long been used in the churches of France and England, as ornaments, and helps to memory, these churches, at the end of the eighth century, were not arrived at that degree of folly and impiety as to pay them any kind of worship.

Sale of re-  
lics.

The sale of relics was now become a gainful trade to the clergy, and especially to the monks, who were fortunate in making daily discoveries of the precious remains of some departed saint, which they soon converted into gold and silver. In this traffic they had all the opportunities they could desire of imposing counterfeit wares upon their customers, as it was no easy matter for the laity to distinguish the great toe of a saint from that of a sinner, after it had been some centuries in the grave. The place where the body of St. Alban, the protomartyr of Britain, lay, is said to have been discovered to Offa King of Mercia, in a vision, A. D. 794, and was taken up with much ceremony in the presence of three bishops, and an infinite multitude of people of all ranks, and lodged in a rich shrine, adorned with gold and precious stones. To do the greater honour to the memory of the holy martyr, Offa built a stately monastery at the place where his body was found, which he called by his name, *St. Alban's*,

\* M. Westminster, ad an. 793.

and in which he deposited his remains, enriching it with many lands and privileges \*. Cent. VIII.

Offa, who had been guilty of some very horrid crimes, became more and more superstitious as he advanced in years, and at length made a journey to Rome, where he squandered away a great deal of money, to procure the pardon of his sins. In particular, he made a grant of three hundred and sixty-five mancusses, being one mancus for each day in the year, to be disposed of by the Pope to certain charitable and pious uses †. This grant was afterwards converted into an annual tax upon the English nation, and demanded in the most imperious manner as a lawful tribute, and mark of subjection of the kingdom of England to the church of Rome ‡.

The see of Litchfield did not very long enjoy the honour of being an archbishopric. For King Offa dying soon after his return from Rome, A. D. 796, and his son Egfred in less than a year after, Kenulph, who succeeded this last Prince, was prevailed upon to restore things to their former state. Some pretend, that he was brought to form this resolution by the address of Athelard, Archbishop of Canterbury, a prelate of great abilities; but others imagine, with greater probability, that he was chiefly influenced by

\* M. Paris Vita Offæ, p. 26. W. Malms. l. 1. c. 4.

† Anglia Sacra, l. 1. p. 460.

‡ Hen. IIunt. l. 4. R. Hoveden, pars prior. Inett's Church History, c. 13.

Cent. VIII. political considerations ; and that he did this  
 } great favour to the see of Canterbury, in order  
 to gain the affections of the people of Kent, who  
 had lately become his tributaries \*. However  
 this may be, it is sufficiently evident, that King  
 Kenulph, with the consent of the Pope, reduced  
 Adulphus, Archbishop of Litchfield, to the state  
 of a private bishop, and put him, and all the  
 other bishops of his kingdom, again under the  
 metropolitical authority of the see of Canterbury;  
 though Adulphus was indulged in the empty ho-  
 nour of wearing the pall of an archbishop as long  
 as he lived.

General  
 state of re-  
 ligion in  
 Britain in  
 this century.

Ignorance and superstition increased greatly  
 in the church of England, as well as in other  
 parts of the Christian world, in the course of the  
 eighth century. Pilgrimages to Rome became  
 far more frequent, and were attended with worse  
 effects than formerly ;—the rage of retiring into  
 monasteries became more violent in persons of  
 all ranks, to the ruin of military discipline, and  
 of every useful art ;—the clergy became more  
 knavish and rapacious, and the laity more abject  
 and stupid, than in any former period. Of this  
 the trade of relics, which can never be carried  
 on but between knaves and fools, is a sufficient  
 evidence. The number of holidays, and of  
 childish and trifling ceremonies, which are  
 equally pernicious to honest industry and ra-  
 tional religion, were very much increased in the

\* Godwin de Præsul. Angliæ, p. 67. Inett's Church History, c. 14.

course of this dark age. As the Britons, Scots, and Picts, had little or no intercourse with Rome in this period, it is probable, that superstition had not made such rapid progress amongst them as amongst the English. But we know so little of the ecclesiastical history of these three nations in this century, that we can produce nothing of certainty and importance on that subject, unless the conversion of the Scots and Picts to the Roman rule in celebrating Easter, which happened in this century, can be called important.

## SECTION IV.

*The history of Religion in Great Britain, from A. D. 800, to 900.*

**A**THELARD, Archbishop of Canterbury, took a journey to Rome, A. D. 801, to obtain the formal consent of the Pope to the re-union of the province of Litchfield to that of Canterbury. He met with a very favourable reception, and easily obtained every thing he desired, as it was one part of the papal policy to encourage applications to Rome, from all parts, and on all occasions. The Pope, to shew how highly he was pleased with Kenulph, King of Mercia, (who had wrote him a very respectful letter, accompanied with a present of one hundred and twenty mancusses), and with the Archbishop, who had paid him a visit, sent an answer to the King, in which

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Cent. IX.  
Archbishop  
Athelard's  
journey to  
Rome.

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that prince, and his primate, are flattered at a most unconscionable rate, and loaded with the most extravagant praises. He calls the king his most dear, most excellent, and most sweet son; and tells him that the Archbishop was such an admirable prelate, that he was able to bring all the souls in his province from the very bottom of hell into the port of heaven\*.

Council of  
Cloveshoos.

Athelard, after his return from Rome with this curious letter, summoned a council to meet at Cloveshoos, A. D. 803; at which the decree of the Pope, for restoring the see of Canterbury to all its ancient rights, was confirmed with great solemnity, and everlasting damnation denounced against all who should hereafter attempt to tear the coat of Christ,—*i. e.* to divide the provinces of Canterbury †. The Archbishop laid another decree of the Pope's, against admitting laymen to the government of monasteries, before this council; which was also confirmed, and subscribed by him and his twelve suffragans, with several abbots and presbyters ‡. This last decree was designed to put a stop to a practice which had long prevailed, of noblemen having the government of the monasteries, and their ladies of the nunneries on their estates, and to put those foundations entirely into the hands of ecclesiastics; by which a great accession, both of power and wealth, accrued to the church.

\* Spelman Concil. t. 1. p. 322.

‡ Id. *ibid.*

† Id. p. 324.

Athelard did not long survive the restoration of his see to its ancient splendour; but dying A. D. 807, was succeeded by Wulfred, who had been a monk of Christ's church in Canterbury\*. This prelate convened a council of all the bishops, and many of the abbots and presbyters of his province, at Ceale-hythe, July 27. A. D. 816; at which Kenulph King of Mercia, with the great men of his kingdom, were present. This council, in the preamble to its canons, is said to have been called in the name, and by the authority of Jesus Christ, the supreme head of the church; and the design of it is said to have been, that the presidents of the sacred order, or bishops, might treat with the abbots, priests, and deacons, concerning what was necessary and useful for the churches; which seems to intimate, that these inferior clergy were constituent members of this council †. The canons of this council are eleven in number, and some of them contain several curious particulars concerning the state of religion in the church of England at this time. As the building of parochial churches was now become frequent, the second canon prescribes the manner of their consecration, which is to be performed only by the bishop of the diocese, who is to bless the holy water, and sprinkle it on all things with his own hands, according to the directions in the book of rites. He is then to consecrate the eucharist, and to

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 Council of  
Ceale-  
hythe.

\* Godwin de Prasul. Angl. p. 68.

† Spel. Con, t. i. p. 328.

Cent. IX. deposit it, together with the relics, in the repository provided for them. If no relics can be procured, the consecrated elements may be sufficient, because they are the body and blood of Christ. Every bishop, in consecrating a church, is commanded to have the picture of the saint to whom the church is dedicated, painted on the wall, or on a board\*. From the fourth canon it appears, that the English bishops at this time not only enjoyed their episcopal jurisdiction over all the monasteries and nunneries in their dioceses in its full extent, but had also authority to appoint the abbots and abbesses, with the consent of the members of these societies: a proof that all the exemptions from episcopal jurisdiction, said to have been procured from the Pope by several monasteries before this time, are mere forgeries. By the fifth canon, we discover that the members of this council had a most violent aversion to the Scotch clergy; for they decree, that no Scotsman shall be allowed to baptize, to say mass, to give the eucharist to the people, or perform any part of the sacerdotal office; because (says the canon) it is not known by whom these Scotsmen were ordained, or whether they were ordained or not, since they came from a country where there was no metropolitan, and where very little regard was paid to other orders. By the sixth canon, the decrees of former councils which have been signed with the sign of the

\* Spl. Con. p. 328.



cross, are declared to be inviolable. By the seventh, bishops and abbots are discharged from alienating any of their lands for more than one life, except it be to preserve themselves from famine, from slavery, or from the depredations of the enemy; by which is meant the Danes, who about this time grievously infested the coasts of England, and were peculiarly terrible to the clergy. The tenth prescribes what offices are to be performed at the death of a bishop for the repose of his soul, viz. that the tenth part of all his moveable effects, both without and within doors, shall be given to the poor;—that all his English slaves shall be set at liberty;—that at the sounding of the signal in the several parish-churches, the people of the parish shall repair to the church, and there say thirty psalms for the soul of the deceased;—that every bishop and abbot shall cause six hundred psalms to be sung, and one hundred and twenty masses to be celebrated, and shall set at liberty three slaves, and give each of them three shillings;—that all the servants of God shall fast one day;—and that for thirty days immediately after divine service in every church, seven belts of pater-nosters shall be sung for him\*. These good bishops did certainly right to provide for the repose of their souls after death; but whether this was the most effectual way of doing it, is not quite so clear.

\* These belts or girdles had studs for numbering the pater-nosters, as the rosaries or strings of beads do at present.

Cent. IX. By the last canon of this council, priests are commanded to use dipping, and not sprinkling, in the celebration of baptism. Several other councils were held under this primate; but as they were convened rather for terminating private disputes about the patrimony of the church, than for making general laws and regulations for its government, they merit little attention\*.

The clergy  
cruelly  
treated by  
the Danes.

Wulfred Archbishop of Canterbury died A. D. 830, and Theogildus abbot of Christ's church was chosen in his room, who survived his predecessor only about three months, and was succeeded by Celnoth deacon of the same church †. In the time of this primate, the heptarchy ended, and the English monarchy was established by the illustrious Egbert King of the West-Saxons, —though some princes after this bore the title of kings, and enjoyed some degree of authority, in Mercia, Northumberland, and other states. This union of the several English states into one potent kingdom, was in many respects a happy event; and particularly to the church, because the clergy were thereby delivered from the great inconveniency of being subject to different, and often contending sovereigns. But the invasions of the Danes, which about this time became more frequent and formidable than they had been before, more than overbalanced this advantage, and involved the English clergy in the

\* Spel. Concil. t. i. p. 331—336.

† Godwin de Præsul. Angl. p. 68.

most deplorable calamities. For the Danes, being Pagans, as well as savages, and finding the monasteries, in which the clergy generally resided, better stored with booty and provisions than other places, never failed to plunder them when it was in their power. In those calamitous times, therefore, we cannot expect to meet with many councils assembled for making ecclesiastical laws and regulations. Great numbers of the clergy were put to the sword, or buried in the ruins of their monasteries; and the mildest fate they could expect when they fell into the hands of the Danes, was, to be sold for slaves. This made many of the monks abandon a profession which exposed them defenceless to so many dangers; some of them becoming soldiers, and others pursuing other ways of life. Those who still adhered to their profession after the destruction of the monasteries in which they had resided, retired into country-villages, and there performed the duties of their function to the people of the neighbourhood. By this means the destruction of the monasteries, and dispersion of the clergy by the Danes, became the occasion of the building of many parish-churches, of which there were but very few in England before this time. This dispersion of the clergy was productive also of a very important change in their manners and way of life. When great numbers of them had formerly lived together in one monastery, few of them were married, because a collegiate life is on many accounts unfavourable to matrimony; but after

Cent. IX.



Cent. IX. they were dispersed, and blended with the people, they generally embraced a married life, as most convenient and comfortable in their situation \*. These observations are so undeniably true, that before the end of this century there was hardly a monastery or a monk, and but few unmarried clergymen in England.

Ethelwolf's  
grant to  
the church.


Ethelwolf, the eldest surviving son of Egbert, the first monarch of England, who succeeded his father in the throne, A. D. 837, had been designed for the church, and was actually a subdeacon in the cathedral of Winchester, if we may believe the author quoted below †, when his father died. This prince did not forget his former friends and brethren of the clergy after his advancement to the throne, but continued to give them many substantial marks of his favour; of which the most considerable was, his famous grant of the tenth of all his lands to the church. The Christian clergy in England, as well as in other countries, began pretty early to claim the tenth of every thing, as the proportion settled by the Levitical law for the maintenance of the ministers of religion; but it required a long time, and many laws, both of church and state, to make this claim effectual. In the seventh and eighth centuries, the English clergy had been supported,—by the produce of the lands which had been given to the church by kings, and other great men,—by a church scot or tax of one

\* Inctt's Church History, c. 17.

† Anglia Sacra, t. 1. p. 200.

Saxon penny on every house that was worth thirty Saxon pence of yearly rent,—and by the voluntary oblations of the people. These funds, in times of plenty and tranquillity, were abundantly sufficient; but in those times of war and confusion, when their houses were burnt, and their slaves, who cultivated their lands, killed, or carried away by the Danes, when the churchscot could not be regularly levied, and when the voluntary oblations of the people failed, the clergy were reduced to great distress and indigence. Ethelwolf, who was a religious prince, and seems to have placed his chief hopes of being preserved from that destruction with which he was threatened by the Danes in the prayers of the church, was desirous of delivering the clergy from their present distress, and of providing more ample and certain funds for their future support. With this view, he called an assembly of all the great men of his hereditary kingdom of Wessex, both of the clergy and laity, at Winchester, in November, A. D. 844; and, with their consent, made a solemn grant to the church of the tenth part of all the lands belonging to the crown, free from all taxes and impositions of every kind, even from the three obligations, of building bridges, fortifying and defending castles, and marching out on military expeditions \*. It was no doubt intended that this royal grant should be imitated, and probably it was imitated,

\* *Anglia Sacra*, t. 1. p. 200.

Cent. IX.  by the nobility. In return for this noble donation, the clergy were obliged to perform some additional duties, viz. to meet with their people every Wednesday in the church, and there to sing fifty psalms, and celebrate two masses, one for King Ethelwolf, and another for the nobility who had consented to this grant\*. What immediate benefit the clergy reaped from this donation, we are not well informed; though it is probable, that it was not very great, as a regulation of this kind could hardly be carried into execution in those distracted times.

Ethelwolf's  
journey to  
Rome.

Though the presence of a prince with his people was never more necessary than in the reign of Ethelwolf, when his territories were every moment in danger of being invaded by the most cruel and destructive foes; yet this prince, prompted by the prevailing superstition of that age, left his kingdom in great confusion, and went to Rome, A. D. 854; where he spent much money in presents to the Pope, the clergy, and the churches †.

Further  
grant to  
the church.

After his return from Rome, he enlarged his former grant to the church, by extending it to the other kingdoms which now composed the English monarchy. This was done in a great council at Winchester, A. D. 855; at which, besides Ethelwolf, Beorred the tributary King of Mercia, and Edmund the tributary King of East-Anglia, the two Archbishops of Canterbury

\* Anglia Sacra, t. I. p. 200.

† Chron. Saxon. A. D. 854.

and York, with all the other bishops, the nobility, and chief clergy of England, were present \*. To give the greater force and solemnity to this donation, the charter containing the grant of it was presented by King Ethelwolf, in the presence of the whole assembly, on the altar of St. Peter the apostle, in the Cathedral of Winchester; and all the bishops were commanded to send a copy of it to every church in their respective dioceses †. But, notwithstanding all these solemnities, we have good reason to believe the intention of this famous grant was in a great measure frustrated, by the vague indeterminate strain in which it was conceived, and the deplorable confusions which soon after followed.

England was a scene of so much misery and confusion during the short reigns of Ethelwolf's three eldest sons, from A. D. 857, to A. D. 871, and the first seven years of the reign of his youngest son, Alfred the Great, that little attention was given to ecclesiastical affairs. In this period the few remaining monasteries which had escaped the former ravages of the Danes, were destroyed, and their wretched inhabitants put to the sword, or burnt in the flames which consumed the places of their abode ‡. But after the glorious victory which Alfred the Great obtained over the Danes, A. D. 878, some stop was put to the horrid cruelties of those barba-

Cent. IX.



Calamities  
of the  
clergy, and  
their relief.

\* Spel. Concil. t. 1. p. 348.

† Ingulph. Hist. Croiland.

‡ Id. ibid.

Cent. IX. rians, and to the intolerable sufferings of the English clergy. For, by the treaty of peace which followed that victory, it was stipulated, that Guthrum King of the Danes, and such of his followers as chose to remain in England, should embrace the Christian religion; and that those who were not willing to comply with that condition should immediately quit the kingdom. In consequence of this article, Guthrum, with about thirty of his principal officers, were baptized in the presence of King Alfred; and their example was soon after imitated by the greatest part of their followers\*. These new Christians had land assigned them in the north of England; where they settled, and in time became peaceable and useful subjects. To secure the attachment of these new converts to the religion which they had embraced, King Alfred made certain laws for the regulation of their conduct, to which Guthrum and the other Danish chieftains gave their consent. By the first of these laws, the Danes are commanded to abandon Paganism, and continue in the faith and worship of one true God. By the second, a heavy fine is imposed on those who should apostatize from Christianity, and relapse into Paganism. By the rest of these laws, which are seventeen in number, the several vices to which the Danes were most addicted, are prohibited; the payment of tithes, the religious observation of the Lord's day, and of

\* Asserius de Vita Ælfred, p. 10.




other festivals, are commanded; and several directions are given, both to the clergy and laity\*.

Cent. IX.

Besides the above constitutions, which were chiefly designed for the Danes, and the English among whom they lived, Alfred formed another body of laws for his other subjects, of which some related to the church. The introduction to these laws consists of a copy of the ten commandments, in which the second commandment, against the making and worshipping of images, is omitted; but to make up the number, after the ninth, the following short one is added, "Make thou not gods of gold or of silver:" a precept which very few were able to transgress. This omission of the second commandment shews, that images, which had been introduced into the church as ornaments, and helps to memory, were now become the objects of adoration: a change which might easily have been foreseen. Alfred also adopted the canons of the apostolical council of Jerusalem, recorded Acts xv. 29. into his ecclesiastical laws; and greatly magnifies that excellent precept of Christ, to do unto others as we would have others to do unto us. It is unnecessary to give a very particular account of the rest of these constitutions, as they contain few novelties. From one of them we learn, that about this time the clergy fell upon a curious device to raise the devotion of the people, and

Ecclesiastical laws of Alfred the Great.

\* Spelm. Concil. t. 1. p. 375.

Cent. IX.  give a mysterious solemnity to the rites of religion, in the holy time of Lent, by drawing a curtain before the altar when they celebrated mass. But the people, it seems, did not like to be kept on the outside of the curtain, and were apt to turn it aside, or pull it down; which is therefore prohibited under a severe penalty. By another we are informed, that servants, but not slaves, were allowed forty-two days in the year to work for themselves, and not for their masters\*.

Alfred re-  
builds  
monasteries.

One of the first cares of the illustrious Alfred, after he had restored peace and prosperity to his afflicted country, was, to repair the ruined churches and monasteries, and even to build new ones. But many of the old English monks having perished in the late troubles, and the rising generation having contracted an aversion to that way of life, from the dreadful tales they had heard of their sufferings, he was obliged to bring monks from France and other foreign countries †. When the peace was better established, and their fears of the future invasions of the Danes abated, many of the clergy who had abandoned their monasteries to preserve their lives, returned to the places from whence they had fled, took possession of their lands, and began to repair their churches and habitations. But many of these clergymen having married in their retreats, they brought their wives and

\* Spel. Concil. t. 1. p. 371.

† Asserius Vita Ælfred. p. 18.

children with them when they returned to their monasteries; by which means the abbeys of England, in the end of this and the beginning of the next century, were generally possessed by a kind of secular or married monks \*. This, as we shall soon see, became the occasion of long and violent contentions in the church of England. Alfred the Great, after he had restored peace and good order to his country, ended his glorious life and reign in the last year of the ninth century.

Cent. IX.

It would be improper to swell this work with a laborious collection of the unconnected scraps of the ecclesiastical history of the Britons, Scots, and Picts, in this century, out of which it is quite impossible to form any thing like a continued narration, supported by proper evidence. — All that we know with certainty of the state of religion among the ancient Britons in this period is, that all those who preserved their civil liberty, preserved also their religious independency; and none of them were in communion with, or in subjection to, the church of England, who were not subject to some English prince. By living in this sequestered state, without much communication with other churches, they still retained, for the most part, their ancient usages, and were unacquainted with many innovations which had been imported from Rome into the church of England.

Ecclesiastical history of the Britons.

\* Anglia Sacra, t. 1. p. 602.

Cent. IX.  
 Of the Scots  
 and Picts.

The Scots and Picts were very much in the same circumstances with the Britons in this respect. Ever since the violent disputes between the Scots and English of the Roman communion, about the time of keeping Easter, and the retreat of the Scotch clergy out of England, there had been a violent animosity between the churches of England and Scotland. This animosity was very strong in this century, as appears from the fifth canon of the council of Ceale-hythe, A. D. 816; which decrees, that no Scotch priest shall be allowed to perform any duty of his function in England\*. The Scots and Picts were instructed and governed by their own clergy; who being educated at home, and having little intercourse with foreign nations, retained much of the plainness and simplicity of the primitive times in their forms of worship. These clergy were called *Kuldees*, both before and after this period: a name which some derive from the two Latin words, *Cultores Dei*, and others from the kills or cells in which they lived †. They were a kind of presbyters, who lived in small societies, and travelled over the neighbouring countries, preaching, and administering the sacraments. In each of these cells there was one who had some kind of superintendency over the rest, managed their affairs, and directed their missions; but whether or not he enjoyed the title and authority of a

\* Spel. Concil. t. I. p. 329.

† Boeth. Hist. Scot. l. 6. Camb. Britan. col. 1468.

bishop in this period, is not certainly known. The council of Ceale-hythe seems to have suspected that he did not; for the chief reasons assigned by that council for refusing to keep communion with these Scotch Kuldees were,—that they had no metropolitans amongst them,—paid little regard to other orders,—and that the council did not know by whom they were ordained, *i. e.* whether they were ordained by bishops or not\*. The rectors or bishops of the several cells of Kuldees were both chosen, and ordained, or consecrated, by the members of these societies; which was probably the very thing with which the council of Ceale-hythe was dissatisfied. When the cells or monasteries of Scotland came to be enlarged, better built, and better endowed, they were long after this possessed by these Kuldees, or secular clergy, who had the privilege of choosing the bishops in those places where bishop sees were established †.

The only bishopric that was founded in Scotland in the ninth century was that of St. Andrew's; whose first bishop, named *Adrian*, was killed by the Danes in the isle of May, A. D. 872, and succeeded by Kellach the second bishop of that see ‡. The other bishops of Scotland in this century, and in former times, were not fixed to any particular diocese, and performed all the offices of their functions in all

Cent. IX.



\* Spel. Concl. 1. 1. p. 329.

† Boeth. Hist. Scot. 1. 10.

‡ Spottiswoode's Church Hist. p. 25. 26.

Cent. IX.



places without distinction\*. The number of these itinerant unsettled bishops was probably very small, as our most diligent antiquaries have not been able to collect the names of above ten or twelve of them in the space of six centuries; and of these few some were foreigners, sent into Scotland on particular occasions, as Regulus, Palladius, Servanus; others were Scotchmen who were bishops in foreign countries, as Wiro, Plachelmus, &c; and others were undeniably only superintendents of societies of Kuldees, as Columbia, Adamman, &c. †

Scotch  
councils.

We may very reasonably suppose, that the Kings both of the Scots and Picts held several councils in this and the preceding centuries, for the regulation of ecclesiastical affairs; but of these no monuments are now remaining, except some faint vestiges of a council or assembly held by Kenneth Macalpin, the first monarch of the Scots and Picts, A. D. 850 ‡. In this council several civil and ecclesiastical laws are said to have been made. By one of these last it is decreed, that altars, churches, cells, oratories, images of saints, priests, and all persons in holy orders, shall be held in great veneration. By another it is ordained, that all fasts, festivals, vigils, holidays, and ceremonies of every kind, which human piety had decreed to be kept in honour of King Christ, and his holy militia, shall

\* Boeth. l. 10.

† See the table of Scotch bishops at the end of Spottiswoode's Church History.

‡ Fordun, l. 4. c. 8. Boeth. l. 10.

be strictly observed. By a third it is declared to be a capital crime to do the least injury to a priest, either by word or deed \*. But we have good reason to suspect the genuineness and antiquity of these canons, which were probably the work of a later age, when superstition and priestcraft had made greater progress in Scotland †.

Cent. X.

## SECTION V.

*History of Religion in Great Britain, from A. D. 900, to A. D. 1066.*

THE tenth century (which is commonly called *the age of lead*) was the most dark and dismal period of that long night of ignorance and superstition in which Europe was involved after the fall of the Roman empire. It is difficult to determine whether the impudence of the clergy, or the credulity of the laity, were most remarkable in those unhappy times; but it is certain, that the former could hardly invent any thing too absurd for the latter to believe.

Cent. X.

Character of the tenth century.

England, which towards the end of the last century had been illuminated by some faint rays of knowledge, and enjoyed a short interval of tranquillity, under the influence of the illustrious Alfred, in the beginning of this sunk into

State of religion in England.

\* Spelm. Con. p. 342.

† Sir David Dalrymple's Historical Memorials, p. 2. note.

Cent. X.

the deepest darkness, and was involved in the greatest confusion. This arose from the wars occasioned by a disputed succession,—from the frequent revolts of the Danes settled in England,—and from the no less frequent invasions of their countrymen from abroad. In the midst of so many wars, it is no wonder that the interests of learning and religion were too much neglected.

Story of an interdict.

It was perhaps owing to this that King Edward the Elder, the son and successor of Alfred, allowed some bishoprics to continue vacant several years; for which, it is pretended, Pope Formosus laid both him and his kingdom under an interdict, A. D. 905 \*. This story of the interdict, it must be confessed, is attended with such difficulties as render it very doubtful, if not quite incredible. Pope Formosus was in his grave eight years before the time of this pretended interdict; and the bishops of Rome had not then become such cruel audacious tyrants as to deprive whole kingdoms of the means of salvation for the fault of one man †. It is not improbable, that King Edward received an admonition from Rome, which the monkish historians in succeeding ages magnified into an interdict.

Edward fills the vacant sees, and erects new ones.

However this may be, that prince, as soon as the exigencies of his affairs permitted, not only filled up all the vacant bishoprics in his kingdom of Wessex, but erected new ones, at Wells,

\* W. Malms. l. 2. p. 26.

† See Inett's Church Hist. c. 18.



at Kirton in Devonshire, and at Padstow in Cornwall; and Plegmund Archbishop of Canterbury consecrated no fewer than seven bishops in one day, A. D. 909, viz. Fridstan of Winchester, Werestan of Shereburn, Kenulp of Dorchester, Beornock of Selsey, Athelm of Wells, Eadulph of Kirton, and Athelstan of Padstow\*.

Cent. x.

The Danes of East-Anglia and Northumberland, who, with their leader Guthrum, had submitted to King Alfred, and had embraced the Christian religion, remained tolerably faithful to their new religion, and to their new sovereign, during the life of that great prince; but after his death, they apostatized from Christianity, as well as rebelled against his son and successor Edward. But having reduced these apostates and rebels to the necessity of submitting to his authority, A. D. 909, he compelled them to return to the profession of the Christian religion, and to the obedience of those laws which his father had prescribed to their ancestors about thirty years before †.

Apostasy  
and recovery  
of the  
Danes.

We meet with few ecclesiastical transactions of importance for near twenty years after this; when a great council was assembled at Gratanlea, A. D. 928, by King Athelstan, in which Wulphelm Archbishop of Canterbury presided. This was one of those mixed assemblies, so frequent in the Saxon times, consisting of all the great

Council of  
Gratanlea.

\* Anglia Sacra, t. i. p. 554. 555.

† Spel. Concil. p. 390. Wilkin Concil. t. i. p. 205.

Cent. X.

men, both of the clergy and laity, in which both civil laws and ecclesiastical canons were made. For besides the archbishop and other bishops, we are told that a great number of nobles and wise men, who had been called by King Athelstan, were present at this great synod; and in the acts of it we find civil and ecclesiastical matters sometimes blended together in the same law\*. The first canon of this council respects the payment of tythes, and is couched in the following terms:—" I King Athelstan, by the " advice of Wulphelm, my archbishop, and of " my other bishops, strictly command and charge " you all my reeves, in all parts of my kingdom, " in the name of God and his saints, and as you " value my favour, to pay the tithes, both of " the cattle and corn, on all my lands: and I " further ordain, that all my bishops and alder- " men shall pay the tithes of their lands; and " that they shall give it in charge to all who are " under their jurisdiction to do the same. All " this I command to be carried into execution " by the time appointed, which is the day of " the decollation of John the Baptist." From this canon it appears, that the famous grant of King Ethelwolf, of the tenth part of his lands to the church, if it did not originally mean the tenth of their produce, was now understood in this sense, either by tacit consent and custom, or by some law which is now lost. It is further

\* Spel. Concil. t. i. p. 401.

evident from this canon, to which a pathetic exhortation is subjoined, that all former laws for the payment of tithes had been ineffectual; and we shall soon see cause to think, that this one was not much better obeyed.—By the second canon, in one of the copies of this council, it is decreed, that the church-scot shall still be paid where it is due\*. From whence we may learn, that the clergy did not relinquish any of their former revenues, when they obtained the grant of tithes. In the third canon, the king, for the forgiveness of his sins, and salvation of his soul, commands each of his reeves to maintain one poor Englishman from every two of his farms, by giving him one amber of meal, one hog, or one ram, worth four pence, every month, and one mantle, or thirty pence, annually, for his clothing. By two of these canons, the various religious ceremonies are prescribed, which were to be observed in performing the several kinds of ordeal, which shall be more particularly described hereafter †. By the ninth canon it is decreed, that fairs and markets shall not be kept on the Lord's day. The tenth enumerates both the spiritual and secular duties of bishops, which are such as these,—that they should teach their clergy how they ought to act in all circumstances,—to promote peace and concord, and co-operate with such secular judges as were friends to justice,—to take care that oaths be rightly ad-

Cent. X.

\* Spel. Concil. t. 1. p. 402.

† See chap. 3.

Cent. X.



ministered, and the ordeals duly performed,—to visit their flocks, and not suffer the devil to destroy any of their sheep,—to keep the standards of the weights and measures of their respective dioceses, and take care that all conformed to these standards,—to be present with the aldermen in their courts, to prevent any sprouts of pravity from springing up,—not to permit the powerful to oppress the weak, or masters to use their slaves ill,—and that they should fix the measures of work to be performed by slaves in all their dioceses. By the twelfth canon it is decreed, that fifty psalms shall be sung for the king every Friday, in every monastery and cathedral church \*. With these ecclesiastical laws, several others of a civil nature are intermixed, which will be more properly considered in another place †.

Death of  
Archbishop  
Wulphelm,  
and succes-  
sion of Odo.

Though Athelstan was almost constantly engaged in war, he held at least four other councils, at the four following places, viz. Exeter, Feversham, Thunderfield, and London; but the canons of all these councils are either lost, or so blended with those of Gratanlea, that they cannot be distinguished ‡. Wulphelm Archbishop of Canterbury, died A. D. 934, and was succeeded in that high station by Odo Bishop of Shereburn; whose history is remarkable enough, without the thundering miracles with which it

\* Spl. Concil. t. 1. p. 402.

‡ Spl. Concil. p. 407.

† Chap. 2.

is adorned by his biographer\*. He was the eldest son of a noble and wealthy Dane settled in East-Anglia, by whom, being a bigoted Pagan, he was disinherited, and turned out of doors, for frequenting the Christian churches when he was a boy. In this extremity he took shelter in the family of Athelm, an English nobleman of the first rank; who was so charmed with his spirit and ingenuity, that he treated him with parental tenderness, and gave him a learned education. Having entered into holy orders, by his own merit, and the interest of his patron Athelm, he passed rapidly through the inferior stations in the church, and was ordained a priest before the age prescribed by the canons, and not long after consecrated bishop of Shereburn. In this office he behaved with the greatest piety and prudence; and being of a martial spirit, he attended his sovereign King Athelstan in the field, and contributed not a little to the gaining the great victory of Brunanburgh over the Danes. On the death of Wulphelm, all the world turned their eyes on the learned, pious, and valiant Bishop of Shereburn, as the fitted person to fill the vacant chair; of which he at length accepted, after having made a few wry faces, and very frivolous objections. His chief objection, if we may believe the monkish historians, was, that he was not a monk, as all the former archbishops had been. But we can hardly suppose

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\* Anglia Sacra, t. 2. p. 78.

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this prelate so ignorant of church history, as to make this objection, which was probably invented for him long after his death, by those cloistered annalists, who neglected no opportunity of magnifying their own order. However this may be, though Odo's zeal for religion seems still to have been sincere and fervent, his bold aspiring spirit, no longer under any restraint, made him act the primate with a very high hand. This appears, not only from his actions, especially in his old age, but also from his famous pastoral letter to the clergy and people of his province, (commonly called *the constitutions of Odo*), which was published A. D. 943, in which he speaks in a very magisterial tone: "I strictly command and charge," says he, "that no man presume to lay any tax on  
 " the possessions of the clergy, who are the sons  
 " of God, and the sons of God ought to be free  
 " from all taxes in every kingdom.—If any  
 " man dares to disobey the discipline of the  
 " church in this particular, he is more wicked  
 " and impudent than the soldiers who crucified  
 " Christ.—I command the king, the princes,  
 " and all in authority, to obey, with great hu-  
 " mility, the archbishops and bishops, for they  
 " have the keys of the kingdom of heaven \*,"  
 &c.

Council of  
London.

Besides these constitutions, that were published by the sole authority of the Archbishop, there

\* Spel. Concil. t. 1. p. 416. Wilkin Concil. t. 1. p. 212.

were several ecclesiastical canons made in a great council, both of the clergy and laity, which was held by King Edmund, at London, A. D. 944. By the first of these canons it is decreed, that all who are in holy orders, from whom the people of God were to expect a virtuous example, should live chastely; and that those who violated this canon should forfeit all their goods, and be denied Christian burial. This canon was perhaps aimed against the secular canons or monks, who were generally married, and designed as a prelude to those violent efforts that were soon after made to dispossess them of their monasteries on that account. By the second canon of this council, all are commanded to pay their tithes, their church-scot, and alms-fee, under the penalty of excommunication. From this we learn, that besides tithes, there were several other dues claimed by the clergy. By one canon, uncleanness with a nun is declared to be an equal crime with adultery, and subjected to the same penalties. By another, bishops are commanded to repair and decorate the churches on their own lands at their own expence, and to admonish the King to do the same to other churches. Though Christianity had been now long established in England, Paganism was far from being quite extirpated, especially amongst the Danes settled in East-Anglia and Northumberland; and therefore there were laws made in almost every ecclesiastical synod against the use of Pagan rites, which were often practised even

Cent. X.



Cent. X. by those who were a kind of nominal Christians.

By the last canon of this council, those who were guilty of perjury, or of using Pagan rites and ceremonies, are to be excommunicated \*.

Canons of  
the North-  
umbrian  
priests.

About the middle of this century, as it is most probable, an ecclesiastical synod of the province of York was held; in which the fines to be paid by the clergy, for various offences, and violations of the canons of the church, are ascertained. To secure the payment of these fines, every clergyman, at his admission into orders, was obliged to find twelve bondsmen. As the province of York, or kingdom of Northumberland, was at this time chiefly inhabited by Danes, these fines are all to be paid in the Danish oras, or ounces of silver; and considering the great scarcity of that precious metal, they are very severe, as will appear from a few examples: "If a priest celebrate mass in an unhallowed house, let him pay twelve oras. If a priest celebrate mass on an unhallowed altar, let him pay twelve oras. If a priest consecrate the sacramental wine in a wooden chalice, let him pay twelve oras. If a priest celebrate mass without wine, let him pay twelve oras." These fines, and many others, were to be paid to the bishop of the diocese. This seems to have been a scheme to bring the discipline of the church to a perfect conformity with the laws of the state, which set a fixed price

\* Spl. Concil. t. 1. p. 420. Wilkin Concil. t. 1. p. 214.



on all crimes; and was probably invented by some artful prelate, to make the delinquencies of his clergy the means of his wealth\*.

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It is now time to introduce the celebrated St. Dunstan to the acquaintance of our readers, who was already become very famous, and soon after acted a most memorable part, both in the affairs of church and state. In doing which, we shall give them a short specimen of the monkish manner of writing the lives of saints. Dunstan was descended from a noble family in Wessex, and educated in the abbey of Glastonbury. Here he studied so hard, that it threw him into a violent fever, which brought him to the very point of death. When the whole family were standing about his bed, dissolved in tears, and expecting every moment to see him expire, an angel came from heaven in a dreadful storm, and gave him a medicine, which restored him to perfect health in a moment. Dunstan immediately started from his bed, and run with all his speed towards the church, to return thanks for his recovery; but the devil met him by the way, surrounded by a great multitude of black dogs, and endeavoured to obstruct his passage. This would have frightened some boys; but it had no such effect upon Dunstan; who pronouncing a sacred name, and brandishing his stick, put the devil and all his dogs to flight. The church-

History of  
St. Dunstan.

\* Wilkin Concil. t. 1. p. 218. Johnson's Canons, vol. 1. A. D. 950.

Cent. X.

doors being shut, an angel took him in his arms, conveyed him through an opening in the roof, and set him softly down on the floor, where he performed his devotions. After his recovery, he pursued his studies with the greatest ardour, and soon became a perfect master in philosophy, divinity, music, painting, writing, sculpture, working in gold, silver, brass, and iron, &c. When he was still very young, he entered into holy orders, and was introduced by his uncle Athelm, Archbishop of Canterbury, to King Athelstan; who, charmed with his person and accomplishments, retained him in his court, and employed him in many great affairs. At leisure hours he used to entertain the King and his courtiers with playing on his harp, or some other musical instrument; and now and then he wrought a miracle, which gained him great admiration. His old enemy the devil was much offended at this, and prompted some envious courtiers to persuade the King, that his favourite was a magician; which that prince too readily believed. Dunstan, discovering by the King's countenance that he had lost his favour, and resolving to resign, rather than be turned out, retired from court to another uncle, who was Bishop of Winchester. This good prelate prevailed upon his nephew to forsake the world, and become a monk; after which he retired to a little cell built against the church-wall of Glastonbury. Here he slept, studied, prayed, meditated, and sometimes amused himself with

forging several useful things in brass and iron. One evening, as he was working very busily at his forge, the devil, putting on the appearance of a man, thrust his head in at the window of his cell, and asked him to make something or other for him. Dunstan was so intent upon his work, that he made no answer; on which the devil began to swear and talk obscenely; which betrayed the lurking fiend. The holy blacksmith, putting up a secret ejaculation, pulled his tongs, [which were red hot, out of the fire, seized the devil with them by the nose, and squeezed him with all his strength; which made his infernal majesty roar and scold at such a rate, that he awakened and terrified all the people for many miles around\*. This, it is presumed, will be thought a sufficient specimen of the monkish manner of writing history: it is now proper to pursue the story of Dunstan in a more rational strain.

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This extraordinary person was recalled to court by King Edmund, A. D. 941; who bestowed upon him the rich abbey of Glastonbury, which, for his sake, he honoured with many peculiar privileges †. He enjoyed a very high degree of the favour of this prince during his short reign of six years; but he stood much higher in the favour of his brother and successor, King Edred, to whom he was confessor, chief confident, and

Continuation of the history of St. Dunstan.

\* Anglia Sacra, t. 2. p. 97.

† W. Malm. l. 2. c. 7. Anglia Sacra, t. 2. p. 100.

Cent. X.

prime minister. He employed all his influence during this period of court-favour, in promoting the interest of the monks of the Benedictine order, to which he belonged, and of which he was a most active and zealous patron. Having the treasures of these two princes, especially of the last, very much at his command, he lavished them away in building and endowing monasteries for these monks, because almost all the old monasteries were in the possession of secular canons. Not contented with this, he persuaded Edred (who was a bigoted valetudinary) to bestow such immense treasures on the churches and monasteries by his last will, that the crown was stripped of its most valuable possessions, and left in a state of indigence\*.

Further  
continua-  
tion.

This conduct of Dunstan, while he was in power, rendered him very odious to Edwi, who succeeded his uncle Edred, A. D. 955; and his rude behaviour to himself, and his beloved Queen Elgiva, raised the resentment of that prince so high, that he deprived him of all his preferments, and drove him into exile †. The banishment of Dunstan, the great patron, or (as Malmsbury calls him) the prince of monks, was a severe blow to that order, who were expelled from several monasteries; which were made the impure stables (according to the same author) of the married clergy ‡. But their sufferings were

\* Inett's Church Hist. vol. 1. p. 316.

† W. Malms. 1. 2. c. 7.

‡ Id. *ibid.*

not of long continuance. For Edgar, the younger brother of Edwi, having raised a successful rebellion against his unhappy brother, and usurped all his dominions on the north side of the river Thames, recalled Dunstan, and gave him the bishopric of Worcester, A. D. 957\*. From this moment he was the chief confident and prime minister of King Edgar, who became sole monarch of England, A. D. 959, by the death of his elder brother Edwi.

Cent. X.


Odo, Archbishop of Canterbury, having died about two years before King Edwi, Elfin, Bishop of Winchester, by the influence of that prince, was translated to Canterbury; but died not long after in his way to Rome †. On this second vacancy, Edwi procured the election of Brithelm, Bishop of Wells; who was hardly warm in his seat, when Edgar succeeded to his brother's dominions, and obliged the new archbishop (who was of a soft and gentle disposition) to relinquish his high station, and return to his former bishopric. This violence was practised by King Edgar, to make way for his favourite Dunstan; who was accordingly raised to be Archbishop of Canterbury, A. D. 960 ‡. Being now possessed of the primacy, and assured of the royal support and assistance, he prepared to execute the grand design which he had long meditated, of compelling the secular canons to put away their

St. Dunstan  
raised to the  
see of Can-  
terbury.

\* Anglia Sacra, t. 1. p. 107.

† Godwin de Præsul. Ang. p. 73.

‡ Id. ibid.

Cent. X.  wives, and become monks; or of driving them out, and introducing Benedictine monks in their room \*. With this view, he procured the promotion of Oswald to the see of Worcester, and of Ethelwald to that of Winchester; two prelates who were monks themselves, and animated with the most ardent zeal for the advancement of their order.

The married canons ejected.

St. Dunstan, St. Oswald, and St. Ethelwald, the three great champions of the monks, and enemies of the married clergy, began the execution of their design, by endeavouring to persuade the secular canons in their cathedrals, and other monasteries, to put away their wives, and take the monastic vows and habits †. But finding that these persuasions produced little or no effect, they proceeded to the most shameful acts of fraud and violence. St. Oswald (as we are told by a monkish historian) turned all the married canons out of his cathedral church of Worcester, not by direct force, but by a most holy and pious stratagem, which he hath not thought fit to mention ‡. He expelled the married clergy out of seven other monasteries within his diocese, and filled them with monks, allowing those who were expelled a small pension for life, barely sufficient to keep them from starving ||. Ethelwald acted with still greater violence, if possible, towards the canons of his cathedral. For having

\* Anglia Sacra, t. 1. p. 219.

‡ W. Malm. l. 2. c. 8.

† Id. t. 2. p. 219.

|| Anglia Sacra, t. 2. p. 200.

secretly provided a sufficient number of monkish habits, he entered the church one day, followed by a number of servants carrying them, and, with a stern countenance, told the canons who were performing divine service, that they must instantly put on these habits, and take the vows, or be turned out. The poor canons pleaded hard for a little time to consider of this cruel alternative, but the unrelenting prelate would not allow them one moment. A few complied, and took the habits; but the far greatest number chose rather to become beggars and vagabonds, than forsake their wives and children; for which our monkish historians give them the most opprobrious names\*. To countenance these cruel tyrannical proceedings, Dunstan and his associates represented the married clergy as monsters of wickedness for cohabiting with their wives, magnified celibacy as the only state becoming the sanctity of the sacerdotal office, and propagated a thousand lies of miracles and visions to its honour; of which the reader may take the following specimen:—A monk, named *Floberht*, who had been appointed Abbot of Pershore, a monastery out of which the secular canons had been turned by St. Oswald, was a most prodigious zealot for the monastic institutions, but in other respects of a very indifferent character. This abbot fell sick, and died; and when all the monks of his own monastery, with Germanus

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\* Anglia Sacra, t. ii. p. 219. W. Malm. l. 2. c. 8.

Cent. X.



Abbot of Winchelcomb, and many others, were standing about his corpse, to their great astonishment, he raised himself up, and looked around him. All the monks were struck with terror, and fled, except Germanus, who asked his brother-abbot, What he had seen? and what had brought him back to life? To which the other answered, That he had been introduced into heaven by St. Benedict; that God had pardoned all his sins for the merits of his beloved darling Oswald Bishop of Worcester; and had sent him back to acquaint the world, that Oswald was one of the greatest saints that ever lived. Being asked further by Germanus, What kind of figure St. Benedict made in heaven? how he was dressed? and how he was attended? he answered, That St. Benedict was one of the handsomest and best dressed saints in heaven, shining with precious stones, and attended by innumerable multitudes of monks and nuns, who were all perfect beauties \*. This, it must be confessed, was a very simple tale; but it was well enough calculated to answer the purposes for which it was invented, in that age of ignorance and credulity. By these and various other arts, Dunstan Archbishop of Canterbury, Oswald Bishop of Worcester, and Ethelwald Bishop of Winchester, in the course of a few years, filled no fewer than forty-eight monasteries with monks of the Benedictine order †.

\* Anglia Sacra, t. ii. p. 201.

† Id. *ibid.* p. 201.



Though Edgar the Peaceable was a very profligate prince, and stuck at nothing to gratify his own passions, he was, if possible, a greater persecutor of the married clergy than the three clerical tyrants above mentioned. To them he gave a formal commission, A. D. 969, to expel the married canons out of all the cathedrals and larger monasteries, promising to assist them in the execution of it with all his power\*. On this occasion he made a most flaming speech to the three commissioners, painting the manners of the married clergy in the most odious colours; calling upon them to exert all their power, in conjunction with him, to exterminate those abominable wretches who kept wives. "I know," says he, in the conclusion of his speech, "O holy Father Dunstan! that you have not encouraged those criminal practices of the clergy. You have reasoned, intreated, threatened. From words it is now time to come to blows. All the power of the crown is at your command. Your brethren, venerable Ethelwald, and the most reverend Oswald, will assist you. To you three I commit the execution of this important work. Strike boldly;—drive those irregular livers out of the church of Christ, and introduce others, who will live according to rule †." This furious champion for chastity had, some time before the delivery of this harangue, debauched, or rather ravished, a nun,

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King Edgar  
a great per-  
secutor of  
the married  
canons.

\* Hoveden. Annal. ad Ann. 969.

† Spel. Concil. t. i. p. 478.


Cent. X. a young lady of noble birth and great beauty ;  
 at which his holy father confessor Dunstan was so much offended, that he enjoined him, by way of penance, not to wear his crown for seven years,—to build a nunnery,—and to persecute the married clergy with all his might \* :—a strange way of making atonement for his own libertinism, by depriving others of their most natural rights and liberties.

Canons of  
King Ed-  
gar.

As King Edgar was very much under the influence of his three favourite prelates, he paid great attention to ecclesiastical affairs, and held several councils for the regulation of them. In one of these councils, those sixty-seven canons, commonly called *the canons of King Edgar*, were enacted,—in which there are not many things new, or worthy of a place in history. By the eleventh of these canons, every priest is commanded to learn and practise some mechanic trade, and to teach it to all his apprentices for the priesthood. By the sixteenth, the clergy are commanded to be at great pains to bring off their people from the worship of trees, stones, and fountains, and from many other heathenish rites which are therein enumerated. By this it would appear, that many of the people of England were but very imperfect Christians at this time. The fifty-fourth recommends it to the clergy to be very frequent and earnest in exhorting the people to pay all their dues to the church

\* Spel. Concil. t. i. p. 482.

honestly, and at the proper time;—their plough-  
alms fifteen nights after Easter,—their tithes of  
young animals at Pentecost,—their tithes of corn  
at All-saints,—their Peter-pence at Lammas,—  
and their church-scot at Martinmas. To these  
canons is subjoined a penitential, which some  
think was composed by St. Dunstan, and requires  
penitents to be very particular in confessing all  
the sins which they have committed by their  
bodies, their skin, their flesh, their bones, their  
sinews, their reins, their gristles, their tongues,  
their lips, their palates, their teeth, their hair,  
their marrow, by every thing soft or hard, wet  
or dry. Confessors are then directed what kind  
of penances to prescribe in a great variety of  
cases. The most satisfactory penances for lay-  
men are said to be these:—To desist from carry-  
ing arms—to go upon long pilgrimages—never  
to stay two nights in the same place—never to  
cut their hair, or pare their nails, or go into a  
warm bath, or a soft bed—not to eat flesh, or  
drink strong liquors—and if they were rich, to  
build and endow churches. Long fastings of  
several years are prescribed as the proper penances  
for many offences; but these fastings were not  
so formidable as they appear at first sight, espe-  
cially to the rich, as a year's fasting might be  
redeemed for thirty shillings, equal in quantity  
of silver to four pounds ten shillings of our  
money, and in value to more than thirty pounds.  
A rich man, who had many friends and de-  
pendents, might dispatch a seven-year's fast in

Cent. X.  three days, by procuring eight hundred and forty men to fast for him three days on bread and water and vegetables\*. From this it appears, how much the discipline of the church was relaxed since the council of Cloveshoos, A. D. 747; in which this curious method of fasting by proxy was condemned.

Disputes  
between the  
monks and  
married  
canons.

The three commissioners for expelling the secular canons out of the cathedrals and larger monasteries, executed that commission with great vigour, and no little success, during the reign of Edgar; but on the death of that prince, A. D. 975, they received a check. The sufferings of the persecuted canons had excited much compassion; and many of the nobility who had been overawed by the power and zeal of Edgar, now espoused their cause, and promoted their restoration. Elferc, Duke of Mercia, drove the monks by force out of all the monasteries in that extensive province, and brought back the canons, with their wives and children; while Elfwin Duke of East-Anglia, and Brithnot Duke of Essex, raised their troops to protect the monks in these countries †. To allay these commotions, several councils were held; in which Dunstan was so hard pushed by the secular canons and their friends, that he was obliged to practise some of his holy stratagems. In a synod held in the old monastery at Winchester, A. D. 977,

\* Spel. Concil. t. 1. p. 443—478.

† Hoveden. Annal. A. D. 976.

when this great cause was about to be determined against the monks, and all the canons lately made in their favour reversed, the assembly was suddenly alarmed with a loud voice, which seemed to proceed from a crucifix built into the partition-wall, crying,—“ Don’t do that,—don’t do that.—You judged right formerly ; don’t change your judgment.” On which the assembly broke up in confusion, and nothing was determined \*. Though the enemies of the monks had been a little startled at this pretended prodigy, they were not convinced ; which occasioned the meeting of another council at Calne in Wiltshire, A. D. 978 ; at which the canons and their friends were hurt, as well as frightened. For the room in which the council met being very much crowded, that part of the floor on which the unhappy canons and their advocates stood (the chief of whom was one Beornelm, a Scotch bishop) suddenly fell down ; which put an end to the debate for that time, some being killed, and many wounded †. If these events really happened, we cannot avoid entertaining very unfavourable suspicions of the celebrated St. Dunstan, and pitying the weakness of the English nobility in those benighted times.

In the reign of Ethelred the Unready, who succeeded his brother Edward the Martyr, A. D. 979, the English were engaged in so many wars

Deaths of  
Dunstan,  
Ethelwald,  
and Oswald.

\* Spel. Concil, t. 1. p. 490.

† Id. p. 494. Anglia Sacra, t. 2. p. 112.


Cent. X.



with the Danes, and involved in so many calamities, that they had little leisure to attend to ecclesiastical affairs; which renders the church-history in the end of the tenth and beginning of the eleventh century as barren as that of the state is melancholy. The three famous prelates, Dunstan, Ethelwald, and Oswald, so far outshone their brethren in their zeal for the monastic institutions, that they quite eclipsed all the other bishops their cotemporaries, who are hardly ever mentioned by the monkish writers. Ethelwald, Bishop of Winchester, a great builder of monasteries, and most zealous patron of the monks, was the first of this famous triumvirate who quitted the stage, dying A. D. 984\*. By his death, the hopes of the secular canons, of whom he had been a most cruel persecutor, were a little revived, and they made great efforts to get one of their own number elected in his room; but were at length baffled by the superior art and influence of the Archbishop, who procured the advancement of Elphigus, Abbot of Bath, to the see of Winchester, by pretending that the Apostle St. Andrew had appeared to him, and assured him, that Elphigus was the fittest person in the world for that charge †. St. Dunstan did not long survive his friend and fellow-labourer Ethelwald, but died, A. D. 988, in the sixty-fourth year of his age, having held the bishopric

\* Godwin de Præsul. Angl. p. 266.

† Anglia Sacra, t. 2. p. 221.

of London, together with the archbishopric of Cent. X.  
Canterbury, about twenty-seven years\*. As   
this prelate was the great restorer and promoter  
of the monastic institutions, the grateful monks,  
who were almost the only historians of those dark  
ages, have loaded him with the most extravagant  
praises, and represented him as the greatest  
wonder-worker, and highest favourite of heaven  
that ever lived. To say nothing of his many  
conflicts with the devil, in which he often be-  
laboured that enemy of mankind most severely,  
the following short story, which is told with  
great exultation by his biographer Osbern, will  
give the English reader some idea of the astonish-  
ing impiety and impudence of those monks, and  
of the no less astonishing blindness and credulity  
of those unhappy times. “The most admirable,  
“ the most inestimable Father Dunstan,” says  
that author, “whose perfections exceeded all hu-  
“ man imagination, was admitted to behold the  
“ mother of God and his own mother in eternal  
“ glory : for before his death he was carried up  
“ into heaven, to be present at the nuptials of  
“ his own mother with the eternal King, which  
“ were celebrated by the angels with the most  
“ sweet and joyous songs. When the angels  
“ reproached him for his silence on this great  
“ occasion, so honourable to his mother, he  
“ excused himself on account of his being un-  
“ acquainted with those sweet and heavenly

\* Godwin de Prasul. Angl. p. 75.

Cent. X.



“ strains ; but being a little instructed by the  
 “ angels, he broke out into this melodious song,  
 “ O King and Ruler of nations, &c.” It is  
 unnecessary to make any comment on this most  
 shocking story. St. Dunstan was succeeded in  
 the see of Canterbury by Ethelgar Bishop of  
 Seolsey, who lived only one year and three  
 months; and then by Siricius Bishop of Wilton\*,  
 who governed that church about four years †.  
 Both these prelates had been monks of Galston-  
 bury, and disciples of St. Dunstan; but the  
 shortness of their pontificates, and the confusion  
 of the times, did not permit them to perform  
 any thing memorable. St. Oswald, the great  
 friend and associate of St. Dunstan in the expul-  
 sion of the secular canons, and introduction of  
 the monks, died A. D. 993, after he had held  
 the archbishopric of York, together with the  
 bishopric of Worcester, about twenty-two years ‡.  
 By these two famous saints, holding each of  
 them two bishoprics together for so many years,  
 we have some reason to suspect they were not  
 quite so heavenly-minded as their admirers re-  
 present them.

Fatal ef-  
 fects of the  
 increase of  
 monasteries.

The violent and too successful zeal of Dun-  
 stan and his associates, in promoting the build-  
 ing and endowing so great a number of houses  
 for the entertainment of useless monks and nuns,  
 was very fatal to their country: for by this

\* *Anglia Sacra*, t. 2. p. 114.

† *Godwin de Præsul.* Angl. p. 75.

‡ *Id.* t. 2. p. 18.



means, a spirit of irrational, unmanly superstition was diffused amongst the people, which debased their minds, and diverted them from nobler pursuits: and a very great proportion of the lands of England was put into hands who contributed nothing to its defence; which made it an easy prey, first to the insulting Danes, and afterwards to the victorious Normans.

Cent. X.



The people of Wales, who were governed by their own princes, were still instructed by their own clergy, and seem to have had but little connection with the churches of Rome or England in the tenth century. It appears, however, from the laws of Hoel Dha, who flourished about the middle of this century, that the Welsh were not much wiser, or much less superstitious, than their neighbours in this period; for by these laws, which are said to have been made in a great council of the nobility and clergy, at which no fewer than one hundred and forty prelates, *i. e.* bishops, abbots, and rectors, were present, it is evident that the churches and clergy of Wales enjoyed the same distinctions and immunities with those of England\*. The truth is, that there was a very great conformity between the laws of England and Wales at this time, both in civil and ecclesiastical matters; which must have been occasioned by the vicinity of these countries, the unavoidable intercourse of their inhabitants, and the ascendant which the

Ecclesiastical history of Wales.

\* Leges Hoeli Dha, a Wottono edite, passim.

Cent. X.



Kings of England had acquired over the Princes of Wales, who were their vassals and tributaries\*.


Ecclesiastical history of Scotland.

The history of the church of Scotland is as little known in this period as that of Wales.

Though the bishops of St. Andrew's were not yet raised to the rank of archbishops and metropolitans, they seem to have had some kind of pre-eminence over the other bishops of Scotland, occasioned probably by their greater wealth, and their greater influence with the princes of those times. Kellach the Second, who was bishop of St. Andrew's from A. D. 904, to A. D. 939, is said to have been the first bishop who went from Scotland to Rome for consecration, or for obtaining the approbation of the Pope †. We have good reason to presume, that there were several councils held in Scotland, in the course of this century, for the regulation of ecclesiastical affairs; but the records of all these councils have long ago perished through the injuries of time, the cruel policy of Edward I. of England, and the sudden destruction of the abbeys of Scotland, with their archives and libraries, at the Reformation. There is a slight notice of one of these councils preserved in a very short chronicle, which hath escaped all these disasters. " In the following year, A. D. 906, King Constantine, the son of Ethy, with Kellach his bishop, and the Scots, decreed, that the rules of faith and

\* *Leges Hoeli Dha, a Wottono editæ, passim.*

† Spottiswoode's Church History, p. 26.

“ of the gospels, with the laws and discipline of Cent. X.  
 “ the church, should be observed, in an assembly   
 “ held on the Hill of Faith, near the royal city  
 “ of Scone. From that day, that hill hath  
 “ borne the name of *Knockcreidigh*, or, *the Hill*  
 “ *of Faith* \*.” The dispute about the celibacy  
 of the regular canons of Kuldees, is said to have  
 been agitated in Scotland as well as in England  
 in this century ; and there is a circumstance  
 mentioned by several monkish historians, which  
 renders this very probable. When this great  
 cause was to be debated before a council at  
 Calne in Wiltshire, A. D. 978, the regular can-  
 ons placed at their head, as their chief orator,  
 one Beornelm, a Scotch bishop ; a man, say these  
 authors, of invincible loquacity, who greatly  
 puzzled poor old St. Dunstan †. It is not im-  
 probable, that this loquacious gentleman had  
 gained a victory on this subject in his own coun-  
 try, which made the English canons engage him  
 to plead their cause.

Ælfric, formerly Bishop of Wilton, was Arch- Cent. XI.  
 bishop of Canterbury from A. D. 995, to A. D. Ælfric's ho-  
 1005 ; and was one of the most learned men,  
 and most voluminous writers, of the age in which  
 he lived. This prelate, conscious of the inca-  
 pacity of many of the clergy to instruct the  
 people in the principles and precepts of religion,  
 translated no fewer than eighty sermons or homi-  
 lies from the Latin into the Saxon language for


\* Innes's Essays, v. 2. p. 786.

† Anglia Sacra, t. 2. p. 112.

Cent. XI. their use\*. These sermons were suited to different seasons and occasions, and were designed to be read by the inferior clergy to the people at these seasons for their instruction. The sermon for Easter Sunday, on the sacrament of the Lord's supper, hath been often printed, and shews very plainly that the church of England had not yet embraced the doctrine of transubstantiation †. This is sufficiently evident, from the following passage in that discourse: “ The  
 “ body that Christ suffered in was born of the  
 “ flesh of Mary, with blood and with bone, with  
 “ skin and with sinews, in human limbs, with  
 “ a reasonable living soul: but his spiritual  
 “ body, which we call the *housel*, is gathered of  
 “ many corns, without blood and bone, without  
 “ limb, without soul; and therefore nothing is  
 “ to be understood therein bodily, but spiritually.  
 “ Whatever is in the *housel* which giveth life,  
 “ that is spiritual virtue, and invisible energy.  
 “ Christ's body that suffered death, and rose from  
 “ death, shall never die again, but is eternal  
 “ and unpassible; but *housel* is temporal, not  
 “ eternal, corruptible, and dealed into sundry  
 “ parts, chewed between the teeth, and sent  
 “ into the belly. This mystery is a pledge and  
 “ a figure; Christ's body is truth itself. This  
 “ pledge we do keep mystically until we come  
 “ to the truth itself; and then is this pledge

\* Ælfrici Præfatio secunda ad Grammaticam suam, p. 2.

† Hickes. Dissertatio Epistolaris, p. 98.

“ ended \*.” It is hardly possible to express the present sentiments of the church of England, and of other Protestant churches, on this subject, in plainer words than these; and it would certainly be no easy task for the most artful sophister, to accommodate them to the doctrine of transubstantiation. Cent. XI. 

This excellent prelate, for so he certainly was for the age in which he lived, composed also a kind of episcopal charge, which seems to have been designed as a form for bishops in instructing their clergy. The several injunctions in this charge are delivered in an authoritative tone, and in the form of commands; for which reason they have been commonly called *Ælfric's canons*, though there is no appearance of their having been enacted by any ecclesiastical synod. These injunctions or canons are thirty-seven in number, and contain many curious particulars concerning the discipline and ceremonies of the church of England in those times. As Ælfric had been educated under Ethelwald Bishop of Winchester, he was, like his master, a great promoter of the celibacy of the clergy; and therefore, in the first eight of these canons, he argues strenuously, though not very logically, against the marriage of priests. It appears, however, from those very canons, that the clergy of England were generally married at this time, and that they stoutly defended the lawfulness of their marriages. Ælfric's canons.

\* Bed. Hist. Eccl. notis Wheeloci, p. 402.

Cent. XI.

“ These canons against the marriage of priests,” says Ælfric, “ seem strange to you to hear, for ye have so brought your wretched doings into fashion, as if there was no danger in priests living like married men. The priests now reply, That St. Peter was a married man, and that they cannot live without the company of a woman.” By the ninth of these canons, the clergy are forbidden to be present at a marriage, or to give their benediction, when either of the parties had been married before ; though such marriages are not declared to be absolutely unlawful, but only to be discouraged. The next seven canons describe the names and offices of the seven orders of the clergy, which are these :—1. The ostiary, who is to open and shut the church-doors, and ring the bells ;—2. The lector, who is to read God’s word in the church ;—3. The exorcist, whose office is to drive out evil spirits by invocations and adjurations ;—4. The acolyth, who holds the tapers at the reading of the gospels, and celebrating mass ;—5. The sub-deacon, who is to bring forth the holy vessels, and attend the deacon at the altar ;—6. The deacon, who ministers to the mass-priest, places the oblation on the altar, reads the gospel, baptizeth children, and gives the housel to the people ;—7. The mass-priest, or presbyter, who preaches, baptizes, and consecrates the housel. This canon declares, that the bishop is of the same order with the presbyter, but more honourable. By the eighteenth, the distinction between

the secular clergy and the monks or regulars is established. The next canon commands the clergy to sing the seven tide-songs at their appointed hours, viz. the ught-song, or matins, early in the morning,—the prime-song at seven o'clock,—the undern-song at nine o'clock,—the mid-day song at twelve o'clock,—the none-song at three o'clock after noon,—and the night-song at nine o'clock at night. By the twenty-first canon, priests are commanded to provide themselves with all the necessary books for performance of divine service, viz. the psalter, the epistle-book, the gospel-book, the mass-book, the song-book, the hand-book, the kalendar, the passional, the penitential, and the reading-book. By the twenty-third, priests are commanded to explain the gospel for the day, every Sunday, in English, to the people, and to teach them the creed and *Pater noster* in English as often as they can. By the twenty-seventh, priests are forbidden to take money for baptizing children, or performing any other part of their duty. The thirty-second commands priests always to have a sufficient quantity of oil by them which had been consecrated by the bishop, for baptizing children and anointing the sick; but that no sick person should be anointed unless he desired it. The thirty-seventh and last of these canons is in the form of an epistle, which was given to each priest on Maunday'Thursday, when he came or sent to the bishop for his annual stock of consecrated chrism and oil; and con-

Cent. XI.

Cent. XI. tains several directions about the celebration of mass, and other offices. Among many other ceremonies to be performed on Good-Friday, the people are directed to adore and kiss the cross. As the freaks of superstition are endless, some priests about this time had conceived a notion, that the sacramental bread consecrated on Easter-day was more efficacious than that which was hallowed at any other time; and, therefore, they used to consecrate a great quantity on that day, and kept it through the whole year for the use of the sick. This practice is condemned, because when the consecrated bread was kept so long, it was apt to become stale, to be lost, or eaten by mice. Priests are directed to mix water with the sacramental wine; “because the wine  
 “betokeneth our redemption through Christ’s  
 “blood, and the water betokeneth the people  
 “for whom he suffered.” A great number of fast days are commanded to be observed, particularly every Friday, except from Easter to Pentecost, and from Midwinter to Twelfth-night. Sunday was to be kept from Saturday at noon to Monday morning\*. These are the most remarkable particulars in this famous charge; on which we shall leave our readers to make their own reflections.

Death of  
 Ælfric.

Archbishop Ælfric expelled the regular canons who would not abandon their wives from his cathedral church of Canterbury, and brought

\* Spl. Concil. t. 1, p. 572—582. Johnson’s Canons, A. D. 957.



in Benedictine monks in their room. He had also the influence to procure a charter from King Ethelred, confirming that transaction, and all the privileges and possessions of his favourite monks; praying most devoutly, that all persons who should give them any disturbance, might be torn by the teeth of all the dogs in hell\*. This seems to have been the last transaction of this prelate's life; who died A. D. 1005, and was succeeded by Elphegus, Bishop of Winchester.

Cent. XI.



The English at this time were involved in very great calamities, and threatened with total ruin, by a grievous famine, and the sword of the victorious Danes, from whom they sometimes purchased a short precarious truce with great sums of money. In one of these intervals, A. D. 1009, a great council of all the chief men of the clergy and laity was held at Ensham in Oxfordshire, to deliberate on the most effectual means of preserving themselves and their country from that destruction with which they were threatened. Elphegus, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Wulstan, Archbishop of York, seem to have convinced this wise assembly, that to oblige the clergy to put away their wives, and the laity to pay all their dues honestly and punctually to the church, would be the best means of averting the displeasure, and conciliating the favour, of heaven; and therefore, many strict laws were made for these purposes †. But either

Council of Ensham.

\* Spel. Concil. t. 1. p. 504.

† Id. t. 1. p. 513, &amp;c.

Cent. XI.



these laws were not so well observed, or had not the desired effect ; for the miseries of the English still continued to increase ; and about four years after this, the Danes, having taken Canterbury, reduced it to ashes, butchered nine-tenths of the inhabitants, and murdered the Archbishop, because he would not, or could not, pay the prodigious ransom which they demanded \*.

Council of  
Habham.

Livingus, Bishop of Wells, succeeded Elphegus A. D. 1013, and was deeply involved in the calamities of those unhappy times †. Soon after the return of King Ethelred from Normandy, (whither he had fled with his family to escape the fury of the victorious Danes), a great council was held A. D. 1014, at a place called *Habham* ; in which it was resolved to practise some extraordinary devotions, to prevail upon the saints and angels to fight against the Danes. St. Michael, the Archangel, had lately gained great reputation by a victory which the Christians in Apulia had obtained by his means, as they imagined, over the Pagans ; and the English determined to persuade this celestial warrior, if possible, to do them the like favour. With this view, it was decreed at this council, that every person who was of age should fast three days on bread, water, and raw herbs, before the feast of St. Michael, should confess and go to church barefoot ; and that every priest, with his whole congregation, should go these three days

\* Anglia Sacra, t. 2. p. 141.

† Godwin de Præsul. Ang. p. 77.

in solemn procession barefoot. The monks and nuns in all their convents were commanded to celebrate the mass *contra Paganos* (against the Pagans) every canonical hour, lying prostrate on the ground, and in that posture to sing the psalm,—“ Lord, how are they increased that trouble me !” &c \*. The English at that time seem to have reposed their chief hopes of preservation in these and such observations ; so entirely were their minds blinded and infatuated by superstition. Their affairs, however, became daily more and more desperate ; and about three years after this council, they were entirely subdued by the Danes.

Though the generality of the Danes at this time were either Pagans, or only a kind of half Christians, their King Canute, who became also King of England, A. D. 1017, was a zealous Christian, according to the mode of the age in which he lived. Of this he gave sufficient evidence,—by repairing the monasteries which had been destroyed by the Danes in the late wars,—by granting many immunities to the convents and clergy,—by building and endowing churches †,—by visiting Rome in person, A. D. 1031, and chiefly by the many ecclesiastical laws that were made in his reign ‡. The first system of Canute’s ecclesiastical laws contains twenty-six canons ; of which the first four enlarge and secure

Cent. XI.

Ecclesiastical laws of King Canute.

\* Johnson’s Canons, A. D. 1014. Spel. Cencil. t. J. p. 530.

† W. Malms. l. 2. c. 11,

‡ Id. *ibid.* p. 533—570.

Cent. XI. the protection of the church, or its rights of sanctuary. In the third of these canons, churches are ranged into four classes, and the mulct for violating their protection proportioned to their dignity, viz. for violating the protection of a cathedral, five pounds; of a middling church, one hundred and twenty shillings; of a lesser church that hath a burying place, sixty shillings; of a country church without a burying-place, thirty shillings. In the fifth canon, rules are laid down for the trial of priests accused of various crimes, which are very favourable to the clergy. By the sixth, celibacy is recommended to all the clergy, and particularly enjoined to those in priests' orders; and for their encouragement it is declared, that an unmarried priest shall be esteemed equal in dignity to a thane. The seventh prohibits marriage within the sixth degree of kindred. In the six subsequent canons, all the dues payable to the clergy, as tithes of corn and cattle, Rome-scot, church-scot, plough-almes, light-scot, and soul-scot, are enumerated, and the payment of them secured by various penalties. The remaining canons contain nothing new or curious\*. There are several laws respecting religion and the church intermixed with the civil laws of this prince; of which the following one is the most remarkable: " We strictly prohibit all Heathenism; *i. e.* the  
" worship of idols or Heathen gods, the sun,

\* Johnson's Canons, A. D. 1017. Spél. Concil. t. 1. p. 538.

“ moon, fire, rivers, fountains, rocks, or trees  
 “ of any kind; the practice of witchcraft, or  
 “ committing murder by magic, or firebrands,  
 “ or any other infernal tricks.”

Cent. XI.



The two succeeding reigns of Harold Harefoot and Hardicanute, from A. D. 1035, to A. D. 1041, were so short and unsettled, that they afford no materials of importance for the history of the church. Though Edward the Confessor was a prince of great piety, according to the mode of the times in which he lived, his court was so much disturbed during the greatest part of his reign, by the cabals of the English and Norman factions, that he did not pay so much attention to ecclesiastical affairs as might have been expected. There are indeed two systems of laws extant, which are commonly called *the laws of Edward the Confessor*, in which there are several canons in favour of the church and clergy; but they contain in their own bosom the most unquestionable evidence of their having been composed, or at least very much changed, after the conquest\*. This prince, however, was a great benefactor to the church, and employed the last years of his life in building the famous monastery of St. Peter's, Westminster, on which he bestowed great riches, and many singular privileges and immunities †.

History of the church in the reigns of Harold, Hardicanute, and Edward the Confessor.

Ignorance and superstition arrived at a great height in the church of England in the former

Character of the eleventh century.

\* Johnson's Canons, A. D. 1064, 1065. Spel. Concil. t. 1. p. 619.

† Dugd. Monasticon, vol. 1. p. 55.

Cent. XI. part of the eleventh century. Of this the frequency of pilgrimages to Rome,—the prodigious sums expended in the purchase of relics,—the immense wealth and pernicious immunities of the clergy, to mention no others, are sufficient evidences. In this period, the roads between England and Rome were so crowded with pilgrims, that the very tolls which they paid were objects of importance to the princes through whose territories they passed; and very few Englishmen imagined they could get to heaven without paying this compliment to St. Peter, who kept the keys of the celestial regions\*. The Pope and Roman clergy carried on a very lucrative traffic in relics, of which they never wanted inexhaustible stores. Kings, princes, and wealthy prelates, purchased pieces of the cross, or whole legs and arms of apostles; while others were obliged to be contented with the toes and fingers of inferior saints. Agelnoth, Archbishop of Canterbury, when he was at Rome, A. D. 1021, purchased from the Pope an arm of St. Augustin, Bishop of Hippo, for one hundred talents, or six thousand pound weight of silver, and one talent, or sixty pound weight of gold †. A prodigious sum! which may enable us to form some idea of the unconscionable knavery of the sellers, and the astonishing folly and superstition of the purchasers of those commodities. The building, endowing, and adorning of monas-

\* W. Malm. l. 2. c. 11.

† Id. ibid.

teries, had been carried on with such mad profusion for about one hundred and fifty years, that a great part of the wealth of England had been expended on these structures, or lay buried in their ornaments and utensils. “The masses of gold and silver,” says William of Malmsbury, “which Queen Emma, with a holy prodigality, bestowed upon the monasteries of Winchester, astonished the minds of strangers, while the splendour of the precious stones dazzled their eyes\*.” In this period the numbers, both of the secular and regular clergy, increased very much, and their possessions still more. By the frequent and extravagant grants of land bestowed on cathedrals, monasteries, and other churches, from the beginning of the tenth to the middle of the eleventh century, we have good reason to believe, that at the death of Edward the Confessor, more than one third of all the lands of England were in the possession of the clergy, exempted from all taxes, and for the most part even from military services †. When we reflect on these circumstances, we cannot be very much surprised, that the people of England, in this period, were so cruelly insulted by the Danes, and at the end of it so easily conquered by the Normans.

Cent. XI.

\* W. Malms. l. 2. c. 11.

† Spelman, Gloss. p. 396.





THE  
HISTORY  
OF  
GREAT BRITAIN.

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BOOK II.

CHAP. III.

THE HISTORY OF THE CONSTITUTION, GOVERNMENT,  
AND LAWS OF GREAT BRITAIN, FROM THE ARRIVAL  
OF THE SAXONS, A. D. 449, TO THE LANDING OF  
WILLIAM DUKE OF NORMANDY, A. D. 1066.

**T**HE history of that political constitution and form of government which was established in the best and greatest part of this island, and of the laws which were enacted by the Anglo-Saxons in this period, is equally curious, important, and interesting. It is curious, as it sets before us a great variety of uncommon and amusing objects, and discovers the origin of many of our most ancient customs and institutions. It is important and interesting to the English nation, as that form of government, and those

Curiosity and importance of the subject of this chapter.

laws, were the work of their remote ancestors; the most valuable legacy which they left to their posterity, and the foundation of that most noble and beautiful superstructure, their present free and happy constitution.

Difficulty of writing the history of law and government.

It is much to be lamented, that it is so difficult, or rather that it is impossible, to write the history of the origin and progress of the English constitution, laws, and government, in so clear and full a manner, as to leave nothing dark or wanting, and supported in every part with such strength of evidence, as to leave nothing doubtful. That this is really impossible, will be most readily acknowledged by those who are best acquainted with the subject. The writers who flourished in this period were very few, and these few were cloistered monks, who never entertained a thought of giving a particular account of the laws and government of their country.—Many of the Anglo-Saxon laws themselves have been entirely lost, and others have suffered so much by the injuries of time, and the inattention of transcribers, that their meaning can hardly be discovered. Some particulars relating to this subject are sunk so deep in the darkness of antiquity, and others are so involved in clouds of learned dust that have been raised by angry disputants, that it seems to require more than human sagacity to find out the truth, and guard against mistakes. In these circumstances, all that can be done is,—to cherish a cordial love of truth,—to search after it with care and

diligence,—and to lay the result of these researches before the public with plainness and sincerity.

To prevent that confusion which is commonly occasioned by blending various subjects together, and to preserve an uniformity between the plan of this chapter, and of that on government in the preceding period, it is proper to divide it into three distinct sections. In the first section shall be given,—A brief account of the several German nations which settled in Britain in this period,—of the places of their original seats on the continent,—of the situation and limits of their settlements in this island,—of the political divisions of their territories that were made by them, and by the other British nations. The second section shall contain,—A delineation of the different ranks of people,—of magistrates,—and of courts of law and justice, in Britain in this period. The third and last section shall comprehend,—the history of the several kinds of laws that were enacted, and in force, in this period.

Plan of this chapter.

## SECTION I.

*A brief account of the several German nations which settled in Britain in this period,—of the places of their original seats on the continent,—of the situation and limits of their settlements in this island,—of the political divisions of their territories that were made by them, and by the other British nations.*

ANCIENT Germany comprehended all that extensive tract of country which is bounded by the Rhine on the south,—by the German ocean on the west,—by the northern sea on the north,—and by the Vistula, &c. on the east\*. This country (which, besides modern-Germany, comprehended all the dominions of Denmark and Sweden, and several other districts) was anciently inhabited by a prodigious number of distinct tribes and nations. But though these Germanic nations differed very much from one another in their situation,—their strength,—their wealth,—and some other circumstances, yet they appear to have sprung from the same origin,—to have spoken the same language, though in different dialects,—and to have borne a very great resemblance to each other in their manners, customs, and forms of government †.

\* Cluver. German. Antiq. I. 1. c. 2. p. 76.

† Tacit. de Morib. German. passim. Northern Antiquities, Preface, p. 24.

This was particularly true of those nations which came from Germany, and settled in Britain, in this period, and from whom the great body of the English nation is descended.

Original seats of the German nations which came into Britain.

Their original seats on the continent were contiguous, situated in that peninsula which is commonly called *the Cimbric Chersonese*, bounded on the river Elbe on the south, by the German ocean on the west, and by the Baltic sea on the north and east. When the unhappy Britons formed the fatal resolution of calling in foreign auxiliaries, to preserve them from that destruction with which they were threatened by the Scots and Picts, they could find none nearer than the inhabitants of that country, who were likely to grant them the protection which they wanted; for their nearest neighbours, and natural allies, the Gauls, who spoke the same language, and professed the same religion with themselves, were in no condition to give them any assistance, having been invaded, and almost conquered, by the Franks, another German nation\*.

The country above described, to which the Britons directed their eyes for relief in their distress, was at that time inhabited by three nations, which were called *Saxons*, *Angles*, and *Iutes*; who sent armies into Britain, and there obtained settlements †. From these three nations the

Nations from whom the English are descended.

\* Gregor. Turonens. l. 1. 2.

† Bcd. Hist. Eccles. l. 1. c. 15. Chronicon Ethelwerdi, l. 1.

English in general derive their origin; though several other nations, particularly Danes and Normans, have since mingled with them in very great numbers\*.

The Saxons. The Saxons had long been the most powerful of these three nations, and had held the other two in some degree of subjection. This is the reason that those famous rovers who infested the narrow seas, plundered the coasts of Gaul and Britain, and gave the Romans so much trouble, in the fourth and fifth centuries, were all called Saxons, though they consisted of several nations. The chief seat of the people properly called Saxons was in Holsatia, or Old Saxony, now Holstein; though, after the departure of the Franks into Gaul, they extended themselves along the sea-coasts to the banks of the Rhine †. The Britons, having often experienced the valour of those Saxons to their cost, were desirous of employing it in their defence; and knowing them to be a maritime people, who delighted in such expeditions, they very naturally applied to them for assistance. They were but too successful in their application; several bands of Saxon adventurers came over and fixed themselves in Britain, where their posterity still flourish, though under another name, and bear, if we may believe several travellers, a very remarkable resemblance in their persons to the

\* Sheringham de Origine Gentis Anglorum, c. 2. p. 25. &c.

† Id. ibid.

present inhabitants of Holstein, from whence their ancestors came \*.

The Angles are said to have been a tribe of The Angles. the Suevi, who in Cæsar's time were the greatest and bravest of all the German nations †.— This tribe, after various adventures and migrations, settled in that part of the Cimbric Chersonesus which now forms the duchy of Sleswic, where some vestiges of their name still remain in the district of Anglen, between Sleswic and Flensburgh ‡. It was in this situation the British ambassadors found them; and from this country they embarked in the British expeditions with greater spirit, and in greater numbers, than any of the other German nations; which procured them the honour of giving their name to England and its inhabitants, who make at present one of the richest, most powerful, and flourishing nations in the world ||.

The Iutes, who were a tribe of the Getæ, the The Iutes. conquerors of so many countries, inhabited the extremity of the Cimbric Chersonesus, which from them is still called *Jutland*, and is bounded by the German ocean on the west, the Baltic on the east, and the country of the Angles on the south §. Besides these three nations, there were many adventurers belonging to the neighbouring tribes, particularly to the Frizians, who

\* Howel's Letters, vol. i. sect. 6. let. 4.

† Cæsar. Bel. Gal. l. 4.

‡ Cluver. German. Antiq. l. 3. c. 27. p. 605.

|| Bed. Hist. Eccles. l. 1. c. 15.

§ Sheringham, c. 2. p. 32.

embarked with them in their Britannic expeditions, and settled in this island.

Their seats  
in Britain.

The history of the several embarkations of these three nations from their native seats for this island, and of the seven kingdoms which they established in it, hath been already given\*. It only remains, in this place, to give a very brief description of the most common boundaries of these several kingdoms, with an account of the particular nation by which each of them was erected, that all the people of England may have a distinct view of their remote ancestors. In doing this, we shall begin at the south-west corner of Britain, and proceed regularly towards the north-east.

Kingdom of  
Wessex.

The south-west parts of Britain were subdued by several successive bands of Saxons, who there erected a kingdom about the beginning of the sixth century; which, from their name, and that of its situation, was called the kingdom of *Wessex*, or of the *West-Saxons*. This kingdom was very small for a considerable time after it was founded; but being happy in a long succession of great princes of the same royal family, it gradually increased, and at length swallowed up all the other kingdoms. In the times of the heptarchy, it comprehended those countries which now constitute the counties of Hants, Berks, Wilts, Somerset, Dorset, Devon, and part of Cornwall †. The Isle of Wight, which

\* See chap. 1.

† Speed Chron. p. 292.



lies off the coast of Hampshire, was commonly under the government of the kings of Wessex, though it was peopled by a colony of Iutes, who also possessed some districts on the continent opposite to that island \*. The capital of this kingdom was Winchester, the Venta Belgarum of the Romans, and the Cair Guent of the Britons.

2. Next to the kingdom of Wessex lay the little kingdom of Sussex, or of the South-Saxons, comprehending only the two counties of Surrey and Sussex. It was, as its name implies, founded and inhabited by Saxons. This kingdom, though one of the most ancient, was one of the smallest, weakest, and of the shortest duration of any of the heptarchy. When it was converted to Christianity, A. D. 678, it contained no more than about seven thousand families †.— This was partly owing to its small extent; but chiefly to a great part of it being covered with the wood Andereda ‡. The capital of this little kingdom was Chichester, the Regnum of the Romans, and the Cair Cei of the Britons.

3. Next to Sussex, eastward, lay the kingdom of Kent, which comprehended only the county of that name. This was the most ancient of all the Saxon kingdoms in Britain, having been founded about A. D. 455, and was also the first that embraced the Christian religion. This kingdom, if we may depend on the authority of

\* Bed. Hist. Eccles. l. 1. c. 15.

† Id. l. 4. c. 13.

‡ Camd. Britan. v. i. p. 195.

Bede and Ethelwerd, was erected and inhabited by a colony of Iutes, who seem not to have come directly from Jutland into Britain, but to have been settled for some time near the mouth of the Rhine, where it is probable the British ambassadors found them \*; for it is quite improbable that those ambassadors would make their first application at the greatest distance; and there is some positive evidence that Hengist, the founder of this kingdom, built the castle of Leyden a little before he embarked on his British expedition †. Though this kingdom was of small extent, it was very populous; and several of its princes bore a considerable sway in the heptarchy. The city of Canterbury, the Durovernum of the Romans, and the Cair Ceint of the Britons, was the capital of the kingdom of Kent, and one of the most considerable cities in England in the Saxon times.

Kingdom of Essex. 4. To the north-east of Kent, the kingdom of Essex, or of the East and Middle Saxons, was situated, comprehending only the counties of Essex and Middlesex, and a part of Hertfordshire. This kingdom, as its name imports, was founded and possessed by a colony of Saxons; but though it was rich and populous, and had the famous city of London for its capital, it made no distinguished figure in the heptarchy, its

\* Bed. Hist. Eccles. l. 1. c. 15. Ethelwerd, l. 1.

† Camd. Britan. pref. col. 157.

princes being for the most part in a state of dependence on those of Kent.

5. To the north-east of the kingdom of Essex Kingdom of East-Anglia. that of the East-Angles was situated, comprehending the counties of Cambridge, Suffolk, Norfolk, and the Isle of Ely. This kingdom was founded and inhabited by Angles, who landed in that part of Britain, because it was not pre-occupied by their neighbours the Saxons or Iutes, and lay nearest to their own country\*. It was bounded on the east and north by the ocean, on the south by Essex, and on the west by St. Edmund's ditch, dividing it from Mercia. The capital of East-Anglia was Dunwich, called by Bede Domnoc, a place of considerable note in the British, Roman, and Saxon times, but now swallowed up by the sea †.

6. In the very centre of England lay the powerful and extensive kingdom of Mercia, Kingdom of Mercia. comprehending (besides a part of Hertfordshire) no fewer than sixteen of our present counties, viz. Huntingdon, Rutland, Lincoln, Northampton, Leicester, Derby, Nottingham, Oxford, Chester, Salop, Gloucester, Worcester, Stafford, Warwick, Buckingham, Bedford. This kingdom was erected and possessed also by the Angles, and was therefore sometimes called the kingdom of the Mediterranean English ‡. It derived its more common name of Mercia from its situation,

\* Bed. Hist. Eccles. l. 1. c. 15.

† Id. l. 2. c. 15. Camd. Britan. v. 1. p. 448.

‡ Bed. Hist. Eccles. l. 3. c. 21.

bordering upon the marches of all the other kingdoms of the heptarchy, as well as of Wales. This situation had both its advantages and disadvantages; for as it gave the kings of Mercia an opportunity of invading all their neighbours, so it exposed them to the danger of being assaulted on all sides. Leicester, the *Ratæ* of the Romans, was the capital of Mercia.

Kingdom  
of North-  
umberland.

7. The seventh kingdom of the heptarchy was that of Northumberland, so called from its situation to the north of the Humber. This kingdom was also very extensive, comprehending all that part of England which lies to the north of the Humber and Mersey, and all that part of Scotland which lies to the south of the Forth. The Northumbrian territories were sometimes divided into the two kingdoms of Deira and Bernicia; of which the former, whose capital was York, comprehended the country between the Humber and the Tyne; and the latter, whose capital was Bamburgh, the country between the Tyne and the Forth. All these countries were inhabited by Angles, though probably with a great mixture of Iutes; for Octa and Ebissa, who settled a large colony in the desolated country between the walls of Severus and Antoninus Pius very early, were nearly related to Hengist the first king of Kent. We may be apt to be surprised, that the Angles, who were not near so numerous or powerful as the Iutes and Saxons, conquered and took possession of more than two-thirds of England (to which

they gave their name), besides a considerable part of Scotland. But the reason of this seems to have been, that the Iutes and Saxons only sent a few bands of adventurers into Britain, the body of these nations still continuing at home; while the Angles removed almost entirely from the continent into this island, leaving their native seats desolate; in which condition, Bede assures us, they remained in his time\*.

Such, in general, were the situations and limits of the several kingdoms of the heptarchy, and the Germanic nations by which they were originally erected and inhabited. Though some of these kingdoms were very small, and none of them, except those of Mercia and Northumberland, of any great extent, yet we have good reason to believe, that they were subdivided into smaller districts, for the more convenient administration both of the civil and military government. The Anglo-Saxon territories in Germany were subdivided into what the Roman historians call *pagi et vici*; which may not improperly be translated *shires and townships*, or *hundreds*; and we may be almost certain, that they subdivided the territories of each state in a similar manner as soon as they settled in this island †. Such subdivisions, and their respective governors, are frequently mentioned by our historians long before the end of the heptarchy ‡.

Subdivisions of these kingdoms.

\* Bed. Hist. Eccles. l. 1. c. 15.

† Tacit. de Morib. German. ch. 12. Cæsar. Bel. Gal. l. 6. Cluver. German. p. 91.

‡ Bed. l. 1. c. 1. 1. 5. c. 4. 15. W. Mahms. l. 2. c. 4.

It is not therefore strictly true, that Alfred the Great was the first who divided England into shires, hundreds, &c. though it is very probable, that great Prince made a new and more regular division than that which had subsisted before his time. The reader will find an account of a political division of all that part of England which lies to the south of the Humber, specifying the number of hides, or plough-lands, in each district, in the work quoted below \*. This division was evidently very ancient, and subsisted in the time of the heptarchy.

Political divisions of Wales.

It is quite impossible to give an exact delineation of the political divisions of the territories of the British or Welsh princes from the establishment to the end of the heptarchy. The number of these princes who flourished at the same time often varied. From Gildas we learn, that there were five British kings or princes who reigned over so many little principalities of the Britons, about the middle of the sixth century, when he wrote his satirical epistle against these princes †. Soon after, the number of these princes and principalities appear to have been six, viz. Guynedh, Powys, Dehewbarth, Reynnuc, Esyluc, Morgannuc ‡. The truth is, that every thing was fluctuating and unsettled among the unhappy Britons in this period; and the number and limits of their little principalities were perpe-

\* *Scriptores Britan.* edit. a Gale, l. 1. p. 748.

† *Epist. Gildæ* sub init.

‡ *Humphl-Lhuyd. Fragment. Britan.* p. 51.

tually changing by the fortune of war, and the fatal custom of dividing the territories of a prince at his death among all his sons. By this custom, the territories of the Britons were sometime subdivided into an incredible number of little states, which were subject to an equal number of petty tyrants, constantly at war with each other, and an easy prey to their common enemies the Saxons. Without attempting to describe the limits of these little temporary states, which were almost daily changing, it is sufficient to observe, that the most common and lasting division of the British territories in this period, was into the three following principalities or kingdoms. 1. Dehewbarth, now South Wales, the country of the brave Silures. This principality was anciently divided into the six districts of, (1.) Cairdigan, now Cardiganshire; (2.) Dyvet, now Pembrokeshire; (3.) Cairmarden, now Carmarthenshire; (4.) Morganive, now Glamorganshire; (5.) Guent, now Monmouthshire; (6.) Brecknock, now Brecknockshire. The chief residence or capital of the ancient princes of South Wales, was Cairmarden, and sometimes Dinevor Castle. 2. The principality of Matheaul, or Powysland, the country of the Demetæ, was divided into three districts of Powys-Vadoc, Powys between the Wye and Severn, and Powys Wanwynyn. The chief residence of the ancient princes of Powysland was first at Pengwern, now Shrewsbury, and afterwards at Mothraul. 3. The principality

of Gwyneth, now North Wales, the country of the Ordovices, was divided into the four districts of Mon, now Anglesey; Avuon, now Caernarvon; Meryonyth, now Merionethshire; and y Berwedhwlod, now Denbighshire and Flintshire. The chief residence of the princes of Gwyneth, or North Wales, was at Aberfrau, in the isle of Anglesey. Each of these districts or provinces in the three principalities of Wales, were subdivided into so many Cantreves, and these again into so many Commots; so as to make fifty-one Cantreves, and one hundred and fifty-eight Commots, in all Wales\*.

Political  
divisions of  
Scotland.

That part of Great Britain which hath for many ages been called *Scotland*, was, in the times of the heptarchy, inhabited by four nations, viz. 1. the Angles, or English, of the kingdom of Bernicia; 2. the Strath-Cluyd Britons; 3. the Scots; 4. the Picts. The limits of the kingdom of Bernicia have been already described. The country of the Strath-Cluyd Britons, commonly called the kingdom or principality of Cumbria, was a scene of greater confusion, and of more frequent revolutions, than even Wales itself in this period. When this principality was in a flourishing state, it extended from the river Ribble in Lancashire along the western coast to the mouth of the Clyde, where its capital, Al-Cluyd, now Dumbarton, was situated. But in the sixth and seventh centuries, this country was

\* See Speed's Description of Wales.



torn in pieces by many petty tyrants, which exposed the south parts of it to be subdued by the English kings of Deira and Bernicia, and the north parts by the Scots and Picts\*. The territories of the Scots, in the beginning of this period, were neither large nor fertile. Their limits are thus described in two of the most ancient chronicles now extant: “Fergus, the son of Erc, reigned over Albany, from Drumalbin to the sea of Ireland and Inchegall †.” From this description, it seems probable, that the Scots, before they subdued the Picts, possessed only that part of Caledonia which lies along the west and north sea, from the frith of Clyde to the Orkneys: and that their territories were divided from those of the Picts on the east by those high mountains which run from Lochlomond to the frith of Taine ‡. The Picts possessed all the rest of Scotland beyond the Frith of Forth, and had frequent disputes with the Northumbrian kings about the country between the Forth and Tweed; which, though almost wholly inhabited by Anglo-Saxons, was sometimes under the government of the Picts; who, before the extinction of their monarchy, had even extended their dominion over all the west parts of Scotland, which lay between the friths of Clyde and Solway ||.

\* Carte's Hist. v. 1. p. 210—213.

† Innes's Essays, Append. No. 1. No. 1.

‡ See Dr Macpherson's Dissertations, p. 332. &c.

|| Id. *ibid.*

Establishment of the English and Scotch monarchies.

Such were the political divisions of Great Britain from the beginning of the sixth to the middle of the ninth century. About that time a great change took place in the distribution of power in this island, by the establishment of the English monarchy in the south on the ruins of the heptarchy, and of the Scotch monarchy in the north, on the ruins of the Pictish kingdom. Soon after this great revolution, the two kingdoms of England and Scotland arrived at the same limits which they ever after retained (with some small and temporary variations) until they were happily united into one empire, in the beginning of the present century.

Political division of England by Alfred the Great.

Not long after the establishment of the English monarchy, Alfred the Great made a new and more regular division of his whole kingdom, very different from that which had subsisted under the heptarchy in many respects. In order to form this division with greater exactness, that wise and active Prince commanded a survey of all his territories to be taken, and recorded in the book of Winchester\*. From this book, which contained a description of the rivers, mountains, woods, cities, towns, and villages, with an account of the number of plough-lands and inhabitants in each district, he divided the whole into a certain number of shires, nearly, though not exactly, the same with our present counties. Each shire was again divided into trithings or

\* Ingulf, Hist.

leths; of which division there are still some vestiges in the ridings of Yorkshire, the leths of Kent, and the rapes of Sussex \*. Every trithing was subdivided into so many centuries or hundreds, and each hundred into ten decennaries or districts, containing ten families, or near that number, for in such distributions it was impossible to be quite precise and accurate. All the members of each decennary were mutual pledges for each other's obedience to the laws, and answerable, with some equitable restrictions, for their disobedience †. Whoever was not a member of some decennary, was considered as a vagabond, who could claim no protection or benefit from the laws of his country. In each of these divisions of shires, trithings, hundreds, and decennaries, that wise king appointed certain magistrates and courts, which shall be hereafter described. It is impossible to conceive any distribution more admirably contrived than this, for preserving peace and good order, and bringing all the members of the society under the immediate eye of the law, as every member of it had nine persons, besides himself, who were answerable for his good behaviour.

Britain was far from being populous in the period we are now considering. Of this the most ample evidence, as well as the most satisfactory reasons, may be given. The Scots and

State of population in Britain in this period.

\* Spelman Vita Ælfredi, p. 74.

† Wilkins Leges Saxonice, p. 20—204.

Picts had almost quite depopulated a great part of provincial Britain, before the arrival of the Saxons\*. Those dangerous auxiliaries becoming enemies, extirpated, enslaved, or expelled, all the ancient inhabitants of the best part of Britain, in erecting their seven kingdoms. After these kingdoms were erected, their cruel and incessant wars against each other prevented their becoming populous. When those seven kingdoms were united into one monarchy, new enemies appeared, no less destructive to population than any of the former, and prevented the happy effects of that union. The fatal rage of building monasteries; and crowding them with useless monks and nuns; this rage, I say, which seized the kings and nobility of England, after the establishment of the English monarchy, contributed not a little to impede the increase of people in that period. The very imperfect state of commerce, manufactures, and agriculture, which occasioned frequent and destructive famines, is at once an evidence and a cause of a scanty population in those times. As a further evidence of this, it may be observed, that there were very few cities or towns in Britain in this period, and these few were small and thinly peopled. In Scotland, there was not perhaps so much as one place that merited the name of a city; and in South Britain, where the Romans had built so great a number of towns, we are

\* Gildæ Hist. c. 11—26.

told by Nennius, there were only twenty-eight remaining in the seventh century \*. There is the clearest evidence from Doomsday-book, that not one of these cities, even at the end of this period, (London and Winchester perhaps excepted), contained ten thousand inhabitants; and the greatest part of them contained only a few hundreds †. York, which is the greatest city mentioned in that famous record, contained only 1418 houses, of which there were 540 uninhabited ‡. In Exeter there were only 315 houses, and in Warwick 223. Upon the whole, it seems very probable that Britain was not much more populous in the times of the heptarchy, than it had been in the ancient British times before the first Roman invasion; not half so populous as in the flourishing times of the Roman government; and that, from the establishment of the English monarchy to the conquest, it did not at any time contain above one million and a half of people. So fatal was the fall of the Roman empire to the populousness of its provinces, and so slowly was that loss repaired !

\* Nennii Hist. Brit. c. 65. See Appendix, No. 11.

† Brady on Burghs, passim.

‡ Id. p. 10.

## SECTION II.

*The history of the different ranks of people,—of magistrates,—and of courts of justice in Britain, from the arrival of the Saxons, A. D. 449, to the landing of William Duke of Normandy, A. D. 1066.*

Subject of  
this section.

**H**AVING, in the preceding section, given a brief delineation of the political divisions of the British territories, in the period we are now considering, into kingdoms, provinces or shires, trithings, hundreds, and decennaries, it is proper to proceed in taking a view of the several ranks of people by whom these territories were inhabited, with their respective rights and privileges,—the magistrates by whom these different districts or divisions were governed, with their several powers,—and the various courts in which these magistrates presided. In doing this, it seems most natural to begin at the lowest rank of people, magistrates, and courts, and regularly proceed to the higher, as this is the course in which appeals proceed in the administration of justice.

Slaves. The lowest order of people among the Anglo-Saxons, and the other nations of Britain in this period, were slaves; who, with their wives and

children, were the property of their masters \*. Besides those who were native slaves, or slaves by birth, others frequently fell into this wretched state, by various means; as, by an ill run at play,—by the fate of war,—or by forfeiting their freedom by their crimes,—or even by contracting debts which they were not able to pay †. These unhappy people, who were very numerous, formed an article both of internal and foreign trade; only if the slave was a Christian, he was not to be sold to a Jew or a Pagan; or if he belonged to the same nation with his master, he was not to be sold beyond sea ‡. Slaves, however, were of various kinds among the Anglo-Saxons, employed in various works, and were not all in an equal state of thralldom. Some of them were called *villani*, or *villans*, because they dwelt at the villages belonging to their masters, and performed the servile labours of cultivating their lands, to which they were annexed, and transferred with these lands from one owner to another ||. Others were domestic slaves, and performed various offices about the houses and families of their masters §. Some of these domestic slaves of the King and the nobility were taught the mechanic arts, which they practised for the benefit of their owners; and the greatest number of the mechanics of those

\* Reliquiæ Spelman. p. 250. 251. Leges Wallicæ, p. 206—324.

† Tacit. de Morib. German. c. 24. Leges Inæ, c. 7.

‡ Ibid. Eigbright Excerpt. c. 149. 150.

|| Glossar. Spelman. and Du Cange in voc. Villanus.

§ Leges Wallicæ, p. 453.

times seem to have been in a state of servitude\*. Slaves were not supposed to have any family or relations who sustained any loss by their death; and therefore when one of them was killed by his master, no mulct was paid, because the master was supposed to be the only loser; when slain by another, his price or manbote was paid to his master †. In a word, slaves of the lowest order were considered merely as animals of burden, and parts of their owner's living stock. In the laws of Wales, it is expressly said, "That a master hath the same right to his slaves as to his cattle ‡."

Slavery mitigated and diminished.

The horrors of this cruel servitude were gradually mitigated; and many of those unhappy wretches were raised from this abject state to the privileges of humanity. The introduction of Christianity contributed not a little both to alleviate the weight of servitude, and diminish the number of slaves. By the canons of the church, which were in those times incorporated with the laws of the land, and of the same authority, Christians were commanded to allow their slaves certain portions of time to work for their own benefit, by which they acquired property; the bishops had authority to regulate the quantity of work to be done by slaves, and to take care that no man used his slave harshly, but as a fellow-Christian ||. The bishops and clergy re-

\* Du Cange ad voc. Servi ministeriales. † Leges Wallicæ, p. 324.  
‡ Id. p. 206. || Spel. Concil. p. 405, &c.



commended the manumission of slaves as a most charitable and meritorious action: and in order to set the example, they procured a law to be made, that all the English slaves of every bishop should be set at liberty at his death; and that every other bishop and abbot in the kingdom should set three slaves at liberty\*. But after all these mitigations of the severities of slavery, and diminutions of the number of slaves, the yoke of servitude was still very heavy, and the greatest part of the labourers, mechanics, and common people, groaned under that yoke at the conclusion of this period †.

The next class or rank of people in Britain, Frilazin. in this period, was composed of those who were called *frilazin*,—who had been slaves, but had either purchased, or by some other means obtained, their liberty ‡. Though these were in reality free men, they were not considered as of the same rank and dignity with those who had been born free; but were still in a more ignoble and dependent condition, either on their former masters, or on some new patrons. This custom the Anglo-Saxons seem to have derived from their ancestors in Germany, among whom those who had been made free did not differ much in point of dignity or importance in the state, from those who continued in servitude ||. This distinction between those who had been made free,

\* Spel. Concil. p. 330. 331.

‡ Spel. Gloss. in voc.

† Vide Doomsday-book, *passim*.

|| Tacit. de Morib. German. c. 25.

and those who enjoy freedom by descent from a long race of freemen, still prevails in many parts of Germany; and particularly in the original seats of the Anglo-Saxons\*. Many of the inhabitants of towns and cities in England, in this period, seem to have been of this class of men who were in a kind of middle state between slaves and freemen †.

Ceorls. The third class or rank of people in Britain, in the period we are now considering, consisted of those who were completely free, and descended from a long race of freemen. This numerous and respectable body of men, who were called *ceorls*, constituted a middle class, between the labourers and mechanics (who were generally slaves, or descended from slaves) on the one hand, and the nobility on the other. They might go where they pleased, and pursue any way of life that was most agreeable to their humour; but so many of them applied to agriculture, and farming the lands of the nobility, that a ceorl was the most common name for a husbandman or farmer in the Anglo-Saxon times ‡. These ceorls, however, seem in general to have been a kind of gentlemen farmers; and if any one of them prospered so well as to acquire the property of five hydes of land, upon which he had a church, a kitchen, a bell-house, and great gate, and obtained a seat and office in the King's

\* Heinexii Elementa Juris German. t. vi. p. 27.

† Brady of Burghs.

‡ Somner. Dictionar. Saxon.

court, he was esteemed a nobleman or thane\*. If a ceorl applied to learning, and attained to priest's orders, he was also considered as a thane; his weregild, or price of his life, was the same, and his testimony had the same weight in a court of justice †. When he applied to trade, and made three voyages beyond sea, in a ship of his own, and with a cargo belonging to himself, he was also advanced to the dignity of a thane ‡. But if a ceorl had a greater propensity to arms than to learning, trade, or agriculture, he then became the sithcundman, or military retainer, to some potent and warlike earl, and was called the *huscarle* of such an earl ||. If one of these huscarles acquitted himself so well as to obtain from his patron, either five hydes of land, or a gilt sword, helmet, and breastplate, as a reward of his valour, he was likewise considered as a thane §. Thus the temple of honour stood open to these ceorls, whether they applied themselves to agriculture, commerce, letters, or arms, which were then the only professions esteemed worthy of a freeman.

All those above the rank of ceorls were thanes Thanes. or nobles. There were several degrees of nobility, or of thanes, among the Anglo-Saxons, though it is very difficult to mark the distinctions

\* Wilkins Leges Saxonicae, p. 70.

† Wilkins Leges Saxon. p. 71.

§ Wilkins Leges Saxon. p. 71.

† Spel. Concil. p. 405.

|| Spehnan's Gloss. in voc.

between these degrees with certainty and precision. The earl's or alderman's thane seems to have been the lowest degree of nobility; and next to him, he who had been advanced to that dignity on account of his promotion in the church, or his success in trade or agriculture\*. The King's thanes seem to have been of three different degrees, according to their different degrees of wealth, or favour at court, as appears from the hereots to be paid to the King at their death. The hereot of a king's thane of the lowest rank was one horse saddled, and the thane's arms;—of the second or middle rank, two horses, one saddled and one unsaddled, two swords, two spears, two shields, and fifty mancusses of gold;—of the first or highest rank, four horses, two saddled and two unsaddled, four swords, four spears, four shields, and one hundred mancusses of gold †. This is a sufficient proof, that these three classes of thanes were very different from each other in point of wealth and dignity; though they were all noble, attendants upon, and retainers of the King; the great ornaments of his court in times of peace, and the chief defence of his person in times of war.

The Anglo-Saxon thanes the same with the ancient German Comites.

Nothing can be more obvious than that the Anglo-Saxon thanes, or nobles, were the genuine descendants and representatives of the ancient German companions of their princes, who

\* Wilkins Leges Saxon. p. 71.

† Id. p. 144.

are thus described by Tacitus: “ The most noble  
“ are not ashamed to appear among the compa-  
“ nions and attendants of their brave and war-  
“ like princes. Of these companions there are  
“ different ranks, according to their different  
“ degrees of favour with the princes whom they  
“ attend; which fires them with ambition to ac-  
“ quire the first place in their esteem. Nor are  
“ princes less ambitious to increase the number  
“ and valour of their retainers: for to be sur-  
“ rounded by a numerous band of brave un-  
“ daunted followers, is their glory, their strength,  
“ their ornament in peace, their defence in war.  
“ In the day of battle, the prince strives to ex-  
“ cel his followers in acts of valour, and they  
“ to imitate his example; he fights for victory,  
“ and they for him. From him they receive the  
“ plenteous feast, the war-horse, and bloody  
“ spear, as the marks of his approbation, and  
“ the rewards of their attachment\*.” Hengist  
and Horsa, and Cerdic, and all the other Anglo-  
Saxon chieftains, who founded kingdoms in Bri-  
tain, were attended by numerous bands of these  
brave companions, thanes, or followers, who  
contributed greatly to their success. When the  
conquests, therefore, were completed, by the ex-  
pulsion, submission, or slaughter of the native  
Britons, the conquerors, with general consent,  
bestowed certain portions of the conquered lands

\* Tacit. de Morib. German. c. 13. 14.

on these valiant companions of their toils and victories. These lands were called *thanelands*, and were granted with that frank and generous spirit with which rude unpolished warriors are animated; without any of those painful restrictions, and manifold services and prestations, that were afterwards invented by artful feudalists. For the Anglo-Saxon thanes were under no obligations on account of their lands, except the three following, which were indispensably necessary to the defence and improvement of their country:—To attend the king with their followers in military expeditions,—to assist in building and defending the royal castles,—and in keeping the bridges and highways in proper repair \*. To these obligations all proprietors of land (even the churchmen for a long time not excepted) were subjected; and these services were considered as due to their country, rather than to the persons of their kings; and were agreed to by all as being necessary to their own preservation and conveniency. Such were the thanes or nobles of England, and of the lowlands of Scotland, where the Saxon language was spoken, in the times we are now considering; and such indeed were the nobles in all the kingdoms of Europe that were founded by the northern nations on the ruins of the Roman empire, being all called by names of the same

\* Reliquiæ Spelman. p. 22.

import and meaning\*. Among the Scots and Picts, the genuine descendants of the ancient Caledonians, those who bore the greatest resemblance to the Anglo-Saxon thanes, were called *tierna*; and among the Welsh, the true posterity of the ancient Britons, *teyrn*, which signify, the great proprietors of land †.

The thanes, who were the only nobility among the Anglo-Saxons, were a very numerous body of men, comprehending all the considerable landholders in England, and filling up that space in society between the ceorls or yeomanry on the one hand, and the royal family on the other, which is now occupied both by the nobility and gentry. In times of war, they constituted the flower of their armies, and in times of peace they swelled the trains of their kings, and added greatly to the splendour of their courts, especially at the three great festivals of Christmas, Easter, and Whitsuntide. From this body, all the chief officers, both civil and military, as aldermen, greeves, earls, heretogens, &c. were taken; and to obtain some of these offices was the great object of their ambition. Before they obtained an office, their lands were their only support, and they lived in greater or less

State of  
the thanes,  
and of their  
lands.

\* Thegan, or thane, signifies a minister or honourable retainer, from the verb *thenian*, to minister. The Vasses, Drudes, Lendes, Antrusionces, Gaffendii, and Gardingii of the Lombards, Franks, Goths, and Wisigoths, were all nobles of the same kind and origin with our thanes; and all these names signify ministers or retainers. See Squire on the English Constitution, p. 125.

† Macpherson's Dissertat. p. 179.

affluence, according to the extent of their estates. These they divided into two parts; one of which they called their *inlands*, and the other their *outlands*. Their *inlands* they kept in their own immediate possession, and cultivated them by the hands of their slaves and villans, in order to raise provisions for their families; their *outlands* they granted to ceorls or farmers, either for one year, or for a term of years; for which they received a certain stipulated proportion of their produce annually. These customs had long prevailed among their ancestors in Germany, and were adhered to by their posterity in England to the conclusion of this period\*.

Princes of  
the blood.

The princes of the several royal families among the Anglo-Saxons were considered as of a rank superior to the other nobles, and distinguished by the title of *Clitones*, or *Illustrious* †. The eldest son of the reigning prince, or the presumptive heir of the crown, was called the *Ætheling*, or the *Most Noble*, and was the next person in dignity after the King and Queen ‡. Among the ancient Britons or Welsh, in the beginning of this period, the presumptive heir of the crown or principality was called *Gurthd-drychjad*, or the *appointed Prince*; but by their frequent intercourse with, and partial subjection to the English, they gradually adopted many of

\* Tacit. de Morib. German. c. 25.

‡ Id. ibid. in voc.

† Spelman. Gloss. in voc.



their laws, customs, and titles of honour; and particularly called their heir-apparent the *Edling*. This prince had many high privileges and considerable revenues assigned him, to enable him to support his dignity. All the King's officers and servants were commanded to obey and serve the Edling, whenever he required them, without reward; and he had the free use of all the royal houses, horses, dogs, hawks, &c.\* Among the Scots and Picts, in this period, the presumptive, or rather the appointed heir, to their respective crowns, was called the *Tanist*, and enjoyed the same honours and privileges with the Ætheling of the English, and the Edling of the Welsh †.

Such were the several ranks in society among Ranks of women. the Anglo-Saxons, and other nations of Britain, in the period we are now examining, viz. slaves, freemen, ceorls, thanes, and princes of the blood. In this enumeration no notice hath been taken of the fair sex, because they were always of the same rank with their parents before marriage, and with their husbands after marriage; except female slaves, who did not become free by marrying a freeman, but were commonly made free before, in order to render them capable of such a marriage ‡.

It is now proper to take a view of those who Anglo-Saxon magistrates, &c. were invested with offices among the Anglo-

\* Leges Wallicæ, l. 1. c. 9.

† Dr Macpherson's Dissert. 13.

‡ Hiccesii Dissertatio epistolaris, p. 13.

Saxons, and other British nations, in this period, with the powers and emoluments annexed to these offices, the courts in which those who held them presided, and such other circumstances as are worthy of attention, and can be discovered.

Slaves incapable of being magistrates.

The lowest, though they were the most numerous class of men among the Anglo-Saxons, were absolutely incapable of any office of power, trust, or honour; for being slaves themselves, and not their own masters, they could have no authority over others, even over their own wives and children. The truth is, those unhappy men could not so much as call their lives their own; for these might have been taken from them by their masters with perfect impunity, and by any other person, for paying their price to their owners\*. For some time after the settlement of the Saxons in England, their slaves were in the same circumstances with their horses, oxen, cows, and sheep, except that it was not fashionable to kill and eat them. After the introduction of Christianity, the government began to take some notice of this miserable class of men, and to make some little distinctions between them and other animals. By one law, if a master gave his slave a blow, of which he died within twenty-four hours, he was to pay a small mulct to the king; by another, a master was not allowed to pay his fine for being guilty of adul-

\* Tacit. de Morib. German. c. 25.

tery, in slaves, but only in cattle or money; but still they were very far from being capable of any office \*. Even those slaves who obtained their freedom, very seldom attained to any office of power or trust; thinking themselves sufficiently happy in being under the protection of government, they hardly ever aspired to any share in the administration of it †.

Among the ancient Germans, every father of <sup>Heads of families.</sup> a family was a kind of magistrate, and had a great degree of authority over his wife and children, though it doth not seem to have extended to the power of life and death, as it did among the Gauls ‡. After the Saxons settled in England, the masters of families still retained very great power; because they were responsible to the public for the conduct of all the members of their respective families, and obliged to pay the fines for all the crimes which they committed. If a stranger staid above three days and nights in any family, the master of that family acquired the same authority over him, because he became in like manner answerable for his conduct ||.

One of the lowest magistrates among the An- <sup>Borsholder.</sup> glo-Saxons was called the *borsholder*, or *tithing-man*, whose authority extended only over one freeburgh, tithing, or decennary, consisting of ten families. Every freeman who wished to en-

\* Wilkins Leges Sax. p. 29. Johnson's Canons, A. D. 877.

† Tacit. de Morib. German. c. 25.

‡ Id. c. 19. Cæsar de Bel. Gal. l. 6. c. 19.

|| Wilkins Leges Saxon. p. 9.

joy the protection of the laws, and not to be treated as a vagabond, was under the necessity of being admitted a member of the tithing where he and his family resided; and in order to obtain this admission, it was as necessary for him to maintain a good reputation, because all the members of each tithing being mutual pledges and sureties for each other, and the whole tithing sureties to the king for the good behaviour of all its members, they were very cautious of admitting any into their society who were of bad or doubtful characters. Each tithing formed a little state or commonwealth within itself, and chose one of its most respectable members for its head, who was sometimes called the alderman of such a tithing or freeburgh, on account of his age and experience, but most commonly *borsholder*, from the Saxon words *borh*, a surety, and *alder*, a head or chief\*. This magistrate had authority to call together the members of his tithing, to preside in their meetings, and to put their sentences in execution. The members of each tithing, with their tithing-man or borsholder at their head, constituted a court of justice, in which all the little controversies arising within the tithing were determined. If any dispute of great difficulty or importance happened, or if either of the parties was not willing to submit to a sentence given in the tithing-court, the cause was referred, or appealed, to the next

\* Spelman. Gloss. p. 86.

superior court, or court of the hundred. At these tithing-courts, the arms belonging to the tithing were from time to time produced and inspected, new members were admitted, and testimonials given to such members as had occasion to remove into the bounds of another tithing. For as the tithing was answerable to the public for the good behaviour of all its members, no man could be member of a tithing in which he did not reside ; because he could not be under the immediate inspection of those who were answerable for his conduct. If any member of a tithing committed a crime, and made his escape, the tithing to which he belonged was allowed thirty-one days to pursue and apprehend him. If the tithing did not produce the criminal at the end of that period, the head of that tithing, with two of its most respectable members, together with the heads of the three next tithings, and two members out of each, making in all a body of twelve men, were obliged to make oath before a superior magistrate, “ That none of the  
“ members of the tithing to which the criminal  
“ belonged, had been accomplices in his crimes,  
“ —that they had not connived at his escape,—  
“ and that they had been at all possible pains to  
“ apprehend and bring him to justice.” If the tithing could not give this ample evidence of their perfect innocence, they were obliged to pay the mulct prescribed by the law for the crime committed. The severity of this last regulation was afterwards a little mitigated, and the oaths

of all the members of the tithing to which the criminal belonged, to the above effect, were admitted as a sufficient exculpation, provided they promised upon oath, at the same time, to present him to justice as soon as they could apprehend him\*.

Great union  
among the  
members of  
a tithing.

As all the members of a tithing were mutual sureties, so they were commonly mutual friends. They were all of the same rank, because thanes were not members of any tithing, the family of a thane being considered as a tithing within itself, and the thane responsible to the public for all its members †. A tithing was sometimes called a neighbourship, and its members the neighbours, who were strongly attached to each other's interest, and frequently united by the ties of blood. The neighbours fought in one band in the day of battle, and often eat at one table in the days of peace. If any quarrel happened at the common table of the neighbourship, a severe fine was paid by him who was to blame ‡. If one of the neighbours was wronged, all the rest assisted to procure redress; if one sustained a loss by fire, the death of cattle, or any other accident, all the rest contributed to repair the loss; if one of the neighbours became poor, the rest supported him; all the neighbours attended all the funerals, marriages, and festivals of the neighbourship; and, finally, if one of the neigh-

\* Wiggins Leges Saxon. p. 201. 202.

‡ Id. p. 16.

† Id. p. 202.

bours, or members of a tithing, behaved ill, he was solemnly expelled the society; which was one of the greatest disgraces and calamities in which a man could be involved\*: from that moment he sustained a total loss of character, became an outlaw and vagabond, and was exposed to a thousand insults.

It doth not seem to be possible for human prudence to contrive any political arrangement more admirably adapted than this was for promoting the peace and good order of society.— We need not therefore be surprised to hear of the prodigious effects it is said to have produced, when it was fully established and strictly executed in the reign of Alfred the Great. “By these means,” says Ingulphus, “so profound a tranquillity, and such perfect security, were established over all the land, that if a traveller left, or lost, ever so great a sum of money in the open fields or highways, he was sure of finding it next morning, or even a month after, entire and untouched †.”

The advantages of this excellent institution were so great, that many, both of the nobility and clergy, who were by law exempted from the necessity of being members of any tithing, formed voluntary associations among themselves upon the same plan. The learned Dr Hicke hath published the rules which the members of several of these voluntary fraternities bound

Advantages  
of this insti-  
tution.

Societies  
formed in  
imitation of  
tithings.

\* Spelman Vita Ælfredi, p. 73—82.

† Ingulph. Hist.

themselves to observe: from whence it appears, that they were exactly similar to those observed by the members of tithings or freeburgs\*. Each of these voluntary associations had a chief or head, invested with the same powers with a tithing-man or borsholder: most of them had also common tables, at which the members frequently feasted together; several of their fines were paid in honey or malt, which were no doubt designed to be made into mead or ale for these entertainments; and when a quarrel happened at these feasts, the offending party was obliged to pay the same fine that the member of a tithing was obliged to pay for the same offence †. In a word, there seems to have been no other difference between a *sodalitium*, or fraternity of thanes, bishops, abbots, and priests, and a tithing or freeburg of ceorls and freemen, but this, that the one was voluntary, and the other necessary. It even appears, that though the nobility and clergy were not obliged to become members of any tithing, as that would have implied a distrust of their good behaviour, unbecoming their dignity and character,—yet they were encouraged to form such voluntary associations among themselves, for their own security, and the public good; and several laws were made respecting these voluntary associations ‡. Whether the revival of this Anglo-Saxon insti-

\* Hiccesii Dissertatio Epistol. p. 18—22.

† Id. *ibid.*

‡ Johnson's Canons, A. D. 725. sub fin. Spelman Concil. p. 407. 495. 448.



tution would be any improvement of the present system of police, it doth not become a private member of society to determine. It is perhaps too exact and perfect to be practicable, in a populous and extensive empire.

The next magistrate superior to the tithing-man in rank and power, was called the *hundredary*, who presided over a district that contained ten tithings, or that division of a shire that was called a *hundred*. This magistrate was commonly, if not always, a thane or nobleman residing within the hundred, and elected by the other members into his office, which was both honourable and lucrative\*. It belonged to him to appoint the times and places for the meetings of the hundred-court,—to preside in that court,—to put its sentences in execution,—to inspect the arms belonging to the hundred, &c.; and for the performance of these offices, he received one-third of all the fines imposed in his court, with a certain quantity of corn from each member for maintaining his dogs, which destroyed wolves, foxes, and other noxious animals. The hundredary was the captain of his hundred in times of war, as well as their civil magistrate in times of peace. This office was known among the ancient Germans, and was long retained among the Franks, Lombards, and Wisigoths, as well as the Anglo-Saxons †.

\* Spelman Gloss. in voc. p. 301. &c.

† Lindenbrog. Gloss. voc. Centenarius. Tacit. de Morib. German. c. 6. 12.

The hundred-court.

As the hundredary was the next magistrate above the tithing-man, so the hundred-court was the next above the tithing-court. All the members of the several tithings within the hundred were members of the hundred-court, and obliged to attend its meetings, under pretty severe penalties. This court commonly met once every month; and all the members, in imitation of their German ancestors, came to it in their arms; from whence it obtained the name of the *wapentac*: for it was a constant custom, at the beginning of each meeting, for all the members to touch the hundredary's spear with theirs, in token of their acknowledging his authority, and being ready to fight under his command\*. In these courts, the Arch-deacon, and sometimes the Bishop, presided with the hundredary, and both civil and ecclesiastical affairs were regulated; an inquiry was made into the state of the several tithings; many petty causes came before them, either in the first instance, between persons belonging to different tithings, or by appeals from the tithing-courts. The hundred-courts had not authority to condemn any person to death or slavery; and if any man thought himself injured by their decisions, he might appeal to the trithing, or next superior court †. The proceedings in these courts were very summary, and every

\* Wilkins Leges Saxon. p. 203.

† Du Cange Gloss. voc. Centenarii. Spelman's Gloss. voc. Hundredarius, Wapentachium.

thing was determined by the votes of all the members, the hundredary having only a right to collect the votes, and pronounce the sentences. In these hundred-courts, sales of land, and other important transactions between the members of the same hundred, were published and confirmed\*.

The government of towns and cities, in this period, very much resembled the government of rural hundreds. The chief magistrate in these places was commonly called the *alderman* or *towngrieve*, or if they were sea-ports, the *portgrieve*; and each of these had the same authority in his town, or city, that the hundredary had in his hundred. The chief court in towns and cities was called the *burgemote*, or *folckmote*, at which all the burgesses attended, all the affairs of the community were regulated, and the disputes between one burges and another determined. Besides the stated monthly meetings of this court, the alderman or portgrieve had authority to call extraordinary ones, upon sudden emergencies, by the sound of the motbell †.

The next magistrate above the hundredary, was called the *trithingman* or *lathgrieve*, who presided over that division of a country that was called a *trithing*, and in some places a *lath*, which contained three, four, or more hundreds. The trithing-court, in which this magistrate pre-

\* Dugdale's Origines Juridicales, p. 27.

† Wilkins Leges Saxonice, p. 204.

sided, was composed of the members of the several hundred-courts within the trithing; and in it were tried appeals from the hundred-courts, and causes between members of different hundreds. In this court also the sales of estates, last wills, and other important transactions, were published and confirmed\*. But as this link in the chain of courts and magistrates was sooner left out, as unnecessary, than any of the rest, and hath left fewer vestiges behind it, a more minute description of it would be improper.

Alderman  
or earl.

The next magistrate above the trithingman was the alderman, or, as he was called in the Danish times, the *earl*, of that division of a kingdom that was called *shire*, or *county*. The alderman, or earl of a shire, was a person of the highest dignity, and greatest power, among the Anglo-Saxons; and therefore this office was commonly enjoyed by the thanes of the largest estates, and most ancient families. Possessed both of the civil and military government of his shire, the alderman was a little king within his own territories, and assumed the titles of *sub-king* and *prince* in subscribing charters and other deeds †. When he appeared at the head of the military forces of his shire in times of war, he was called a *duke* or *heretogen*, which signify a *general* or *commander* of an army; and was indeed a high and potent prince ‡. In the

\* Wilkins Leges Saxonice, p. 204. Hist. Eliens. apud Gale, t. 1. p. 479.  
 † Selden's Tit. Hon. p. 502. ‡ Spelman Gloss. p. 288.

most ancient times of the Anglo-Saxon government, the aldermen or earls were appointed by the king; but towards the conclusion of this period, these great officers seem to have been elected by the freeholders of the shire, in the shiregemot or county-court\*. To enable them to support their dignity, the earls enjoyed certain lands, which were called the *earls lands*, and had a right to one-third of all the fines imposed within the shire, and to several other perquisites†. The office of earl was so far from being hereditary in the most ancient period of the Anglo-Saxon government, that it was not so much as for life, but only during the good pleasure of the sovereign, and their own good behaviour‡. Towards the conclusion of this period, it appears, that the great earls were most commonly, though not always, succeeded by their sons in their earldoms. But this seems to have been owing to the increasing power of the aristocracy, and to the prodigious wealth and influence of a few great families, rather than to any formal change in the constitution. From the same cause, it became also very common in those times, for one of these great thanes to possess two, three, or more earldoms; which rendered them too powerful for subjects, and at length enabled one of them to usurp the crown ||.

As the aldermen or earls were always chosen

\* Annal. Saxon. p. 49. Wilkins Leges Saxon. p. 205.

† Spel. Gloss. p. 141. 142.

‡ Id. ibid.

|| Harold.

from amongst the greatest thanes, who in those times were generally more addicted to arms than to letters, they were but ill qualified for the administration of justice, and performing the civil duties of their offices. Some of these great men had also offices at court which required their attendance, or were absent from their shires on other accounts; or so much engaged in hunting and other rural sports, that they could not administer justice in their own persons. To remedy these inconveniences, there was an officer in every shire, inferior indeed to the earl in dignity, but commonly his superior in learning and the knowledge of the laws, who was called the *shiregerieve*, and in the absence of the alderman supplied his place. When the alderman was present, the shiregerieve was his assessor in judgment, and his chief minister in the discharge of every part of his duty \*. In the most ancient times, the shiregerieves were appointed by the king, but (if we can depend on the testimony of the pretended laws of Edward the Confessor) they were afterwards chosen in the shiregemote †. All the other nations of Gothic and German origin, who founded kingdoms in different parts of Europe on the ruins of the Roman empire, had officers of the same kind with the Anglo-Saxon shiregerieves: which is a sufficient evidence of their great antiquity ‡.

\* Spel, Gloss. in voc. Graphio.

† Wilkins Leges Saxon. p. 203.

‡ Gloss. apud Lindenbrog. voc. Graphio.

After the Anglo-Saxon laws were committed <sup>Lawyers by profession,</sup> to writing, it became necessary that some persons should read and study them with particular attention, in order to understand their true intent and meaning. This gave rise to lawyers by profession, who, in the language of England in those times, were called *ræd-boran* or *lahmen*, and in Latin *rhetores* or *causidici* †. These were the same kind of persons who were called *scabini*, *rachimburgi*, or *sagibarones*, by the Germans, Longobards, Franks, and other nations of Europe, in the times we are now examining\*; for all these are Teutonic words a little latinized, and of the same import with the *ræd-boran* and *lahmen* of the Anglo-Saxons; implying a capacity of reading, and a knowledge of the laws.

Some of these *lahmen*, *i. e.* law-men, after <sup>Assessors to the aldermen, &c.</sup> having undergone an examination as to their knowledge of the law, were appointed assessors to the aldermen, shiregerieves, and hundredaries; and others of them acted as advocates and pleaders at the bar ‡. In the most ancient times, when there were but few who could read, or understood the laws, three of these law-men were thought sufficient to assist an alderman or shiregerieve in judgment; but as the number of readers increased, the number of these assessors

\* Wilkins *Leges Saxon.* p. 125. *Hist. Eliens.* apud Gale, t. 1. p. 469.

† Du Cange *Gloss. in voc. Scabini, Rachimburgi, Sagibarones.* Heineccii *Opera*, t. 6. p. 642.

‡ Hicessii *Dissertat. epist.* p. 34. *Leges Wallica*, p. 30. 124.

was raised, first to seven, and afterwards to twelve\*. These assessors, who were in reality judges, took a solemn oath, that they would faithfully discharge the duties of their office, and not suffer an innocent man to be condemned, nor any guilty person to be acquitted †. Ingulphus seems to think that Alfred the Great was the first who instituted this order of law-men as assessors to the ordinary judges; but there is sufficient evidence, that this institution was more ancient, both in England and in other nations of Europe ‡. These ancient sages of the law are very plainly described in the laws of King Ina, who flourished in the end of the seventh and beginning of the eighth century. “If any fight  
“in the house of an alderman, or in the house  
“of one of the famous wise men, let him make  
“compensation with sixty shillings ||.”

Not the  
same with  
jurors.

Some learned men have been of opinion, that the *ræd-boran* and *lahmen* of the Anglo-Saxons, were the same with the jurors or jurymen of more modern times, who have acted a very important part in the administration of justice in England for several ages past. But this opinion is evidently liable to very strong objections. It is founded on one law of King Alfred's, and two of King Ethelred's, which merit a moment's

\* Du Cange Gloss. voc. *Sagibarones*. Id. voc. *Rachimburgi*. Wilkins *Leges Saxon.* p. 125.

† Wilkins *Leges Sax.* p. 117. *Leges Wallicæ*, p. 30.

‡ Ingulf. *Hist. Croyland in Alfred.*

|| Wilkins *Leges Saxon.* p. 16.



consideration. King Alfred's law may be thus translated: "If a king's thane is accused of murder, let him purge himself by twelve king's thanes. If an inferior thane is accused, let him purge himself by eleven of his equals, and one king's thane\*." This law seems rather to relate to compurgators, which will be hereafter described, than to jurors. The first law of Ethelred is to this purpose,—“That there may be a court held in every wapontack, let twelve of the most venerable thanes, with the gerieve, stand forth and swear on the holy things put into their hands, that they will not condemn any innocent, nor acquit any guilty person †.” This law directs the manner of constituting the judges in the hundred-courts, which were the president and his twelve assessors, forming a permanent body. The second law of Ethelred is this: “Twelve law-men shall administer justice between the Welsh and English, six Englishmen and six Welshmen ‡.” This was rather an article of a treaty than a law, and constituted a court to determine controversies between the subjects of different states. In the fifth volume, we shall have an opportunity of investigating the origin of juries.

The court in which the alderman or earl of the shire, together with the bishop, the shiregerieve, and the law-men their assessors, presided, was called the *shiregemote*. This was a court of great

The shire-gemote.

\* Wilkins Leges Saxon. p. 47.

‡ Id. p. 125.

† Id. p. 117.

authority and importance in the Anglo-Saxon times; a kind of little parliament, in which a great variety of business, civil, military, and ecclesiastical, was transacted. One great or general shiregemote was held in every county in the spring, and another in autumn, at a stated time and place, where the bishop of the diocese, the alderman of the shire, the shiregerieve, law-men, magistrates, thanes, abbots, with all the clergy and landholders of the county, were obliged to be present. The meeting was opened with a discourse by the bishop, explaining, out of the scriptures and ecclesiastical canons, their several duties as good Christians and members of the church. After this, the alderman, or one of his assessors, made a discourse on the laws of the land, and the duties of good subjects and good citizens. When these preliminaries were over, they proceeded to try and determine, first, the causes of the church, next the pleas of the crown, and last of all the controversies of private parties \*. As soon as a cause was opened, and sufficiently understood, and the evidence produced on both sides, it was determined by the votes of the whole assembly, which were collected by the law-men, who drew up and pronounced the sentence †. If any question of law arose, it was answered by the law-men out of the dome-boc, or law-book, which always lay before

\* Reliquiæ Spelman, p. 54.

† Hiccesii Dissertatio epist. p. 31, 32.

them in court\*. Besides the trial both of criminal and civil causes, a variety of other business was transacted at the shiregemotes; such as the sale of lands, donations to the church, the publication and confirmation of testaments, &c †.”

Though the shiregemote sometimes continued several days, it was impossible to finish all its business in the two annual general meetings; and therefore county-courts were held by the shiregerieve from four weeks to four weeks, to determine such causes as could not be overtaken by the general shiregemotes. At these lesser county-courts, which are sometimes called *folck-motes*, none were obliged to attend but the shiregerieves, the law-men, the parties and witnesses in the causes to be tried, and such as had immediate business ‡.

Whether there was any stated legal magistrate below the king, and superior to the aldermen or earls of counties, in the Anglo-Saxon times, may be justly questioned. The name of chancellor was not then indeed unknown; but he seems to have had little authority or jurisdiction, and to have acted as a kind of private secretary to the king; for which reason he is sometimes called the king's scribe or notary ||. This office, however, giving those who were invested with it frequent access to the persons and secrets of their royal masters, procured them no little influence,

\* Wilkins Leges Saxon. p. 48.

‡ Wilkins Leges Saxon. p. 50.

† Hickesii Dissertatio epist. p. 30.

|| Ingulf. Hist. Croyl.

and gradually became more and more important.

Anglo-Saxon  
cyning or  
king.

The chief magistrate in all the states established by the Anglo-Saxons in this island, was called the *cyning* or *king*; a title of the most honourable import in their language, as including the ideas of wisdom, power, and valour, the most necessary qualifications of a sovereign, both in peace and war \*. It is true, that those chieftains who conducted the several bands of adventurers out of Germany into Britain, were at their arrival only heretoges; a title which signified no more than the leader of an army during an expedition, which conveyed no authority in times of peace, and was commonly of very short duration †. But as those armies of adventurers met with a vigorous opposition from the native Britons, which continued many years, the authority of their heretoges or leaders lasted long, and by degrees became firm and well established. This encouraged these leaders, with the consent, and perhaps at the desire, of their followers, to assume the more honourable and permanent title of king; though it is hardly to be imagined, that this new title occasioned at first any very remarkable change in the constitution, or brought with it any great accession of authority. It is even probable, that the several Anglo-Saxon armies bestowed the title of kings on their respective leaders, as much to do honour to themselves

\* Somner Diction. Saxon. in voc.

† Chron. Saxon. p. 13.

as to their leaders. While they were commanded only by heretoges, they were considered as a collection of adventurers engaged in a piratical or plundering expedition; but when they had kings at their head, they appeared in the more respectable light of regular states or nations. This account of the origin of kingly government among the Anglo-Saxons in this island is very much confirmed by what happened in the north of England and south of Scotland in the same period. Octa and Ebessa conducted a very large colony out of Germany into Britain, A. D. 460, with which they settled between the walls of Severus and Antoninus Pius, or the rivers Tyne and Forth. This country being at that time almost desolate, they met with little or no opposition; and therefore did not bestow the title of king on any of their leaders, till near a century after, when they came to be involved in long and bloody wars.

It would be very improper to swell this work by entering deep into the political altercations of modern writers concerning—the rules of succession to the crown in the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms,—the duties, prerogatives, and revenues, of the Anglo-Saxon kings. It is more becoming the dignity of history, to lay before the reader, in a few words, what appears to be the truth on these subjects, as far as it can be discovered from the genuine monuments of those times.

Rules of  
succession,  
&c. in the  
Anglo-  
Saxon  
kingdoms.

The  
crown  
hereditary,  
but not  
strictly.

Each of those brave victorious chieftains who founded a state in this island by his conquests, was highly honoured by his followers during life ; and his valour and victories, to which they owed their establishment, were remembered with admiration even after his death. This veneration for the father and founder of their state inspired them and their posterity, for a considerable time, with great respect and affection for his descendants, who were considered by them as inheriting the virtues of their great ancestor, and on that account intitled to inherit also his wealth and honours. Agreeable to this, we may observe, that the succession to the crown in all the kingdoms of the heptarchy was at the beginning remarkably clear and regular, the eldest son succeeding his father, without interruption, for several generations. This is a sufficient indication, that this most natural and obvious rule of succession was not unknown to our Saxon ancestors at their first establishment in this island ; and even that it was the rule which they proposed to follow. It was, however, too perfect to be strictly and invariably observed in those rude and unsettled times. By degrees it was violated, and greater and greater breaches made in the succession. At first it was thought no great stretch for the brother of the deceased prince, who was of a mature age and warlike character, to supplant his infant-nephew ; as fierce unpolished nations could hardly form an idea of being governed by a child, or

by a regent in his name. This is so true, that there is but one example of a minority, and that a short and unfortunate one, in all the history of the heptarchy \*. When this breach in the succession was become familiar, they proceeded to greater deviations; and sometimes a prince of the royal family, who was at a great distance from the throne, took possession of it, to the exclusion of many who were nearer; but still the veneration of the people for the family of the founder of their state was so great, that no man who was not of that family dared to cast an ambitious eye on the crown. At last, however, this veneration was so much diminished, by length of time, and by the vices, follies, and quarrels, of the several royal families, that the thrones of all the kingdoms of the heptarchy, that of Wessex alone excepted, were seized by bold usurpers, who had no connection with the families of their founders; which first involved these kingdoms in confusion, and at last in ruin. The family of Cerdic, the founder of the West-Saxon kingdom (from whom our present most gracious sovereign George III. is descended) was more fortunate than any of the other royal families. For though the strictest rule of succession was often violated in this illustrious line (sometimes through necessity and for the public good †) yet the family was never quite excluded from the

\* Bed. Hist. Eccles. l. 5. c. 24.

† W. Malm. l. 1. c. 2. Brompt. p. 770. Chron. Saxon. p. 56.

throne, but was at length exalted to the monarchy of England in the person of Egbert, the first English monarch.

Hereditary  
after the  
establish-  
ment of  
the monar-  
chy.

After the establishment of the monarchy, the strictest rule of succession again took place, and was for some time observed; but in less than a century, it was again violated by Alfred, the best and greatest of our ancient kings, who was called to the throne by the urgent necessities of the times, and the importunate cries of the whole nation, to the exclusion of the infant-son of his elder brother. Several similar breaches were afterwards made in the succession, to say nothing of the violent intrusion of the Danish kings, and the usurpation of Harold. Upon the whole, there is sufficient evidence, that the crown of England was considered as hereditary from the very beginning by the Anglo-Saxons; though the strictest rule of hereditary succession was sometimes obliged to yield to necessity, and sometimes to violence. In these deviations the testament of the late king was sometimes of no little weight; and the approbation of the great men in the wittenagemot was always necessary to their stability.

Rules of  
succession  
to the  
crown  
among the  
Scots and  
Welsh.

The same observations may be applied to the succession of the crown among the Scots in this period; though the deviations from the strict rule of hereditary succession seem to have been rather more frequent among them than among the English. Kenneth II. who mounted the throne of Scotland A. D. 970, is said to have



made a law to prevent these deviations, and to secure the crown to the eldest son of the last king\*. But if such a law was made, it is evident from the history of the succeeding period, that it had little or no effect. The unhappy custom that prevailed among the Welsh, of dividing the territories of the father among all his sons, threw every thing with regard to the succession of their princes into great confusion, and was attended with many other fatal consequences.

The duties of a sovereign, in the times we are now considering, were chiefly two:—To administer justice to his subjects, with the assistance of his court or council, in times of peace,—and to command the armies of the state in times of war.

That our Anglo-Saxon kings were considered as the chief judges in their respective kingdoms, and frequently administered justice in person, is undeniable †. To this they were bound by their coronation oath; and in this some of them spent a great proportion of their time. Alfred the Great, in particular, as we are assured by Asserius, who lived in his court, sometimes employed both day and night in hearing causes that were brought before him by appeals from the sentences of inferior judges ‡. These sentences he frequently reversed, reprimanding the judges

\* Boeth. Hist. Scot. l. 2.

† Hiccesii Dissertatio epistolaris, p. 115.

‡ Asser. Vita Ælfridi, p. 21.

for their ignorance, and commanding them, either to apply to the study of the laws, or resign their offices \*. When their wrong judgments proceeded from malice or corruption, he punished them with great severity, and if we may believe the author quoted below †, condemned no fewer than forty-two judges in one year to capital punishments. To assist our ancient kings in performing this part of their royal office, they were constantly attended by a considerable number of the greatest and wisest men of the kingdom, who acted as assessors to their sovereign, and formed a supreme court of justice, which was called the *king's court* or *council* ‡. To render the attendance of the members of this supreme council more easy and compatible with the management of their private affairs, Alfred the Great divided them into three equal parts, which succeeded each other monthly ||.

This part of the royal office performed by a deputy.

This part of the royal office was found to be very inconvenient after the establishment of the monarchy, when appeals to the sovereign from all parts of England became very frequent, and when few of our kings had sufficient knowledge and industry to perform it in person. Several laws were made to prevent unnecessary appeals to the sovereign; and a chief justiciary was appointed to preside in the king's court, and perform the judicial part of the royal office, when

\* Asser. Vita Ælfridi, p. 21.

† *Miroir de Justices*, l. 5.

‡ See Squire's Inquiry into the English Constitution, p. 181.

|| Asser. Vita Ælfridi, p. 19. 20.

the King was absent, or otherwise employed \*. It is impossible to discover the precise time when this high office of chief justiciary was instituted; though it is most probable, that it was some time in the tenth century, when our kings were so constantly engaged in war against the Danes, that they had no leisure to attend in person the administration of justice. At its first institution, the persons invested with it seem to have been called by different names, expressive of their high dignity and great authority, as half-king, alderman of all England, &c. Æthelstan, a great and powerful thane in the reign of King Athelstan, was raised to this high office (and was perhaps the first who enjoyed it), with the title of *half-king*; because he performed that half of the regal office which consisted in the administration of justice. His son Aylwin succeeded him; but contented himself with the more modest title of Alderman of all England †. After the institution of this office, which continued for several centuries to be the highest in the state, our kings gradually withdrew from the bench, and left the administration of justice to their high justiciaries and other judges.

The other part of the regal office, which consisted in commanding the armies of the state in person in time of war, was long considered as indispensable. It was by being brave and suc-

Commanded the army in time of war.

\* Wilkins Leges Sax. p. 77. 250. Spelman Gloss. in voce Justiciarius.

† Selden's Tit. Hon. p. 505. Hist. Ramsien, c. 3.

cessful generals, that the founders of the several states of the heptarchy had become kings; and it was long believed to be improper, if not impossible, for any one to be a king who was not a warrior. Many who by blood were well entitled to reign, were excluded from the throne, because, on account of their age or sex, they were esteemed incapable of performing this most essential part of the regal office. Some of our ancient kings, however, after they were firmly seated on the throne, were discovered to be of an unwarlike character, and naturally incapable of commanding armies in person; and were therefore permitted to perform this part of the regal office also by a substitute, who was called the *cyning's hold* or *king's lieutenant*, and had the same authority over all the other holds or heretoges of the several counties, that the high justiciary had over all the other aldermen\*.

Prerogatives  
of the  
Anglo-  
Saxon kings.

Nothing can be more evident than this important truth,—“That our Anglo-Saxon kings were not absolute monarchs; but that their powers and prerogatives were limited by the laws and customs of their country.” Our Saxon ancestors had been governed by limited monarchs in their native seats on the continent; and there is not the least appearance or probability that they relinquished their liberties, and submitted to absolute government in their new settlements in this island †. It is not to be ima-

\* Squire on the English Constitution, p. 213. n.

† Tacit. de Morib. German. c. 7.

gined that men, whose reigning passion was the love of liberty, would willingly resign it; and their new sovereigns, who had been their fellow-soldiers, had certainly no power to compel them to such a resignation. The power of administering justice to their subjects, and of commanding the armies of the state, which have been represented above as the most important duties of our Anglo-Saxon kings, may be also considered as their chief prerogatives. Those princes who performed these two offices in their own persons, with great abilities and success, had the greatest influence and authority; while those who wanted either capacity or industry for the execution of these offices, were much despised and disregarded.

None of our Saxon kings ever so much as pretended to the power of making laws, or imposing taxes, without the advice and consent of their wittenagemots, or assemblies of the great and wise men of their respective kingdoms. This is evident from the preambles of the several systems of Saxon laws which are still extant\*.

Had not power to make laws, or impose taxes.

It seems to have been the prerogative of our Saxon kings to call the wittenagemots, or great councils,—to appoint the times and places of their meeting,—to preside in them in person,—to propose the subjects of their deliberations,—and to execute their decrees †.

Assembled the wittenagemots.

\* Vide Wilkins Leges Saxon. passim.

† Spel. Gloss. in voce Gemorum.

Had not  
the sole  
power of  
peace and  
war.

When the kingdom was suddenly invaded by a foreign enemy, or its internal peace disturbed by an insurrection, the King might by his own authority put himself at the head of his troops, to repel the invaders, or suppress the insurgents: but when a formal war against a neighbouring state was intended, more deliberation was required; and it could not be undertaken without the advice and consent of the wittenagemot\*. The Anglo-Saxon kings had considerable influence in disposing of the conquered lands, and dividing the spoils taken from the enemy; but they were obliged to use this influence with justice and moderation, and could not keep above a third part of these lands and spoils to themselves, without incurring the indignation of their troops †. King Harold, by retaining a greater proportion than this of the Danish and Norwegian spoils, occasioned so great a disgust and desertion in his army, that it proved the chief cause of his ruin ‡. The consent of the wittenagemot was commonly obtained to the conclusion of peace, as well as to the declaration of war; because the prosperity and happiness of the whole kingdom were as much concerned in the one as in the other.

Had the  
power of  
military  
discipline.

Among the ancient Germans, the King had no power to inflict any punishment upon his soldiers for desertion, or other offences, this being the

\* Cluver. German. Antiq. p. 308.

† Squire on the English Constitution, p. 205. Leges Wallicæ, p. 22.

‡ W. Malms. p. 94. Higden, p. 285.

province of their priests, who acted by the authority of the god of war, who was supposed to be present in their armies\*. But after the introduction of Christianity, the exercise of military discipline became one of the royal prerogatives, as it was never claimed by the Christian clergy †.

The Anglo-Saxon kings had no power of re-<sup>The power of pardon-</sup>mitting any mulct or fine imposed upon any criminal by a court of justice, because that would have been depriving another person of his right; but they had a power of changing a capital into a pecuniary punishment ‡.

The kings of England, in the period we are now considering, were only usufructuaries of the crown-lands, and could not alienate any of these lands, even to the church, without the consent of the wittenagemot ||.

It appears to have been one of the royal pre-<sup>Nomination of magistrates.</sup>rogatives in the times of the heptarchy, and even after the establishment of the monarchy, to appoint the aldermen, shiregerieves, domesmen, and other civil and military officers; but this power seems to have been afterwards taken from the crown, and vested in the wittenagemot §. But the time and other circumstances of this change in the constitution, are not preserved in history; and it must also be acknow-

\* Tacit. de Morib. German. c. 7.

† Wilkins Leges Saxon. p. 23.

‡ Id. p. 36. 201.

|| Squire on the English Constitution, p. 219. Spel. Concil. t. 1. p. 340.

§ Chron. Saxon. p. 49. Wilkins Leges Saxon, p. 205.

ledged, that the pretended laws of Edward the Confessor, which inform us of it, are of very doubtful authority, and can hardly be depended upon.

Ecclesiastical authority of the Anglo-Saxon kings.

The veneration for the clergy, after the introduction of Christianity, was so very great, that our kings seem to have left to them the government of the church in a great measure, and the choice of persons to ecclesiastical offices, for some ages. It is expressly declared by the laws of Withred King of Kent, A. D. 694, that the Archbishop of Canterbury had as good a right to nominate bishops, abbots, abbesses, &c. as the king had to nominate the civil and military officers of the kingdom \*. This law was adopted and confirmed by Ethelbald King of Mercia, A. D. 742, in a great council of the clergy and nobility, and by his successor King Offa, A. D. 785; and seems to have been observed in all the kingdoms of the heptarchy †. By degrees, however, our Anglo-Saxon kings found it necessary for the peace and good government of the state, to interfere more directly in ecclesiastical elections, and to take care that the dignities of the church should be filled by men of peaceable dispositions, and well affected to their persons and government. They were so successful in their endeavours to obtain the direction of ecclesiastical elections, that they acquired first the right

\* Chron. Saxon. p. 49. Spel. Concil. t. 1. p. 190.

† Spel. Concil. t. 1. p. 230, 292.



of approving, and at length of appointing all the chief dignitaries of the church\*.

As hereditary titles of honour, unconnected with offices, were unknown in the period we are now delineating, our Anglo-Saxon kings could not have the prerogative of granting such titles. Did not bestow nominal titles.

The authority of regulating the public coin of the kingdom, seems to have been vested in the wittenagemot; and the privilege of coining was not only granted to the king, but also to the archbishops, bishops, and chief towns †. It is unnecessary to be more particular in pointing out the prerogatives of our Anglo-Saxon kings, as is sufficiently evident, from the above account, that they were circumscribed within very narrow limits, and were hardly sufficient to support the dignity of the crown, unless when it was worn by a person of a warlike character and great abilities. Coining money.

The revenues of the Anglo-Saxon kings, especially in the times of the heptarchy, could not be very great, and consisted chiefly in the profits arising from the crown-lands, and their own patrimonial estates. As the Saxons met with a more vigorous resistance in Britain, than any of the other northern nations who founded kingdoms on the ruins of the Roman empire in other countries, so they treated the native Britons with greater severity. All the other northern Revenues of the Anglo-Saxon kings.

\* Spel. Concil. p. 387. Ingulf. Hist. Croyl.

† Wilkins Leges Saxon. p. 59.

conquerors contented themselves with seizing two-thirds of the conquered country, which they divided among themselves, leaving the other third in the possession of the ancient inhabitants\*. But the Saxons seized the whole country, reducing all the ancient inhabitants who remained in it to a state of slavery, without leaving them even the property of their own persons. This country, with its wretched inhabitants, those greedy unrelenting conquerors divided among themselves, allotting to each chieftain an extent of territory, and number of slaves, proportioned to his dignity and the number of his followers. As these chieftains, and their martial followers, had acquired their title to their respective proportions of lands, slaves, and spoils by the points of their swords, so they received them in free and full property, without being subjected to any payments to their sovereigns, or other magistrates, or even to any services, except those of fighting in defence of their country, and keeping the highways, bridges, and castles, in repair.

Crown-lands.

This made it necessary to assign a certain proportion of lands, with their slaves, cattle, houses, &c. in every state, for the support of government, and of the dignity of those who were invested with it. In the division, therefore, of the conquered country, the chief commander of each army of adventurers received, in the first place,

\* Lindenbrog. Leg. Antiq. p. 197.

that proportion of lands, slaves, and spoils, that fell to his share as a leader of a particular tribe or family, which he held in free and full property, and might alienate at his pleasure, as well as any other chieftain. Besides this, when he was advanced to the throne, he was put in possession of those lands, &c. which had been allotted for the support of the royal dignity; but of these he was only the usufructuary, and not the proprietor; they belonged to the crown, and not to the King, who could not alienate them without the consent of the national assembly or wittenagemot. What proportion the crown-lands originally bore to those of the nation in each state, or whether there was any such proportion settled or not, we are entirely ignorant; though it is highly probable, on many accounts, that these lands were very considerable in extent and value. Out of the produce of their crown-lands and family-estates, which were cultivated, partly by slaves, and partly by ceorls, those ancient monarchs supported their families and numerous retainers in rude magnificence and plenty.

As the administration of justice was one of the principal offices and most important prerogatives of our Anglo-Saxon kings, so it was also one of the greatest sources of their wealth. By law, a very great proportion (in some cases one-half, and in others one-third) of all the fines or mulcts imposed on criminals by the courts

Fines and  
amerce-  
ments.

of justice, belonged to the King\*. This, at a time when almost all punishments were pecuniary, must have amounted to a very considerable sum. We shall have occasion, by and by, to take notice, that our ancient kings derived considerable profits both from foreign and domestic trade †.

Danegeld. When the invasions of the Danes became frequent and formidable, it became a custom sometimes to bribe them with a sum of money to desist from their depredations, and leave the country, and at other times to keep a considerable body of troops in constant pay, to defend the coasts against these dangerous enemies. The ordinary revenues of the crown were quite inadequate to the expense of these expedients; and therefore it was found necessary, with the consent of the wittenagemot, to impose a tax first of one Saxon shilling, and afterwards of two or more shillings, on every hide of land in the kingdom. As there were two hundred and forty-three thousand six hundred hides of land in England, this tax, at one shilling on each hide, raised twelve thousand one hundred and eighty Saxon pounds, equal in quantity of silver to about thirty-six thousand five hundred and forty pounds sterling, and in efficacy to more than three hundred and sixty thousand pounds of our money at present. This tax seems to have been first imposed A. D.

\* Wilkins Leges Saxon. passim.

† Chap. 6.

991, and was called Danegeld, or the Danish tax or payment \*. It was soon after raised to two, and at last to seven shillings, on every hide of land, and continued to be levied long after the original occasion of imposing it had ceased. While the invasions of the Danes were almost annual, our kings derived little profit from this tax, which was all expended in bribing or fighting these invaders; but after the accession of the Danish princes to the throne of England, it became one of the chief branches of the royal revenue. This tax was raised so high, and collected with so much severity, by King Canute, A. D. 1018, that it amounted to the prodigious sum of seventy-one thousand Saxon pounds, besides eleven thousand of the same pounds paid by the city of London †. It appears, however, from very good authority, that this was too great a sum for England to pay in one year at that time. "The tribute," says an author of those times, preserved by Mr Leland, "that was paid annually by the English to the Danes, was at length raised to seventy-two thousand pounds and more, besides eleven thousand paid by the city of London. Those who had money to pay their proportion of this grievous tax, paid it; but those who had not money, irrecoverably lost their lands and possessions. The church of Peterborough, and several other churches, sustained great losses, on that occa-

\* Chron. Saxon, p. 126.

† Id. p. 151.

“ sion \*.” From these accounts, it is evident that this tax had been gradually raised from one shilling to seven shillings on each hide of land. It was afterwards reduced to four shillings on each hide; at which rate it seems to have continued till it was finally abolished about seventy years after the Norman conquest. Houses in towns were subjected to this tax; and a house of a certain value paid the same with a hide of land †.

Forfeitures,  
&c.

Our Anglo-Saxon and Danish kings derived considerable profits from forfeitures,—from vacant benefices,—from the hereots of their aldermen and thanes,—and from some other sources with which we are not particularly acquainted; which enabled them to live with sufficient splendour,—to reward their friends,—to encourage learning,—to relieve the poor,—to build monasteries, churches, and other edifices, for the benefit and ornament of their country ‡.

The wittenagemot.

As the King was the highest magistrate, so the wittenagemot was the highest court; in which, with the King at its head, the sovereignty of the state resided, in the period we are now examining. In the times of the heptarchy, there were as many wittenagemots as there were kingdoms; which, after the union of these kingdoms into one monarchy, were all united into one great assembly, or mickle mot, as it is often called.

\* Leland's Collectanea, v. i. p. 11.

† Spelman Gloss. in voce Danigeldun. Doomsday-book, apud Gale, t. i. p. 775.

‡ Asser. Vita Ælfridi.

In this assembly, both ecclesiastical and political laws were made; taxes for the maintenance of the clergy, and the support of the civil government, were imposed, questions relating to peace and war were debated, civil and criminal causes of the greatest moment were determined, and the most important affairs of the kingdom were finally regulated\*. All the power and wisdom of the state were presumed to be collected in the wittenagemot, which was therefore the guide and guardian of the kingdom, and took cognizance of every thing that affected its safety and prosperity; as the general assemblies of the several states had formerly done in Germany †.

In that country, all the warriors of every little state, together with the priests, who were the only persons of any consideration, had a right to be present in these assemblies; and as these warriors never engaged in agriculture, trade, or manufactures, but spent their time in idleness, when they were not employed in some military expedition, their attendance on these assemblies was rather an amusement than an inconveniency. To such an assembly of warriors, the British ambassadors made their application for assistance; and such, we may believe, were the wittenagemots of the several little Anglo-Saxon states at their first establishment in this island; consist-

Its members  
in the most  
ancient  
times.

\* Tacit. de Morib. German. c. 11. 12. Tyrrel's Introduction, p. 109. &c.

† Tacit. de Morib. German. c. 11.

ing of all the aldermen, heretoges, priests, and warriors of the state. In those times, when they were fighting their way, and their arms were hardly ever out of their hands, they attended the general assemblies of their nation in arms, as they had formerly done in Germany, ready to proceed upon any martial enterprise that might be resolved upon; but a change of circumstances naturally and unavoidably occasioned a change in the constitution of these assemblies, which probably took place by insensible degrees, and without any positive law.

In later times.

When the conquered lands were divided amongst all those brave warriors who had contributed to make the conquest, many of them who had been common soldiers, and consequently received but a small proportion of land, retired to their little farms, which they began to cultivate. These veterans, now become husbandmen, also farmed some parts of the lands of the thanes or heretoges, under whom they had fought; and by degrees formed a new order of men, unknown in ancient Germany, who were called *ceorls*, which have been already described\*. Some have imagined, that all those *ceorls*, who were descended from the original conquerors, and continued to be proprietors of land, had a title to be members of the witenagemot; and there is sufficient evidence that they were not excluded from it by any posi-

\* See p. 324.



tive law, but only by their poverty and manner of life, which rendered their attendance highly inconvenient, if not impossible \*; for as soon as any of these ceorls acquired such an estate in land as enabled them to live with ease and dignity, and attend the public councils of the nation, they were declared by an express law to be thanes, and members of the wittenagemot †.

The qualification in point of estate required by that law, was the property of five hides of land; and all the free-born English who were possessed of such an estate, with a church, a bell-house, and manor-place upon it, were considered as nobles, and had a title to be members of the wittenagemot. This qualification, it is imagined, was afterwards found to be too small, and was therefore gradually raised higher and higher, until, in the reign of Edward the Confessor, it was fixed at no less than forty hides of land ‡.

Besides all the considerable proprietors of land who could afford to attend the public councils of the nation, all the archbishops, bishops, abbots, presbyters, aldermen, heretoges, shiregerieves, and domesmen or judges, were, by virtue of their offices, and on account of their wisdom and knowledge of the laws, members of this great assembly; which, for this rea-

\* Squire on the English Constitution, p. 167. &c.

† Wilkins Leges Saxon. p. 70. 71.

‡ Historia Eliensis, c. 40.

son, was called the *wittenagemot*, or *assembly of the wise men* \*.

The ceorls, rather interested spectators than members.

Though great efforts have been made to prove that the ceorls, or small proprietors of land, were represented in the wittenagemots by their tithing-men, or borsholders, and the inhabitants of trading towns by their aldermen or portreeves, it must be confessed that of this there is not sufficient historical evidence remaining †. It is however highly probable, that many ceorls and burgesses, who dwelt at or near the place where a wittenagemot was held, attended it as interested spectators, and intimated their satisfaction with its resolves by shouts of applause, and other marks of approbation. On some few great occasions, when there was an uncommon concourse of such spectators, their presence and approbation is recorded in such terms as these:—"Omni que populo audiente et vidente (and all the people hearing and looking on), aliorumque fidelium infinita multitudo, qui omnes laudarunt, (and a prodigious crowd of other people, who all applauded) ‡." As the real constituent members of the Anglo-Saxon wittenagemots were very many, and those who had a kind of right and interest to be spectators

\* Wilkins *Leges Saxon.* p. 14. 72. 76. 79. 102. &c. *Spelman. Gloss.* in voce. *Hist. Eliens.* c. 10.

† Tyrrel's *Introduction*, p. 95. &c. *Squire on the English Constitution*, p. 214. &c.

‡ *Spelman, Concil.* p. 625, 350.

of their deliberations were still more numerous, they frequently assembled in the open air, in some extensive plain, on the banks of a river, and near a great town, for the benefit of water and provisions\*.

It was the prerogative of the king to appoint the time and place of the meetings of these great assemblies, and, with the advice of his council, to prepare and ripen those matters that were to be laid before them for their determination.— This negative before debate, which was of great antiquity, being derived from the customs of the ancient Germans, was attended with the most important consequences, and gave the king and his council a very great influence in the wittenagemots †. Such a regulation, however, seems to have been necessary in such numerous assemblies, which were certainly much fitter for determining what was proposed and explained to them, than for inventing and proposing.

In ancient Germany, the general assemblies of the several nations (of which the Anglo-Saxon wittenagemots were the genuine offspring), met at certain stated times, most commonly in the spring, at the full or change of the moon; and these times of meeting were well known to all who were obliged to attend them, who accordingly came to them without any particular sum-

\* For the names of the places where the wittenagemots met, see Hody's History of Convocations.

† Tacit. de Morib. German. c. 11.

mons\*. This custom seems to have prevailed among the Anglo-Saxons long after their settlement in Britain; and the stated times for these meetings, as long as they continued Pagans, were no doubt the same that had been observed by their ancestors on the continent. But after their conversion to Christianity, the ordinary stated meetings of the wittenagemots appear to have been at the three great festivals of Christmas, Easter, and Whitsuntide, wherever the court happened to be at these times. On these festivals, the Anglo-Saxon kings of England lived in great state, wore their crowns, and were surrounded by all the great men of their kingdoms, who were sumptuously entertained by them, and with whom they consulted about the important affairs of church and state †.

Extraordi-  
nary meet-  
ings.

We have good reason to believe, that these ordinary meetings, on account of their frequency, and other circumstances, could not be very numerous, and were attended by few besides those great men who were members of the king's court or council, and were admitted to the royal table; who, we may therefore presume, acted rather in their ministerial and judicial, than in their legislative capacity, on these occasions. But when any thing was to be done that required the united wisdom and authority of the whole kingdom, as the making new laws,

\* Tacit. de Morib. German. c. 11.

† Spelman. Concil. p. 347. n. Hody's Hist. of Convocations, p. 58.

imposing taxes, declaring war, &c. an extraordinary, or rather a more solemn meeting of the wittenagemot, was called, to which all who had a right to be present were summoned. The laws of King Edmund, indeed, are said to have been made in a mickle synod, or wittenagemot, held at London, A. D. 944, on the holy feast of Easter; but it appears from the preamble to these laws, that this was one of those more solemn meetings to which all the members had been summoned\*. The wittenagemots mentioned by our historians seem to have been, for the most part, of this more solemn kind, called for some particular and important purpose;— which is probably the reason that several years sometimes elapsed between these meetings, though there might be many such meetings in those remote ages, of which we have no records †.

The members of the wittenagemots enjoyed several privileges, and special laws were made for securing the liberty and safety of their persons, in going to, attending at, and returning from those assemblies; but such of them as were notorious thieves were not entitled to the benefit of those laws ‡. This exception may appear surprising; but it was not unnecessary; for in those times, too many, who by their rank and wealth were entitled to be members of the

Privileges of  
the members  
of the  
wittenagemots.

\* Spelman. Concil. p. 419.

† For the dates of the Anglo-Saxon wittenagemots, see Hody's Hist. of Convocations.

‡ Wilkins Leges Saxon. p. 146.

supreme council of the nation, were notorious thieves and robbers; and one of the best of our Anglo-Saxon kings lost his life in extruding one of this character from his own table\*.

General observation.

From the foregoing brief delineation of this part of the Anglo-Saxon constitution, respecting their magistrates, and courts of law and justice, gradually ascending from the borsholder to the king, and from the court of the decennary to the wittenagemot, it evidently appears to have been a more regular and solid fabric than could have been expected from such unskilful artists. But it was the work of many nations, and of many ages, and arose by slow degrees, and various means, to that beauty and firmness which we cannot but admire. It would not be impossible to trace the progress of this political edifice from the first rude plan that was formed of it in the wilds of Germany and Scandinavia, to its most perfect state: but such a laborious investigation could afford entertainment only to those few who need it least. The changes which have been made in it since the Norman conquest, will appear in their several periods in our subsequent chapters on government.

Constitution of Scotland in this period.

As that part of Scotland which lies to the south of the friths of Forth and Clyde, especially on the eastern coasts, belonged to the kingdom of Bernicia for several ages, and was chiefly inhabited by Saxons, we may be certain,

\* W. Malm. l. 2. c. 7.

that its government was the same with that above described. When this country was finally conquered by, or rather ceded to the Scots, about a century before the Norman conquest, it only changed its sovereign; but neither changed its government nor its inhabitants \*. Pleased with this valuable acquisition, the kings of Scotland frequently resided in the low countries, and by degrees became acquainted with the Saxon language, laws, and manners; which they at last adopted, and endeavoured to introduce into other parts of their dominions. These, however, made but little progress, in this period we are now considering, in the northern provinces of Scotland, inhabited by the posterity of the ancient Caledonians, who still retained their ancient laws and customs; which have been described in the first volume of this work. The tanist, or appointed successor to the crown, was next in power and dignity to the king; the toshock was the chief commander of the army; while the tiernas, or chieftains (by our historians improperly called *thanes*) of the several tribes, with the assistance of their brehons, or inferior judges, administered justice in their several districts †. All important affairs of general concern were determined in assemblies composed of the great men of the nation. But it is unnecessary to be more

\* Innes's Essays, vol. 2. Append.

† Dr Macpherson's Dissertations, Dissert. 13.

particular in describing the ancient constitution of Scotland, before the introduction of the feudal form of government in the reign of Malcolm III. as hardly any authentic memoirs or undoubted vestiges of that constitution are now remaining \*. It was probably the same with that which was established among the other genuine descendants of the ancient Britons in Ireland and Wales.

Of Wales. That deplorable anarchy in which the provincial Britons were involved after the departure of the Romans, made them an easy prey to the Scots and Picts, and prevented their making an effectual opposition to the Saxons †. Even after they had lost the best part of their country, and were confined to the mountains of Wales and Cornwall, their government continued for some time very fluctuating and irregular. This is acknowledged by one of their best antiquaries; who observes, that in the end of the eighth century, “there was as yet no stayed government established in Wales; but such as were chief lords in any country were called kings ‡.” Their animosity against the Saxons was for some ages so violent, that they would comply with none of their customs, either in civil or religious matters. But when this animosity began to wear off, the great imperfection of their own form of government made them so ready to adopt the

\* See Lord Kames's *British Antiquities*, essay 1.

† *Gildæ Hist.* c. 19.

‡ *Powel's Hist. Wales*, p. 20.



political regulations of their ancient enemies, that before the middle of the tenth century, the constitution, magistrates, and courts of Wales, were almost exactly the same with those of England\*. This is so true, that a more minute and particular account of the Anglo-Saxon constitution might be extracted from the Welsh laws of Howel Dha, which were collected A. D. 842, than even from the Saxon laws themselves.

It will at once be a sufficient proof of this, and a proper conclusion of this section, to give a brief account (chiefly taken from these laws) of the great officers of the court and household of the kings of Wales, which were the same with those of the kings of England, and of all the other sovereigns of Europe in this period, as to the duties of their respective offices, though their emoluments were not so great as in more wealthy states.

Great officers of the court.

The great officers in the court of the kings of Wales were twenty-four in number; of which sixteen belonged to the king, and eight to the queen †. Their rank, duties, privileges, and emoluments, were as follows:—

1. The *penteula*, or mayor of the palace, was the highest officer in the court of the kings of Wales, and was always a prince of the royal family. He took place of all the other officers of the household, and had the chief direction of

Mayor of the palace.

\* Vide Prefat. ad Leges Howeli Dha.

† Leges Wallicæ, p. 8.

every thing within the verge of the court. On the three great festivals, he had a sumptuous table in the lower part of the hall where the king dined; and when any person had behaved improperly at the royal table in the upper part of the hall, and was extruded from thence, it was the duty of the mayor of the palace to invite the offender to his table, and to intercede with the king in his favour. A strange mixture of rudeness and humanity! This great officer was general of the army, and appointed those parties of the king's forces that were sent out from time to time to plunder the English borders, and sometimes commanded them in person. His salary was no more than three pounds a-year; but he had a great variety of valuable perquisites, besides several honourable privileges; one of which was, that in the absence of the king all the officers of the court were obliged to attend him, as if he had been the king, and the court-musician to sing as many songs to him as he desired\*.

The priest  
of the  
household.

2. The *priest of the household* was the next in dignity, and always sat at the royal table, to bless the meat, and chant the Lord's prayer. His perquisites were so many that it was certainly one of the most lucrative offices in the court †.

Steward.

3. The *disdain*, or steward of the household, was the third in rank. It was the duty of this officer

\* Leges Wallicæ, p. 15—18. Muratori.

† Leges Wallicæ, p. 18. 19.

to procure all kinds of provision for the king's kitchen, and liquors for his cellar, and to command all the servants belonging to both,—to assign every one of the guests his proper place at the royal table,—to set one dish upon it at the head, and another at the foot,—and to taste all the liquors before they were presented. The emoluments of this office (besides an estate in land, free from all taxes, annexed to it, as to each of the other offices), consisted in a variety of perquisites, of which the following was one of the most remarkable: “ As much of every  
 “ cask of plain ale shall belong to the steward of  
 “ the household as he can reach with his middle  
 “ finger dipped into it, and as much of every  
 “ cask of ale with spiceries as he can reach with  
 “ the second joint of his middle finger, and as  
 “ much of every cask of mead as he can reach  
 “ with the first joint of the same finger \*.”

4. The *penhebogydd*, or master of the hawks, Master of the hawks was the fourth officer in rank and dignity, and sat in the fourth place from the king at the royal table; but was permitted to drink no more than three times, that he might not be intoxicated and neglect his birds. He had the care and management of all the king's hawks, and the direction of all the people employed in the royal sport of hawking. When he had been at any time remarkably successful in his sport, the king was obliged, by law and custom, to pay him the

\* Leges Wall. p. 20—23.

most distinguishing honour, to rise up to receive him when he entered the hall, and even, on some occasions, to hold his stirrup when he alighted from his horse. The emoluments of this office were not inconsiderable\*.

Judge of  
the house-  
hold.

5. The *judge of the household* possessed the fifth place of rank and dignity, and had a seat at the royal table. The most indispensable qualifications of this great officer were these two, a learned education, and a long beard. He was sworn into his office with very great solemnity, and invested with it, by the king's giving him a chess-board of curious workmanship, the queen presenting him with one gold ring, and the poet of the court with another; all of which he was obliged to keep with great care as long as he lived. The judge of the household determined all disputes that arose among the officers and servants of the king's household, tried the qualifications of those who were candidates for being judges in the country, and presided in those famous contests of the poets and musicians that were frequently held before the king; for all which he was entitled to a variety of perquisites; which made his office as lucrative as it was honourable †.

Master of  
the horse.

6. The *penguasdrawd*, or master of the horse, was the sixth officer in rank, and the last who had a place at the royal table. He had the superintendency of the king's stables and horses, and of all the officers and servants employed

\* Leges Wall. p. 20—23.

† Ib. p. 26—31.

about them; for which he had many perquisites \*. This officer seems to have been the same with the stal-here, or master of the stables, of our Anglo-Saxon kings \*.

7. The *givas ysdafell*, or chamberlain, was the seventh officer in rank; and though he had no place assigned him in the great hall, he had the honour to sleep in the king's chamber, of which he had the care. This officer had the command of all the servants employed about the chambers of the king, queen, and royal family. It was his duty to provide clean straw, or rushes, for the beds, to see them properly made, and fires put on, &c. He was also treasurer of the chamber, and had the keeping of the king's cups, drinking-horns, rings, and other valuable effects, for which he was accountable.

Chamberlain.

8. The bard or chief musician of the court was the eighth in dignity, and had a seat next to the mayor of the palace, at his table, in the lower part of the hall. When he was invested with his office, the king presented him with a harp, and the queen with a gold ring; both which he was obliged to keep as long as he lived. It was his duty to sing and play before the king, 1. the praises of God, 2. the praises of the king, and, 3. a song on some other subject. He was also to sing and play before the queen, in her own apartment, as often as she required him; but in a low tone, that he might

Chief musician.

\* Leges Wall. p. 31.

† Cam. Britan. p. 261.

not disturb the king and his company in the hall. He likewise attended the army, and before an engagement sung and played a particular song, called *Unbennusacht Prydain*, *i. e.* the British empire; for which he was rewarded with a share of the booty\*.

Silentiary.

9. The *gosdegwr*, or silentiary, possessed the ninth place. It was the duty of this officer to command silence in the hall when the king sat down to table; after which he took his stand near one of the great pillars; and when any improper noise arose, he immediately quashed it by striking the pillar with his rod. This useful officer was not peculiar to the court of Wales, and doth not seem to be quite unnecessary in some great assemblies even in modern times †.

Master of the huntsmen.

10. The *penecnyd*, or master of the huntsmen, was the tenth in rank, and commanded the king's huntsmen, hounds, and dogs of all kinds. From Christmas to the 1st of February, he was obliged to attend the court; but at other times his attendance was dispensed with, as he was engaged in the pursuit of his game. It was one of the privileges of this officer, that when he appeared in a court of justice, he was not obliged to take the usual oaths, but only to swear by his horn, and by his dogs ‡.

The mead-maker.

11. The mead-maker was the eleventh, and had, as his name implies, the direction of mak-

\* *Leges Wallicæ*, p. 35—37.

† *Id.* p. 38. *Du Cange Gloss.* in voce *Silentiarius*.

‡ *Leges Wallicæ*, p. 39.

ing all the mead that was used in the king's household \*.

12. The physician of the household was the twelfth, and had a seat at the table of the mayor of the palace, in the lower part of the hall. He was obliged by his office to cure all the slight wounds of the king's officers and servants, without any other fee, but such of their garments as were stained with blood, or cut with a weapon; but in more dangerous cases, as fractured skulls, or broken legs or arms, he was entitled to a fee of 180 pence, besides the bloody garments †.

13. The *trulljad*, or butler, was the thirteenth, and had the custody of the king's cellars, and the care of giving out the liquors to all the members of the household, according to certain fixed proportions ‡.

14. The porter was the fourteenth, and was obliged to know the faces of all men who had a right to be admitted into the king's hall; and was severely fined, if he refused any of them admittance. He acted also as a gentleman-usher to the king. Among other perquisites, the porter was entitled to three horns-full of a certain liquor, which was called *the twelve apostles*, at each of the three great festivals ||.

15. The master-cook was the fifteenth, and had the direction of the kitchen, and of the servants employed in it. This officer was obliged

\* *Leges Wallicæ*, p. 43.

† *Id.* p. 45. 46.

‡ *Id.* p. 44. 45.

|| *Id.* p. 47. 48.

to superintend the dressing of all the dishes designed for the royal table, to taste them before they were served up, and to serve up the last with his own hand\*.

Master of the lights.

16. The master of the lights was the sixteenth ; who had the care of all the wax and tallow candles used in the palace, was obliged to hold a taper in his hand near the dish out of which the king eat, and to carry one before him when he went into his bed-chamber †.

Officers of the queen's household.

The eight officers of the queen's household were, the steward, the priest, the master of the horse, the chamberlain, the lady of the bed-chamber, the porter, the cook, and the master of the lights, whose duties need not be explained.

Fees and immunities of these offices.

To each of these twenty-four offices a certain estate in land was annexed, free from all taxes, in proportion to the dignity and importance of the office ; and each of the officers who filled them had a horse maintained for him in the king's stables, a lodging assigned him in the palace ; and those of them who had not a seat at the royal table, or at the table of the master of the palace, had either separate tables for themselves, or an allowance in money. The whole household was new-clothed at each of the three great festivals, by the king and queen, the king furnishing the woollen cloth, and the queen the linen. The lives of the officers of the household were valued

\* Leges Wallicæ, p. 49.

† Id. p. 50.



at a much higher rate than those of others of the same rank;—any injury done to them was very severely punished;—and their daughters were considered as good matches, and bore a high price. These advantages, and a great variety of perquisites, immunities, and distinctions, made those offices in the courts of our Anglo-Saxon and Welsh kings very desirable, and objects of great ambition.

Besides the twenty-four offices above de-<sup>The king's  
feet-bearer.</sup> scribed, there were eleven others, of considerable value, in the courts of those ancient princes; the most remarkable of which was that of the king's feet-bearer. This was a young gentleman, whose duty it was to sit on the floor, with his back towards the fire, and hold the king's feet in his bosom all the time he sat at table, to keep them warm and comfortable\*: a piece of state and luxury unknown in modern times! It is unnecessary, and would be tedious, to give a particular account of the other ten inferior offices.

\* *Leges Wallicæ*, p. 58.

## SECTION III.

*The history of law in Great Britain, from the arrival of the Saxons, A. D. 449. to the landing of William Duke of Normandy, A. D. 1066.*

Importance  
and utility  
of the histo-  
ry of law.

THE history of law, though it hath been much neglected, is certainly one of the most curious, useful, and interesting parts of history \*. To know the most important laws of any nation, in any period, together with the circumstances in which these laws were made, would enable us to form a sound judgment of the state and character of that nation, and of the wisdom, justice, and propriety of its laws. The want of this historical knowledge is apt to make us entertain very mistaken notions both of nations and of their laws. What, for example, can appear more absurd and barbarous than the following law of Ethelbert, the first Christian king of Kent? “If a freeman lie with a freeman’s wife, let him buy another wife for the injured party †.” But when we learn from history, that a certain price was, in those times, set upon every woman according to her rank, and that no man could procure a wife without paying her legal price to her parents or guardians, we see that this law

\* See Preface to Lord Kames’s Law-tracts.

† Wilkins Leges Saxon. p. 4.

was perfectly just, and implied no more but that the adulterer should pay, by way of damages, to the injured party, the price which he had paid for his wife, who was now lost to him, to enable him to purchase another wife of the same rank.

Our Anglo-Saxon ancestors, at their arrival in Britain, had no written laws, but were governed, as their ancestors had been for many ages, by certain well-known and established customs, which had the force of laws\*. This was the case with all the northern nations who invaded and subdued the several provinces of the Roman empire; they had no written laws when they left their native seats, but were governed by customs exactly similar to those of the Anglo-Saxons. All these nations, after they had formed establishments in Gaul, Spain, Italy, and Britain, became acquainted with letters, and put their ancient customs into writing, which were their first written laws †. This is the true reason of the great similarity of the ancient laws of the Franks, Burgundians, Lombards, Wisigoths, and Anglo-Saxons ‡. All these laws were transcripts of the same original customs, by which the ancestors of all these nations had been governed in the wilds of Germany and Scandinavia ||.

Origin of written laws among the Anglo-Saxons, &c.

Different laws in England.

\* Tacit. de Morib. German. c. 19.

† Id. c. 21.

‡ Vide Lindenbrog. Cod. Leg. Antiq. Wilkins Leges Saxon.

|| Lindenbrog. Prolegomena.

each other, their laws began by degrees to become a little different. But this difference, for several centuries, consisted chiefly in the various rates of those mulcts or fines that were exacted from those who were guilty of certain crimes, according to the greater plenty or scarcity of money in their respective countries. By the difference of these fines, the same crime might then have been committed in one country of Europe for half the money that it would have cost in another. This seems to have been the chief, if not the only difference between the three systems of laws that were established in England in this period, viz. the West-Saxon law, the Mercian law, and the Dane law. For this at least we have the testimony of one of our most learned antiquaries; which can hardly be better expressed than in his own words:—"Our Saxons, though divided into many kingdoms, yet were they all one in effect, in manners, laws, and language: so that the breaking of their government into many kingdoms, or the re-uniting of their kingdoms into a monarchy, wrought little or no change among them, touching laws. For though we talk of the West-Saxon law, the Mercian law, and the Dane law, whereby the west parts of England, the middle parts, and those of Suffolk, Norfolk, and the north, were severally governed; yet held they all an uniformity in substance, differing rather in their mulcts than in their canon; that is, in the quantity of fines and

“amercements, than in the course and frame  
“of justice \*.”

It will not therefore be necessary to take any further notice of this distinction in our Anglo-Saxon laws, by which different mulcts were exacted of criminals, and different values were set on the lives and limbs of men in the west, the middle, and the north parts of England, except it be to acquaint such readers as do not already know it, that similar distinctions obtained in the laws of all the other countries of Europe in this period; which occasioned the following singularity in the jurisprudence of the middle ages. Remarkable singularity in the jurisprudence of the middle ages. When a person removed from one kingdom or province into another, he did not change his law, but his life and limbs continued to be valued at the same rate they had formerly been; and any injury that was done to him was compensated according to the laws of his native country, and not according to those of the country in which he resided †. This gave those persons who removed from a rich country into a poor one, much greater, and those who removed from a poor country into a rich one, much less, security for their lives, limbs, and properties. The nose of a Spaniard, for example, was perfectly safe in England, because it was valued at thirteen marks; but the nose of an Englishman run a great risk in Spain, because it was valued

\* Reliquiæ Spelman. p. 49.

† Murat. Dissertazione, t. i. p. 282.

only at twelve shillings. An Englishman might have broken a Welshman's head for a mere trifle, but few Welshmen could afford to return the compliment\*.

The first  
written laws  
short, &c.

It is not to be imagined, that the first written systems of the ancient laws of the Anglo-Saxons, and other nations, who acquired the dominion of Europe in the fifth and sixth centuries, were very complete. The use of letters, in all these nations, was then in its infancy, and very few of the laity in any of them could either read or write. When they began therefore to put their laws in writing, they were frugal of their words, and put down, with great brevity, only some of the most capital points, leaving many others in their former state; which gave birth to that important distinction between the statute or written, and the common or unwritten law, which still subsists. This, too, is one of the chief causes of the great brevity, obscurity, and variations, observable in the most ancient codes of all the present nations of Europe; some particulars having been made statute law in one country, that were left in the state of common law in another. Whoever, therefore, would give a just account of the jurisprudence of our Anglo-Saxon ancestors, must be no stranger to the cotemporary laws of all the other nations of Europe, which are the best commentary on those of England in this period.

\* Wilkin. Leges Saxon, p. 4. n. and p. 71.

None of our readers will expect, or desire, a complete system of the statute and common law of England in the Anglo-Saxon times, with a full illustration of each particular, in this place. This is the province of the lawyer rather than of the historian, who must content himself with giving a view of the general spirit, and most important particulars, of the laws of his country in every period. For his further satisfaction, the reader will find in the Appendix, a translation of the laws of some of the best of our Anglo-Saxon kings\*.

A complete system of laws not intended.

The laws of our Anglo-Saxon ancestors, and of all the northern nations, relating to the matrimonial union of the sexes, were, in some respects, curious, and merit our attention. These laws are always of great importance to society; being very pernicious when they are imprudent or unnatural, and very beneficial when they are agreeable to nature and good policy. The great fundamental law, so clearly pointed out by nature, of the union of one man and one woman, was firmly established among all these nations in very ancient times; but the manner of forming this union, and the rights of the contracting parties, were a little singular. Though all these nations treated the sex with the most respectful attention, yet they considered every woman as under the protection or guardianship of some man or other during her whole life; without

Matrimonial laws.

\* See Append. No. 3.

whose consent she could not execute any legal deed \*. Whether this was a proper testimony of their regard for the weaker sex may be justly questioned; but the fact is undeniable. This protection or guardianship was called, in the Saxon language, *mund*; and the person who had a right to it, *mundbora*, who could not be deprived of this right without his own consent, obtained by a proper consideration †. The father was the natural and legal guardian of his unmarried daughters;—the brothers, after the father's death, of their unmarried sisters;—the nearest male relation of those who had neither fathers nor brothers;—the male heir of the husband was the guardian of the widow;—and the king was the legal guardian and protector of all those women who had no other ‡. When a young man therefore proposed to make his addresses to a lady, one of the first steps he took, was to procure the consent of her *mundbora* or guardian, by making him some present suitable to his rank and that of the lady. This present was called the *mede* or *price*, and in the barbarous Latin of the middle ages, *metha* or *methum*; which gave occasion to its being said, that in those times men bought their wives ||. If any man was so rash as to marry a woman without the consent of her guardian, he not only incurred the severe penalties inflicted on those who were guilty

\* Muratori Antiq. t. 2. p. 113. Sürnhook de Jure Sueon. p. 153.

† Spelman. Gloss. p. 423.

‡ Muratori Antiq. t. 2. p. 113. 114.

|| Id. ibid. Du Cange Gloss. in voce.



of the crime of *mundbreach*, as it was called, but he obtained no legal authority over his wife, or any of her goods, by such a marriage; that authority still remaining in the guardian, who could not be divested of it without his own consent. Nay, so far was this idea carried, that if a woman who had been married without the consent of her guardian, was debauched, the damages recovered were not paid to her husband, but to her guardian. To restrain avaricious guardians from demanding, and amorous youths from offering too great presents, for obtaining their consent, laws were made to limit the utmost extent of them for people of all ranks\*. When a man made his addresses to a widow, he was obliged to pay no more than one half of the limited price for the consent of her guardian, as a widow was estimated at no more than half the value of a maiden of the same rank †. As soon as the lover had obtained the consent of his mistress, and of her guardian, the parties were solemnly contracted, and one of the bridegroom's friends became surety to the woman's guardian, that she should be treated well, and maintained in a manner suitable to her station ‡. In this contract, the dowry which the husband settled upon his wife was fixed and ascertained; of which she was to enjoy the usufruct, and, in some cases, the property, if she proved the survivor. With

\* Muratori Antiq. t. 2. p. 113. 114. *Leges Wallicæ*, p. 35.

† *Leg. Longobard.* l. 2. tit. 8. sect. 8.

‡ *Spel. Concil.* p. 425.

respect to the proportion of this dowry, the laws of the Anglo-Saxons were more favourable to the sex than those of any other of the northern nations\*. It was a custom as inviolably observed as the most positive law, that all the friends and relations of both parties, within the third degree, were invited to the marriage-feast, and that all who were invited made a present of some kind or other to the bride and bridegroom †. The father, brother, or guardian of the bride, in particular, made a considerable present in furniture, arms, cattle, and money, according to the circumstances of the family; which was called *faderfium* (*father-gift*), and was all the fortune the husband received with his wife ‡. No marriage could be lawfully celebrated without the presence of the woman's guardian, who solemnized the marriage, by delivering the bride to the bridegroom with words to this purpose: " I give thee my daughter (sister, or relation) to be thy honour and thy wife, to keep thy keys, and to share with thee in thy bed and goods. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." After which, the priest pronounced the nuptial benediction ||. Though the bridegroom had already been at much expence in procuring the consent of the guardian, and settling a dowry on his wife, he was obliged,

\* Tacit. de Morib. German. c. 18. Heineccii Op. t. 6. p. 113. Spel. Concil. p. 425. Stiernhook, p. 155. † Id. ibid.

‡ Heinec. t. 6. p. 117. Lindenbrog. Gloss. in voce. Spel. Gloss. in voce. || Stiernhook, p. 160.

both by law and custom, to make her a valuable present on the first morning of their marriage, before he arose from bed, as a testimony of his entire satisfaction. This, which was called the *morgænife*, or *morning-gift*, was the pin-money of antiquity, and became the separate property of the wife, with which the husband had no concern\*. It was found by experience, that some ladies, by their superior charms, or superior art, prevailed upon their husbands, in these critical circumstances, to make very extravagant morning-gifts, which produced positive laws in almost every country of Europe, restraining them within certain limits, in proportion to his estate †. Such were the matrimonial laws and customs of our Anglo-Saxon ancestors; of which one great object seems to have been, to prevent unequal and clandestine marriages. They were evidently very favourable to the fair sex, and to those families who had many daughters; but whether any of them might be revived with advantage, it belongs not to a private person to determine.

When the matrimonial knot was once duly tied, among the ancient Germans, and the several nations descended from them, nothing but the death of one of the parties, or the infidelity of the wife to the marriage-bed, could dissolve it ‡. After these nations had embraced

Concerning divorces.

\* Wilkins Leges Sax. p. 147. Leges Wallicæ, p. 80. et in Gloss. voce Cowyll.

† Muratori, t. 2. p. 115.

‡ Tacit. de Morib. German. c. 19. 20.

the Christian religion, they were still further confirmed in these sentiments, and the ties of marriage were esteemed very sacred and inviolable\*. It cannot however be denied, that voluntary separations, and even divorces, became gradually too frequent, especially amongst the great; and that the monkish doctrines concerning the great merit of vows of chastity made by married persons, contributed not a little to this abuse. By the canon law, if either the husband or wife made a vow of chastity, the other party could not prevent a separation; and, which was still more unreasonable, could not marry another †. The laws of Wales permitted a man to repudiate his wife not only for adultery, but for such indecent behaviour as indicated a disposition to commit that crime; and the same law allowed a woman to separate from her husband, without forfeiting her dowry, for so slight a cause as an unsavoury breath ‡.

Authority of husbands.

The husband, who had regularly purchased the guardianship of his wife from her former guardian, succeeded to all his rights, became her lord and protector, the administrator of her goods, and the guardian of all the children of the marriage ||. But though the authority of husbands, among all the northern nations who bought their wives, was very great, yet they seem to have exercised it with greater lenity

\* Spel. Concil. p. 41. 52. 153.

‡ Leges Wallicæ, p. 80. 298.

† Id. p. 269.

|| Heinecc. t. 6. p. 137.

than the Gauls, and other nations, who had not that custom; and for this very reason perhaps, that their wives had cost them money, and were considered as valuable possessions. By the laws of Wales, (which were probably copied in this particular, as in many others, from those of their neighbours the English), a husband was allowed to give his wife three blows with a stick on any part of the body except the head, if he caught her in bed with another man—if she squandered away his goods—if she pulled him by the beard—or if she gave him opprobrious names; but if he beat her either more severely, or for more trifling causes, he was fined\*.

The paternal authority among the ancient Germans, and the nations descended from them, did not extend to the power of life and death, as amongst the Gauls; but parents, in all these nations, had a right to correct their children with becoming severity, to regulate their conduct, to sell their daughters to husbands with their own consent, and even to sell both their sons and daughters into slavery, to relieve themselves from extreme necessity †. In every clan or tribe of the Welsh in this period, there was one person who was styled the *pencedl*, or *head of the tribe*, who had considerable authority over all the families in it, who transacted nothing of importance without his knowledge and consent ‡.

\* *Leges Wallicæ*, p. 387.

† *Cæsar de Bell. Gall.* l. 6. c. 19. *Heinec.* t. 6. p. 62.

‡ *Leges Wallicæ*, p. 164.

This officer, who was chosen by all the heads of families, was considered as the common parent of the whole tribe, the supreme judge in all genealogical questions about the admission of persons into the clanship, and was entitled to a present from every man who married any woman under his protection\*.

Laws relating to compacts, &c.

The laws of our Anglo-Saxon ancestors, for the regulation of bargains, compacts, and agreements of various kinds,—for the security of real and personal estates,—for the recovery of just debts,—for establishing mutual confidence and good faith among the members of society,—and for pointing out the legal methods of obtaining justice in all these particulars,—are too numerous to be here inserted, and would form a body of law, rather than an article of history †. Before the use of writing became common, all considerable bargains, compacts, and agreements of every kind, were transacted in the presence of some magistrate, or in the hundred or county-court, that if any dispute arose concerning them, the most unexceptionable witnesses might not be wanting ‡. Still further, to prevent mistakes about the terms and conditions of these transactions, they were sometimes written in the blank leaves of some church Bible, which was considered as an authentic record ||. The laws against insolvent creditors were very severe; and

\* *Leges Wallicæ*, p. 164. 184.

† Vide *Wilkins Leges Saxon.* passim, et *Leges Wallicæ*.

‡ *Hiccesii Dissertatio Epistolæ*, p. 30.

|| *Id.* p. 22. 23.

their creditors were permitted not only to strip them of every thing, and to imprison their persons, but even to reduce them to slavery \*. To inspire men with a regard to character in their dealings, notorious rogues and cheats were laid under many inconveniences. They were not admitted into any decenary, nor suffered to bear testimony in any court of justice; and if they became very infamous, they had their noses cut off, or their heads scalped, that all men might know and avoid them †.

The laws of our Anglo-Saxon ancestors not only provided for the security of men's properties during life, but also directed and regulated the succession to them, and that in a manner very agreeable to the natural wishes and desires of mankind. When a father died and left children, they were his heirs, as being dearest unto him, and most dependent upon him ‡. If these children were all sons, there can be no doubt that the possessions of their common parent were equally, or almost equally, divided amongst them; or if they were all daughters, the division was also equal: but when some of them were sons, and others daughters, it is not certainly known, whether the daughters shared equally with the sons or not, in the most ancient times. By the laws of the Saxons on the continent, daughters did not share equally with the sons;

Laws of  
succession.

\* Heinec. t. 6. p. 15.

† Wilkins Leges Saxon. p. 103. 137, 138.

‡ Tacit. de Morib. German. c. 20.

and this, it is probable, was also the law of those who settled in this island \*; though there is a law of King Canute, which seems to make no distinction between sons and daughters †. By the laws of Wales in the tenth century, a daughter received only half the proportion which a son inherited of their father's possessions ‡. When a man at his death had no children, his nearest relations were his heirs; which are thus described: "If any one die without children, if his father and mother be alive, they shall be his heirs; if his father and mother are dead, his brothers and sisters shall be his heirs; but if he hath no brothers or sisters, the brothers and sisters of his father and mother shall be his heirs, and so on to the fifth degree, according to proximity of blood ||." When none appeared to claim a succession, or when they could not make good their claim, the whole fell to the king. Such were the laws of succession among our Anglo-Saxon ancestors; different in several respects from those which are observed at present, and which were introduced, with many other feudal customs, after the Norman conquest.

Laws relating to testaments.

Though the above rules of succession seem to have been agreeable to the most natural feelings of the human heart, yet it might often happen, that persons who had no children, or very near

\* Lindenbrog. p. 476.

† Wilkins Leges Saxon. p. 144.

‡ Leges Wallica, p. 88.

|| Tacit. de Morib. German. c. 20. Lindenbrog. p. 460. Wilkins Leges Saxon. p. 266.



relations, might wish to dispose of their possessions to others than those that were pointed out by law. But this the ancient Germans could not do, because they were strangers to the use of last-wills or testaments, as the Anglo-Saxons probably were at their first settlement in this island \*. Those German and Northern nations, however, who abandoned their native seats, and erected kingdoms in Italy, France, Spain, and Britain, soon became acquainted with, and adopted this method of conveying their estates, which they found practised by the Romans, and other inhabitants of these countries. After the conversion of these nations to Christianity, they were instructed and encouraged in this mode of eluding the strict laws of succession, and conveying their estates by will, for very obvious reasons. Accordingly we may observe, that the most ancient Anglo-Saxon testaments that have been preserved and published, are agreeable to the Roman forms, and contain very valuable legacies to the church, for the benefit of the souls of the testators, and of their ancestors †. The method of disposing of their possessions by will, agreeable to their inclinations, and for the good of their souls, which was first adopted by kings and great men, soon became so common, and so fatal to the interests of legal heirs, that it was found necessary to lay it under some restraints by posi-

\* Tacit. de Morib. German. c. 20.

† Hiccesii Dissertatio Epistolaris, p. 50—63.

tive laws. By a law of Alfred the Great, all persons were restrained from alienating from their natural and legal heirs, estates which had descended to them from their ancestors, if the first purchasers had directed, either in writing, or before credible witnesses, that these estates should remain in the family, and descend to their posterity; which sufficiently proves, that entails are very far from being novelties in the laws of England\*. A man who had children was prohibited, by the laws of Wales, from leaving any legacies from his children, except a mortuary to the church, or a sum of money for the payment of his debts †. But as the ignorance and superstition of the people, the influence and avarice of the clergy, increased, entails, and all other legal restraints, which had been contrived to prevent men from ruining their families to enrich the church, were removed, and every man was encouraged to leave as much to the church as possible. “The thirteenth cause,” says Muratori, “of the great riches of the church, was the pious  
“manners of those ancient times, when fathers  
“and councils earnestly exhorted all Christians  
“to give, or at least to leave, by their testa-  
“ments, a great proportion of their estates for  
“the redemption of their souls; and those good  
“men who complied with these exhortations,  
“were said to have made Christ one of their  
“heirs. By degrees, there was hardly any man

\* Wilkins *Leges Saxon.* p. 43.† *Leges Wallicæ*, p. 76.

“ died, without leaving a considerable legacy to  
 “ the church; and if any person neglected to  
 “ make a will, and do this, he was esteemed an  
 “ impious wretch, who had no concern for the  
 “ salvation of his soul, and his memory was in-  
 “ famous. To wipe off this infamy, it insen-  
 “ sibly became a custom for the bishop to make  
 “ wills for all who died intestate in his diocese,  
 “ and to leave as much to the church as the  
 “ persons themselves should have done, if they  
 “ had made wills. This good office (as I  
 “ imagine) was at first done with the consent,  
 “ and perhaps at the request of the heirs of  
 “ the deceased; but in process of time it be-  
 “ came an established custom, and acquired the  
 “ force of a law, particularly in England\*.”  
 Is it possible, that presumption on the one hand,  
 and simplicity on the other, could be carried to  
 a greater height?

No laws, however just and prudent, have ever Penal laws.  
 been found sufficient, in any country, to secure  
 the peace and good order of society, and protect  
 the properties, characters, and persons of men,  
 from all injuries, merely by the force of their  
 internal rectitude. Nor was there ever any na-  
 tion in the world that could afford to bestow par-  
 ticular premiums upon all who obeyed its laws,  
 in order to engage them to obedience by the  
 hopes of these rewards. It became universally  
 necessary, therefore, to enforce obedience, by

\* Murator. Antiq. t. 5. p. 654.

the fear of punishments in case of disobedience; which gave rise in all parts of the world to those laws which are called criminal or penal laws, because they forbid crimes, and threaten penalties. The penal laws of our Anglo-Saxon ancestors were in several respects curious, and merit a short attention.

The spirit of the Anglo-Saxon penal laws was to repair the injury.

In general, we may observe, that after the Anglo-Saxons embraced the Christian religion, they were subjected to double penalties for all their crimes; one of which was inflicted by the canons of the church, and the other by the laws of the state. Thus, for example, a person convicted of wilful murder was obliged, by the canons of the church, to live seven years on bread and water, as well as to pay all the penalties which the laws of the land required. But as the censures of the church are not so properly the subject of the present inquiry, it may be sufficient to refer the reader for an account of them to the books quoted below\*. It may be further observed, that as the great object of the Anglo-Saxon penal laws was to repair and make amends for injuries, rather than to punish crimes, they made little difference between injuries done through deliberate malice, and those done in a sudden transport of passion, or even by mere accident. It was a maxim in their law, as well as a proverb in common conversation, "Unwil-

\* Wilkins *Leges Saxon.* p. 89—93. *Spelman Concil.* p. 460—468. *Johnson's Canons,* A. D. 963.

“lingly offend, willingly amend\*.” This distinction, however, was too obvious and important to be quite disregarded; and therefore Canute the Great commands, in one of his laws, that some little difference should be made between a wilful and an accidental offender †. From the same principle, capital punishments were very rare amongst the Anglo-Saxons; because a man’s death could not repair the injuries which he had done by his crimes. Our more particular observations on the penal laws of this period, must be chiefly confined to those which were designed to repair the injuries which men sustained in their properties by theft and robbery, in their characters by calumny, and in their persons by maiming and murder. The injury done indeed, by this last crime, was irreparable to the person injured; and therefore the reparation was made to the king for the loss of his subject, and to the family for the loss of their friend.

Theft was one of the most common crimes in the period we are now considering; and there-<sup>Laws against theft.</sup>fore a great number of laws were made against those who were guilty of it. In the early part of this period, theft of the worst kind, even when it was committed in a church, in the king’s palace, or a bishop’s house, did not expose the thief to any corporal punishment. But even then the compensation he was obliged by law to

\* Wilkins Leges Saxon. p. 277. 279.

† Id. p. 142.

make, rendered stealing a very losing trade when it was detected. By the laws of Ethelbert, the first Christian King of Kent, if a thief stole from a church, he was obliged to restore twelve-fold; from a bishop, eleven-fold; from the king, or from a priest, nine-fold; from a deacon, six-fold; and from other clerks, three-fold\*. Where, by the bye, we may observe how soon the goods of the church and of the bishop began to be esteemed more inviolable than those of the king. By degrees it was found necessary to make more severe laws against this crime, which continued to increase. By a law of Withred King of Kent, who flourished about a century after Ethelred, a thief who was caught in the act of stealing, might be killed with impunity, if he attempted either to fly, or to make resistance †. Ina King of Wessex, who was cotemporary with Withred, proceeded a step further, and declared theft a capital crime; but allowed the thief, or his friends, to redeem his life, by paying his *were*, or the price at which his life was valued by the law, according to his rank in society ‡. This seems to have continued to be the general principle of the Anglo-Saxon laws, with regard to those who were convicted of having stolen any thing of considerable value. This value was fixed by the laws of King Athelstan, A. D. 926, at eight pence, equal in efficacy to

\* Wilkins Leges Saxon. p. 1. 2. See Append. No. 3.

† Wilkins Leges Saxon. p. 12.

‡ Id. p. 17.

fifty shillings of our money at present; and it was not long after raised to twelve pence\*. The same king also raised the age at which a person might be condemned for theft, from twelve to fifteen years †. All who had been once convicted of theft, and had paid their *were*, or price of their life, were obliged to find sureties for their good behaviour, or to swear as the bishop directed them, that they would steal no more; and if, after this, they were convicted of the same crime, they were to be hanged ‡. The accomplices and protectors of thieves, and those who received and concealed stolen goods, knowing them to be stolen, were subjected to the same penalties with the thieves themselves. The laws of Wales in this period against theft, and indeed the laws of all the other nations of Europe, seem to have been nearly the same with those of England ||. The distinction between the punishing of theft as a crime, and exacting compensation for it as an injury, which was the chief object of the penal laws of this period, is strongly marked in the following law of Howel Dha: “If a thief is condemned to death, he shall not suffer in his goods; for it is quite unreasonable both to exact compensation, and inflict punishment §.” But theft was at length made a capital crime, without benefit of

\* Wilkins *Leges Saxon.* p. 56. 65.† *Id.* p. 70.‡ *Id.* *ibid.*|| *Vide Leges Wallicæ*, l. 3. c. 3. *Heinecc. t. 6. p. 442. 460.*§ *Leges Wallicæ*, p. 221.

compensation, about forty years after the Norman conquest\*.

Laws a-  
gainst rob-  
bery.

Robbery, when it was committed by a troop of armed men, without the territories of the state to which they belonged, was so far from being condemned as a crime, that it was commended as a brave and patriotic action, by the ancient Germans, and the nations descended from them †. All the laws of our Anglo-Saxon kings, in the times of the heptarchy, against robbery, were made with this restriction:—“ Provided it was committed within the bounds “ of our kingdom ‡.” In the laws of Wales, there are many regulations for dividing the booty brought home by those bands of robbers, that went out from time to time to plunder the territories of the neighbouring states; and of this booty the king, queen, and great officers of the court, had a considerable share ||. But though all those nations, to enrich themselves at the expence of their neighbours, and to keep their youth in the exercise of arms, encouraged external depredations, they discouraged internal robbery. By the laws of Ina King of Wessex, A. D. 693, a robber within the kingdom was condemned to restore what he had taken, and to pay a fine of sixty shillings; but if he was the leader of a gang of robbers above thirty-five in number, he was to pay the full price of his life,

\* Wilkins Leges Saxon. p. 304.

† Tacit. de Morib. German. c. 14.

‡ Wilkins Leges Saxon. p. 16.

|| Leges Wallicæ, p. 17.



or his full *were*. By the laws of the same prince, a robber who broke into the king's or bishop's house, was to make satisfaction with one hundred and twenty shillings,—into an alderman's, with eighty shillings,—into a thane's, with sixty shillings,—and into the house of an inferior land-owner, with thirty-five shillings\*. These were certainly very moderate punishments for such audacious criminals; and yet this seems to have been the law during the whole of this period, except that the mulcts were raised a little higher by Canute the Great, in the beginning of the eleventh century †. It is expressly declared in the ancient laws of Wales, that robbery shall never be punished with death, “because,” say these laws, “it is sufficient satisfaction for this crime, if the goods taken be restored, and a fine paid to the person from whom they were taken, according to his station, for the violence offered him, and another to the king for the breach of the peace ‡.” The extraordinary lenity of all those laws, is a further proof that compensation, and not punishment, was their chief object. This is still more conspicuous in the laws against incendiaries, which obliged the unhappy man who had his house burnt by accident to pay all the damages done by the fire to the neighbouring houses, as much as if he had been a voluntary malicious incen-

\* Wilkins *Leges Saxon.* p. 16. 23.† *Id.* p. 143.‡ *Leges Wallicæ*, p. 230.

diary \*: a most extravagant and unreasonable law ! which shews how careful legislators ought to be what general principles they adopt, and that they do not pursue them too far.

Laws a-  
gainst ca-  
lummy.

A good name was never more useful and necessary than in the period we are now delineating ; because, without that, no man could be admitted a member of any tithing or decenary, but was reputed a vagabond. It was probably for this reason that a calumniator was more severely punished by the laws of the Anglo-Saxons than a robber. By a law of Lothere, who was king of Kent towards the end of the seventh century, a calumniator was obliged to pay one shilling to the person in whose house or lands he uttered the calumny, six shillings to the person he calumniated, and twelve shillings to the king †. But Edgar the Peaceable, who flourished about two centuries after, made a much more severe law against this crime ; by which it was decreed, that a person convicted of gross and dangerous defamation should have his tongue cut out, unless he redeemed it, by paying his full *were*, or the price of his life ; and this law was confirmed by Canute the Great ‡.

Laws for  
the preser-  
vation of the  
peace.

To guard against personal injuries, to which a fierce and warlike people are exceeding prompt, many laws were made by the Anglo-Saxons for the preservation of the public peace, and the

\* *Leges Wallicæ*, p. 226.

† *Wilkins Leges Saxon.* p. 9.

‡ *Id.* p. 9. 78. 126.

prevention of affrays and quarrels, in which men might be in danger of being killed or wounded. By a law of King Ina, it was declared, that whoever broke the peace in the king's court, or in a bishop's house, should pay a mulct of one hundred and twenty shillings; in an alderman's house, eighty shillings; in a thane's house, sixty shillings; in the house of an inferior landholder, thirty shillings \*. The penalty against this offence was very much raised by a law of Alfred the Great; which declared, that if any man fought, or even drew his sword, within the verge of the king's court, his life should be at the king's mercy; and if his life was spared, that he should pay his full *were* †. The verge of the court extended three miles and a half every way from the house in which the king lodged ‡. The penalties for the breach of the peace in cathedral churches were the same as in the king's court, viz. the loss of life, or the payment of a full *were*; in middling churches, a mulct of one hundred and twenty shillings; in smaller churches that have a burying-place, of sixty shillings; in very small churches that have no burying-place, of thirty shillings ||. Several laws were also made, with pretty severe penalties, against fighting and quarrelling in alehouses §.

\* Wilkins Leges Saxon. p. 22.

‡ Id. p. 63.

|| Id. p. 126.

† Id. p. 36.

§ Id. p. 9.

Laws for the  
protection of  
criminals  
from sud-  
den vio-  
lence.

If a fierce unpolished people are too apt to offer personal injuries, they are still more apt to resent and revenge them with instantaneous and excessive violence. This made it necessary for the most ancient legislators of almost all nations to provide for the personal safety of criminals, and preserve them from the immediate revenge and fury of those whom they had offended. One means employed for this purpose by many nations, and particularly by our Anglo-Saxon ancestors, was the appointing certain places to be sanctuaries to all who took refuge in them; and giving authority to certain persons of the highest rank and greatest power, to defend all persons who put themselves under their protection from immediate violence. The king's court, and all churches, were declared sanctuaries by the Anglo-Saxon laws; and criminals who fled to them were protected from violence for a certain time, that they might have an opportunity of making satisfaction for the injuries which they had done, and of compromising matters with those whom they had offended \*. By the same laws, kings and bishops had authority to defend those criminals who put themselves under their protection, for nine days; and abbots and aldermen for three days; but if they did not make satisfaction within that time, they were then to be brought to justice, and punished according to law †.

\* Wilkins Leges Saxon. p. 15. 35. 43.

† Id. p. 63.

But as all the laws that were made for preventing personal injuries were often ineffectual, it was necessary to make other laws, for regulating the punishment to be inflicted upon, or rather the satisfaction to be made by, those who were guilty of these injuries. Those laws were very numerous; but it will be sufficient to take notice only of a few of those which regulated the satisfaction to be made for the three great injuries, of wounding, of killing, and of violating the chastity of the fair sex.

By the laws of the Anglo-Saxons, and of all the other nations of Europe in the middle ages, certain prices were set upon all the members of the human body, and upon bruises, maims, and wounds, in every part of it, according to their breadth, length, and depth, with a degree of accuracy and minuteness that is truly surprising. These prices of the several parts of the body, and of their wounds, maims, and bruises, were formed into a kind of book of rates, which every judge was obliged to get by heart before he could be admitted to sit in judgment\*.—When any person was convicted of having wounded another, the judge declared out of the doom-book, the price of a wound of such dimensions, in such a part of the body; and this the criminal was obliged to pay to the person wounded; and by a law of King Edmund, it was declared, that no abatement could be

\* *Leges Wallicæ*, p. 186. *Leges Saxon. edit. a Wilkin.* p. 5. 6. 7.

made\*. The reader will find a copy of the most ancient of these doom-books in the laws of Ethelbert, the first Christian King of Kent, in the appendix; and the most perfect one now extant is contained in the third book of the laws of Howel Dha †. If a physician was called, the criminal was also obliged to pay for the medicines, and for the maintenance both of the doctor and the patient till the cure was completed ‡. It is hardly necessary to observe, that this was a most unreasonable system of laws, and gave the rich a great advantage over the poor, which no doubt they frequently abused. But these laws were contrived to answer the great end of the jurisprudence of the middle ages, which was compensation, without promoting sufficiently the no less desirable end of prevention.

Murder. The laws of the Anglo-Saxons against killing or murder were still more unreasonable; because they attempted to make reparation for an injury which, to the person who suffered it, was irreparable. By these laws a certain price or value was set upon every man's life, from the sovereign to the slave, according to his rank; and whoever killed any man was obliged to pay the price which the laws had set upon the life of a person of that rank. This price was called a man's *were* or *weregyld*, from *were* a man, and *gyldan*

\* Leges Saxon. p. 74.

† See Append. No. 3. Leges Wallicæ, l. 3. c. 8. p. 275—279.

‡ Id. p. 277.

to yield or pay, and made a capital article in the doom-book; as may be seen in the laws of King Athelstan \*. These laws not only fixed the quantity of every man's *were*, but also directed to whom, and in what proportions, it should be paid. The king's weregeld, for example, was two hundred and forty pounds, equal in quantity of silver to about seven hundred and twenty pounds, and in real value to seven thousand two hundred pounds of our money; which was to be divided into two equal parts, the one of which was to be paid to the family of the murdered prince, as a compensation for the loss of their relation, and the other was to be paid to the public, for the loss of their sovereign †. The *were* of subjects of all ranks above slaves was paid, one half to the king, for the loss of his subject, and the breach of his peace, and the other half to the family of the murdered person, for the loss of their relation, and to extinguish their resentment against the murderer; the former of which was called the *frith-bote*, from *frith* (peace) and *bote* (compensation), and the latter *mæg-bote*, from *mæg* (kindred) and *bote* ‡. When a freeman killed his own slave, he had nothing to pay but a small mulct to the king for breach of the peace; but when he

\* See Append. No. 3.

† Wilkins Leges Saxon. p. 72.

‡ Spelman, Gloss. in voce Fredum. Somner and Leye's Dictionar. Saxon. voc. frith-bote, and mæg-bote.

killed the slave of another person, besides this mulct to the king, he was obliged to pay the value of the slave to his owner, which was called *man-bote*, or *man's price* \*. If a slave killed a freeman, the owner of the slave was obliged to pay both the frith-bote to the king, and the mæg-bote to the family of the murdered person, or to put the murderer into their hands. When a slave killed his own master, he was put to death; because, having no goods and no family, he could make no compensation: when he killed one of his fellow-slaves, his master might punish him as he pleased.

Change in  
the laws  
against  
murder.

As all the near relations of a murdered person received a share of his mæg-bote; so they contributed also their share to the payment of these mulcts for any of their relations who were guilty of murder, which greatly diminished the terror even of these penalties. King Edmund, who reigned from A. D. 940 to A. D. 946, being very desirous of giving some check to the frequent murders occasioned by the unreasonable lenity of these laws, particularly of the last, procured a law to be made, that from thenceforth the murderer himself should be the only object of the resentment of the injured family; and that his relations should not be obliged to pay any share of the penalties †. But though

\* Du Cange Gloss. voce *Man-bote*.

† Wilkins Leges Saxon. p. 73.



this was an amendment, it was not sufficient to produce the desired effect; and therefore it was found necessary to depart from a maxim that had been too long established in the jurisprudence of the middle ages,—“That there was no crime “that might not be expiated with money;” and to declare some crimes, and particularly some kinds of murder, inextiabile. By a law of King Ethelred, A. D. 1008, a murder committed within the walls of a church is declared to be inextiabile, without the special permission of the king; and when the king granted this permission (which was probably too often), the criminal was obliged to pay a mulct to the church for the violation of its protection, besides the frith-bote to the king, and the mæg-bote to the family\*. Upon the whole, it is sufficiently evident, that the penal laws of the Anglo-Saxons against murder were the same in substance with those of their German ancestors; among whom murder was compensated by the payment of a certain number of cattle; of which the whole family received a share †. It is no less evident, that these laws were unreasonably gentle, and very ill calculated to prevent the commission of this horrid crime among a fierce people, who had arms continually in their hands.

\* Wilkins *Leges Saxon.* p. 113.

† Tacit. *de Morib. German.* c. 21.

Punish-  
ments for  
violating  
the honour  
of the fair  
sex.

As the fair sex are naturally weaker than men, and are exposed to injuries of a peculiar kind, so their persons and their honour have been protected in all civilized countries by particular laws. This is not the proper place to speak of those violations of chastity to which the woman was consenting; because, being equally guilty, she was equally punished with the other party. Only it may not be improper to observe, that the laws of the Anglo-Saxons, like those of their German ancestors, against adulteresses, were very severe\*. By an ordinance of King Canute, an adulteress, besides being declared infamous for life, and forfeiting all her goods, was condemned to have her nose and lips cut off, that she might no longer be an object of criminal desires †. The English laws of this period inflicted certain pecuniary penalties on those who were guilty of any attempts against the virtue and honour of the sex, from the slightest indecency to the rudest violence; and these penalties were greater or smaller according to the rank of the injured party. The compensation for a rape committed upon a nun, was as high as for murder, besides the deprivation of Christian burial; but one committed on a person of immature age, subjected the criminal to a mutilation which effectually prevented the repetition of the crime ‡.

\* Tacit. de Morib. German. c. 19.

† Wilkins Leges Saxon. p. 142.

‡ Id. p. 40. 72.

The chastity of the sex was guarded with great anxiety and care by the ancient laws of Wales\*.

Penalties were also inflicted by the Anglo-Saxon laws on those who were guilty of several other crimes, which do not fall directly under any of the three preceding heads; as idolatry, sorcery, witchcraft, perjury, forgery, coining, and high treason against the whole people, &c. † <sup>Punishments of several crimes.</sup> But these penalties were likewise, for the most part, pecuniary: only coiners of base money were condemned to lose their right hands; and traitors against the whole nation were to be put to death, because no compensation could be made to a whole people for so great an injury ‡. In a word, the compensation of injuries, rather than the punishment of crimes, seems to have been the great object of the penal laws of the Anglo-Saxons, and of all the other nations of Europe, in the middle ages; which is the true reason that pecuniary punishments were so frequent, and corporal and capital punishments so uncommon, in those ages.

As crimes are commonly committed with great secrecy, the innocent are sometimes suspected and accused, and criminals often conceal and deny their guilt. To discover the truth, that the innocent may not be condemned, nor the <sup>Laws of evidence.</sup>

\* Leges Wallicæ, p. 78.

† Vide Wilkins et Lambard Leges Saxon. passim.

‡ Wilkins Leges Saxon. p. 59. 103.

guilty acquitted, is one of the most necessary and difficult duties of the judicial office; and therefore the laws of evidence, which have been made, in every period, to direct judges in the investigation of the truth, are of very great importance, and merit our attention. This subject is remarkably curious in the present period; because the laws of evidence in England, and over all Europe, were then exceeding singular, and different from what they are at present.

Oaths. Oaths, or solemn appeals to heaven, have been the most ancient and most universal means employed in courts of justice to engage men to declare the truth: and they were never more frequently employed for this purpose than in the period we are now delineating; for in all actions, both civil and criminal, both parties appeared in the field of battle, attended by a prodigious number of witnesses, (sometimes above a thousand on one side), who were drawn up like two regular armies, and discharged whole volleys of oaths at one another.

Compurgators.

When any person was judicially accused of any crime which he denied, he was obliged, in the first place, to purge himself, as it was called, by his own oath, and to bring such a number of other persons as the law required in that case, to give their oaths, that they believed him to be innocent, and that he had sworn the truth\*.

\* *Leges Wallicæ*, p. 134.

These persons were commonly called his *compurgators*, because their oaths contributed with his own to clear him from the crime of which he had been accused. Many laws were made in England, and in all the other countries of Europe, for regulating the numbers, qualities, and other circumstances of these compurgators, who made a distinguished figure in the jurisprudence of the middle ages\*. When a person accused produced the number of compurgators required by law, he was said to have purged himself by such a number of hands; because each of the compurgators laid one of his hands on the gospels, or on certain relics, and the person accused laid his hand above all the rest, and swore by God, and by all the hands that were under his, that he was not guilty; the truth of which, each of the compurgators who did not withdraw his hand, was presumed to confirm by his oath †. In some cases, two, three, or four hands were sufficient; but in others much greater numbers, even forty, fifty, or a hundred, were required; though twelve, or twenty-four, seem to have been the most common numbers ‡. These compurgators were to be persons of unblemished characters, near neighbours or relations of the person ac-

\* Lindenbrog. Codex Legum Antiquarum. Du Cange Gloss. in voc. Juramentum.

† Id. ibid. Leges Alaman. apud Lindenbrog. p. 366.

‡ Du Cange Gloss. in voc. Juramentum. Stiernhook de Jure Sueonum, p. 118. Leges Wallicæ, p. 217.

cused, and of the same rank and quality \*. If the criminal was a woman, both law and custom required that her compurgators should also be women †. In other cases, women were not admitted to be compurgators ‡. If the criminal produced the number of unexceptionable compurgators which the law required, and if all these compurgators took the oath of credulity or belief, as it was called, he was acquitted; but if he could not produce the number required, or if only one of that number refused to take the oath, he was condemned ||.

Compurgators not the same with jurymen.

Some writers, eminent for their learning, and particularly for their knowledge of our antiquities and laws, have been of opinion, that the compurgators of the middle ages were the genuine predecessors of the jurors or jurymen of later times §. This opinion, though supported by great names, is liable to strong objections; and any reader who attentively considers the description of compurgators that is given above, will perceive that they were very different in many respects from our modern juries. They seem to bear a greater resemblance to those witnesses who do not pretend to know any thing of the fact in question, but are brought to speak to the character of the person upon trial.

\* *Leges Wallicæ*, p. 98. 115.

† *Id.* p. 108. 79.

‡ *Hist. Eliens.* c. 84.

|| *Leges Wallicæ*, p. 134.

§ *Spelman. Gloss. in voc. Jurata. Selden. Janus Anglorum*, l. 2. c. 4.  
 Lord Kames's *Historical Law-tracts*, second edit. p. 76.

The compurgators were not the only persons Witnesses. who gave their oaths on trials, in the middle ages; for besides these, great numbers of witnesses were sworn on both sides, to confirm, or to invalidate the charge\*. But the oaths of witnesses and compurgators were very different. Witnesses swore that they knew the things which they testified to be true: compurgators swore only, that they believed the oath which had been given by the defendant was true †.

This great multiplicity of oaths in the judicial Ceremonies in administering oaths. proceedings of the middle ages, had the same effect that it will always have, of diminishing men's veneration for them, and giving occasion to frequent perjury. The legislators of those times employed several devices to prevent this, by awakening the consciences, and keeping alive the religious fears of mankind. With this view, their oaths were couched in the most awful forms of words that could be invented; and these forms were frequently changed, that they might not lose their effect by becoming too familiar ‡. An oath was not to be administered to any person unless he was perfectly sober, and even fasting ||. Oaths were commonly administered in a church; and for this reason courts were held in or near a place of public worship §. The person who

\* Leges Wallicæ, p. 132.

† Id. p. 136.

‡ Hiccesii Dissert. Epist. p. 112.

Wilkins Leges Saxon. p. 6. 64.

|| Du Cange, p. 1607.

§ Id. ibid.

took the oath, was obliged to lay his right hand upon the altar,—or upon the gospels,—or upon a cross,—or upon the relics of the most venerated saints \*. These, and the like circumstances, were well calculated to make a strong impression on men's imaginations in those ages of ignorance and superstition. To rouse a sense of honour in the breasts of the military men, their oaths were taken with their hands upon their arms †. This last ceremony was much used by the Danes and Saxons, and esteemed by them a most inviolable obligation to declare the truth. The curious reader will meet with a description of some very singular ceremonies that were sometimes used in Wales, in the administration of oaths, in the book quoted below ‡. But after all the devices that were invented by the legislators of the middle ages, to give solemnity to oaths, it is very certain that perjury was very frequent, and one of the reigning vices of those times.

Oaths  
weighed as  
well as  
numbered.

Another very remarkable singularity in the laws of evidence, both in England and in other countries of Europe, in this period, was the method of ascertaining the degrees of credit that were due to the oaths of persons of different ranks. In those times they weighed, as well as numbered oaths, and had a most curious standard for performing that operation. This standard was the

\* Wilkins *Leges Saxon.* p. 12. Johnson's *Canons*, A. D. 754.

† Du Cange *Gloss.* p. 1617,

‡ *Leges Wallicæ*, p. 85.



legal weregeld, or price, that was set on the lives of persons of all the different ranks in society. As the weregeld of a thane, for example, was 1200 Saxon shillings, the oath of one thane was esteemed of equal weight with the oaths of six ceorls\*. But this was certainly a fallacious standard: for though it may be true in general, that the oaths of persons of rank and fortune are more worthy of credit than those of their inferiors, yet this general rule admits of many exceptions; and we have no reason to believe, that men's consciences are so exactly proportioned to the weight of their purses as this law supposes.

It is easy to perceive, from the above account Origin of ordeals. of the laws of evidence, that it was no easy matter for the most innocent person to clear himself from an accusation, especially in those cases where a greater multitude of compurgators was required. Many persons, therefore, when they were accused of any crime, chose rather to apply to Heaven for evidences of their innocence, than to be at the expence and labour of collecting so prodigious a mass of human testimonies in their favour as the laws demanded. The greatest part of the judges also, in those times of ignorance, had neither patience nor penetration to sift and examine the testimonies of contradicting witnesses, or to investigate the truth in perplexed and

\* Wilkins Leges Saxon. p. 64.

doubtful cases ; and were therefore very willing to admit those proofs from Heaven, which were supposed to be perfectly decisive and unquestionable. The clergy, too, supported the authority of this celestial evidence, as it gave them no little influence in all judicial matters. These seem to have been the reasons that rendered trials by different kinds of ordeals so frequent, and of such great authority, in the ages we are now examining ; for all these ordeals were called *judicia Dei* (the judgments of God), and were considered as so many solemn and direct appeals to Heaven, to give testimony to the guilt or innocence of persons accused of crimes, when human evidence could not be procured \*. Agreeable to these ideas, all these ordeals were administered by the clergy, and accompanied with many religious rites and ceremonies.

Different  
ordeals.

It is not necessary to enumerate all the different kinds of ordeals that were used in England, and in the other countries of Europe, in this period. The most common were the six following :—the judicial combat,—the ordeal of the cross,—the ordeal of the corsned,—the ordeal of cold water,—the ordeal of hot water,—the ordeal of hot iron.

Judicial  
combat.

The judicial combat being well suited to the genius and spirit of fierce and warlike nations, was one of the most ancient and universal ordeals,

\* Du Cange Gloss. in voc. *Judicium Dei*.

and particularly prevailed in Germany in very remote ages\*. This method of trial was also in use in several countries on the continent in this period †. But as it is not mentioned in any of the Anglo-Saxon laws, and seems not to have been much used in England till after the conquest, the description of it must be remitted to the third chapter of the next book of this work.

The cross was an object of so much superstitious veneration in this period, that there is no wonder it was employed as an ordeal. It was indeed used to this purpose in so many different ways, that they cannot be all described. In criminal trials, the judgment of the cross was thus commonly conducted:—When the prisoner had declared his innocence upon oath, and appealed to the judgment of the cross, two sticks were prepared exactly like one another; the figure of the cross was cut on one of these sticks, and nothing on the other; each of them was then wrapped up in a quantity of fine white wool, and laid on the altar, or on the relics of the saints; after which a solemn prayer was put up to God, that he would be pleased to discover, by evident signs, whether the prisoner was innocent or guilty. These solemnities being finished,

Ordeal of  
the cross.

\* See vol. i. chap. 3. p. 233.

† *Leges Longobard.* 2. tit. 51. l. 11. *Neap.* 2. tit. 32. 33. *Muratori,* t. 3. p. 633. &c.

a priest approached the altar, and took up one of the sticks, which was uncovered with much anxiety. If it was the stick marked with the cross, the prisoner was pronounced innocent; if it was the other, he was declared guilty\*. When the judgment of the cross was appealed to in civil causes, the trial was conducted in this manner:—The judges, parties, and all concerned, being assembled in a church, each of the parties chose a priest, the youngest and stoutest that he could find, to be his representative in the trial. These representatives were then placed one on each side of some famous crucifix; and at a signal given, they both at once stretched their arms at full length, so as to form a cross with their body. In this painful posture they continued to stand while divine service was performing; and the party whose representative dropped his arms first, lost his cause †.

Ordeal of  
the corsned.

The corsned, or the consecrated bread and cheese, was the ordeal to which the clergy commonly appealed when they were accused of any crimes; in which they acted a very prudent part, as it was attended with no danger or inconveniency ‡. This ordeal was performed in this manner:—A piece of barley bread, and a piece of cheese, were laid upon the altar, over

\* Spelman, Gloss. in voc. Crucis Judicium.

† Murator. Antiq. t. 3. p. 624.

‡ Wilkins Leges Saxon. p. 128.

which a priest pronounced certain conjurations, and prayed with great fervency, that if the person accused was guilty, God would send his angel Gabriel to stop his throat, that he might not be able to swallow that bread and cheese \*. These prayers being ended, the culprit approached the altar, took up the bread and cheese, and began to eat it. If he swallowed freely, he was declared innocent; but if it stuck in his throat, and he could not swallow, (which we may presume seldom or never happened), he was pronounced guilty.

The ordeal of cold water seems to have been chiefly used in the trials of the common people. Cold water ordeal. It was thus conducted:—The person who was to be tried, was put under the direction of a ghostly father, of great reputation for his sanctity, who obliged him to perform many extraordinary acts of devotion, and to keep a rigorous fast for three days. When this fast was ended, and the day appointed for the trial come, the prisoner was publicly conducted to the church, where the priest celebrated mass; and before he permitted the accused to communicate, he addressed him in the following solemn strain: “ I adjure thee, “ O man, by the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, “ by the true Christianity which you profess, by “ the only-begotten Son of God, by the Holy “ Trinity, by the Holy Gospel, and by all the

\* Muratori Antiq. t. 3. 619. Lindenbrog. p. 1307.

“ holy relics in this church, that you do not  
“ presume to communicate, or approach this  
“ holy altar, if you have committed this crime,  
“ consented to it, or known who committed it.”  
If the prisoner made no confession, the priest  
gave him the communion, saying, “ Let this  
“ body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ be  
“ received by you as a probation this day.”  
After this a quantity of holy water was conse-  
crated, and then the whole company left the  
church, and went in procession to the pool,  
where the ordeal was to be performed. When  
they arrived there, the priest gave the prisoner a  
drink of the holy water, saying, “ Let this holy  
“ water be to thee a probation this day.” If  
the prisoner still continued to deny his guilt, the  
priest then said a long and very fervent prayer  
over the pool, adjuring it by every thing that  
was divine and venerable in heaven or on earth,  
that if the person to be thrown into it was guilty,  
it would reject him, and cause him to float upon  
its surface; but if he was innocent, that it would  
receive him into its bosom. The prisoner was  
then stripped naked, his hands and legs made  
fast, and a rope tied about his middle, with a  
knot upon it, at the distance of a yard and a half  
from his body, and thrown into the pool. If he  
floated (which was hardly to be imagined) he  
was taken out and declared guilty; if he sunk  
so deep as to bring the knot on the rope under  
the water, he was instantly pulled out, before he

could receive any injury, and pronounced innocent \*. - This ordeal was evidently a very uncertain test of guilt or innocence; but the great solemnity with which it was administered, might sometimes strike terror into the minds of criminals, and bring them to confession. In this ordeal it was presumed that God would work a miracle for the detection of guilt; in the two next ordeals of hot water and hot iron, the presumption was that he would work a miracle for the vindication of innocence; but there was no solid foundation for either of these presumptions.

The preparations by fastings, prayers, and other religious exercises, for the hot water ordeal, were of the same kind, and of the same duration, with those that were used before the ordeal of cold water. When these private preparations were finished, the person to be tried was conducted with great solemnity to the church, where the priest began, by saying certain prayers suitable to the occasion; after which mass was celebrated; and before the accused was permitted to communicate, he was abjured, in the most awful form of words, to confess if he was guilty. Fire was then kindled under a pot filled with water; and while the water was heating, the priest said many prayers composed for that purpose.

\* Muratori Antiq. t. 3. p. 613—617. Wilkins Leges Saxon. p. 61.

As soon as the water began to boil, a stone was suspended in it by a string, at the depth of one, two, or three palms, according to the nature of the accusation. The pot was then taken down and placed by the side of the fire; and the prisoner having said the Lord's prayer (not very rapidly we may presume), and marked himself with the sign of the cross, plunged his naked hand and arm into the water and snatched out the stone. His arm was instantly wrapped in linen cloths, and put into a bag, which was sealed by the judge in the presence of the spectators. The prisoner was then restored to the priest, who produced him in the same church at the end of three days; when the bag was opened, the bandages taken off, and the arm examined by twelve of his own friends, and twelve of the friends of the prosecutor. If any marks of scalding then appeared upon the arm, the prisoner was found guilty; if no such marks could be discovered, he was acquitted\*.

Ordeal of  
hot iron.

The religious preparations for this ordeal were the same with those of the former; and therefore need not be repeated. The ordeal of hot iron was of two kinds, and performed either with a ball of iron, or with a certain number of plough-shares. The former was conducted in this manner: A ball of iron was prepared, of

\* Du Cange Gloss, in voc. Aquæ ferventis judicium.



one, two, or three pounds weight, according to the nature of the accusation. When all the prayers and other religious ceremonies were finished, this ball was put into a fire, and made red-hot; after which it was taken out. The prisoner having signed himself with the cross, and sprinkled his hand with holy water, took the ball of hot iron in his hand, and carried it to the distance of nine feet; after which his hand was put into a bag, and sealed up for three days; at the expiration of which it was examined, in the presence of twelve persons of each party. If any marks of burning appeared upon it, the accused was found guilty; if none, he was declared innocent\*. The other way of performing this ordeal was, by making the person who was to be tried, to walk blindfolded, with his feet bare, over nine hot plough-shares, placed at certain distances. If he did this without being burnt, he was adjudged innocent; if not, guilty †. This seemingly dangerous ordeal of hot iron was appropriated to persons of high rank.

If we suppose, that few or none escaped conviction who exposed themselves to these fiery trials, we shall be very much mistaken. For the histories of those times contain innumerable examples of persons plunging their naked arms into boiling water, handling red-hot balls of iron, and walking upon burning plough-shares,

These ordeals not dangerous.

\* Du Cange Gloss. voc. Ferrum candens.

† Id. ibid.

without receiving the least injury\*. Many learned men have been much puzzled to account for this, and disposed to think that Providence graciously interposed in a miraculous manner, for the preservation of injured innocence. But if we examine every circumstance of these fiery ordeals with due attention, we shall see sufficient reason to suspect that the whole was a gross imposition on the credulity of mankind. The accused person was committed wholly to the priest who was to perform the ceremony, three days before the trial, in which he had time enough to bargain with him for his deliverance, and give him instructions how to act his part. On the day of trial, no person was permitted to enter the church, but the priest and the accused, till after the iron was heated; when twelve friends of the accuser, and twelve of the accused, and no more, were admitted, and ranged along the wall on each side of the church, at a respectful distance. After the iron was taken out of the fire, several prayers were said, the accused drunk a cup of holy water, and sprinkled his hand with it; which might take a considerable time, if the priest was indulgent. The space of nine feet was measured by the accused himself with his own feet, and he would probably give but scanty measure. He was obliged only to touch one of the marks with the toe of his right foot,

\* Du Cange Gloss. t. 3. p. 399. 400.

and allowed to stretch the other foot as far towards the other mark as he could; so that the conveyance was almost instantaneous. His hand was not immediately examined, but wrapped in a cloth, prepared for that purpose, three days. May we not, then, from all these precautions, suspect that these priests were in possession of some secret that secured the hand from the impressions of such a momentary touch of hot iron, or removed all appearances of these impressions in three days; and that they made use of this secret when they saw reason? Such readers as are curious in matters of this kind may find two different directions for making ointments, that will have this effect, in the work quoted below \*. What greatly strengthens these suspicions is, that we meet with no example of any champion of the church who suffered the least injury from the touch of hot iron in this ordeal; but when any one was so fool-hardy as to appeal to it, or to that of hot water, with a view to deprive the church of any of her possessions, he never failed to burn his fingers, and lose his cause †.

If the Anglo-Saxon constitution, government, and laws, do not appear so excellent and perfect in all respects, in the above description, as they have been sometimes represented, and as the fond admirers of antiquity have been used to think them, the author of this work cannot help

\* Du Cange Gloss. t. 3. col. 397.

† Id. t. i. p. 611.

it; and hath nothing to say in his own defence, but that he hath used his best endeavours to discover the truth, to represent it fairly, and to guard againt mistakes. It must, in particular, be evident to every intelligent reader, that many of their penal laws were founded on wrong principles; and many of their modes of trial led to wrong decisions.

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.













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