READINGS
FROM ENGLISH HISTORY.

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SELECTED AND EDITED

BY

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PART I.

FROM HENGEST TO CRESSY

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PREFACE.

My aim in compiling these books of historical extracts is a very simple and practical one.

The teaching of English History is spreading fast through our schools; but it can hardly be said as yet to have become a popular subject of study among their scholars. In fact, if I may trust my own experience, a large proportion of boys and girls turn from it as "hard," "dry," and "uninteresting." I cannot say that the complaint is a groundless one. In their zeal to cram as many facts as possible into their pages, the writers of most historical text-books have been driven to shut out from their narratives all that gives life and colour to the story of men. History, as we give it to our children, is literally "an old almanack;" and is as serviceable as an old almanack in quickening their wits or in rousing their interest. No doubt wiser books will come in time; but meanwhile those teachers who care to appeal to more valuable faculties than that of mere memory are hard put to it to find a remedy for the "dryness" of history.

One of the most eminent of our English schoolmistresses has been in the habit of breaking from time to time the history lessons of her various classes

by reading to them passages from the greater historians, illustrative of some event in the time which they were studying, and weaving these extracts into a continuous story by a few words at their opening and close. The plan is a very simple and effective one, as its success has proved, for history has become popular with her scholars, while the "dry" parts of the text-books are mastered with far greater accuracy than of old. There is but one obstacle in the way of its general adoption, but that is a serious one; for it presupposes the possession of an historical library far too large and expensive to be within the reach of the bulk of teachers.

It is this difficulty that I have tried in some degree to meet by these books of extracts. Read to a class which has fairly mastered the facts of the period which they illustrate, I trust they may solve in some measure the difficulty which has been found in enlisting the interest of the learner on the side of history, while requiring from him a steady knowledge of historical facts.

In compiling this book I have been driven here and there by sheer necessity of space to omissions and a few trivial changes, for which its purely educational character must be my excuse. I have not been able to avail myself as largely as I could have wished of passages from recent or living authors; but I have to acknowledge my obligations to Messrs. Longman, Murray, and other publishers for their permission to use extracts from works which are still their property.

CONTENTS.

PROSE READINGS FROM ENGLISH HISTORY.

PART I.

I.

THE EARLY ENGLISHMEN.

GREEN.

[Britain, or the island in which we live, was first made known to the civilized world by a Roman General, Julius Cæsar, in the year 55 before the birth of Christ. Cæsar had conquered Gaul, a country which included our present France and Belgium, and brought it under the rule of Rome; but in the course of his conquest he learned that to the west of Gaul lay an island named Britain, whose peoples were mainly of the same race with the Gauls and gave them help in their struggles against the Roman armies. He resolved therefore to invade Britain; and in two successive descents he landed on its shores, defeated the Britons, and penetrated at last beyond the Thames. No event in history is more memorable than this landing of Cæsar. In it the greatest man of the Roman race made known to the world a land whose people in the after-time were to recall, both in their temper and in the breadth of their rule, the temper and empire of Rome. Cæsar however was recalled from Britain by risings in Gaul; and for a hundred years more the island remained unconquered. It was not till the time of the Emperor

men, venturesome, self-reliant, proud, with a dash of hardness and cruelty in it, but ennobled by the virtues which spring from war, by personal courage and loyalty to plighted word, by a high and stern sense of manhood and the worth of man. A grim joy in hard fighting was already a characteristic of the race. War was the Englishman's "shield-play" and "sword-game"; the gleeman's[4] verse took fresh fire as he sang of the rush of the host and the crash of its shield-line. Their arms and weapons, helmet and mailshirt, tall spear and javelin, sword and seax, the short broad dagger that hung at each warrior's girdle, gathered to them much of the legend and the art which gave colour and poetry to the life of Englishmen. Each sword had its name like a living thing. And next to their love of war came their love of the sea. Everywhere throughout Beowulf's song, as everywhere throughout the life that it pictures, we catch the salt whiff of the sea. The Englishman was as proud of his sea-craft as of his war-craft; sword in teeth he plunged into the sea to meet walrus and sea-lion; he told of his whale-chase amidst the icy waters of the north. Hardly less than his love for the sea was the love he bore to the ship that traversed it. In the fond playfulness of English verse the ship was "the wave-floater," "the foam-necked," "like a bird" as it skimmed the wave-crest, "like a swan" as its curved prow breasted the "swan-road" of the sea.

Their passion for the sea marked out for them their part in the general movement of the German nations. While Goth and Lombard were slowly advancing over mountain and plain the boats of the Englishmen pushed faster over the sea. Bands of English rovers, outdriven by stress of fight, had long found a home there, and lived as they

[4] *Gleeman is the old English name for minstrel.*

could by sack of vessel or coast. Chance has preserved for us in a Sleswick peat-bog one of the war-keels[5] of these early pirates. The boat is flat-bottomed, seventy feet long and eight or nine feet wide, its sides of oak boards fastened with bark ropes and iron bolts. Fifty oars drove it over the waves with a freight of warriors whose arms, axes, swords, lances, and knives were found heaped together in its hold. Like the galleys of the Middle Ages such boats could only creep cautiously along from harbour to harbour in rough weather; but in smooth water their swiftness fitted them admirably for the piracy by which the men of these tribes were already making themselve dreaded. Its flat bottom enabled them to beach the essel on any fitting coast; and a step on shore at once transformed the boat-men into a war-band. From the first the daring of the English race broke out in the secrecy and suddenness of the pirates' swoop, in the fierceness of their onset, in the careless glee with which they seized either sword or oar. "Foes are they," sang a Roman poet of the time, "fierce beyond other foes and cunning as they are fierce; the sea is their school of war and the storm their friend; they are sea-wolves that prey on the pillage of the world!"

II.

THE ENGLISH CONQUEST OF BRITAIN.

GIBBON.

[These English pirates were called to Britain by the Britons themselves. As troubles gathered round Rome itself, the Empire withdrew its troops and officers from the island;

[5] *Keel is still in northern England the name for a boat.*

but with independence came the need of fighting for self-defence against the sea-rovers who attacked its shores, and the Picts or tribes of the Scotch Highlands who penetrated to the heart of the country. It was to repulse the Picts that Britain sought the aid of some bands of Jutes who landed under their chieftain, Hengist, in Kent, and obtained lands there in reward for their assistance. But the Jutes themselves soon became as great a danger as the Picts whom they had repulsed; as quarrels arose with Britons they called for help from their fatherland; and bands of Jutes, Saxons, and Angles descended one after another on the shores of Britain to begin a work of conquest which at last made the land their own. Faction and internal weakness aided the progress of the invaders; but the Britons fought hard for their land; and in no part of the Roman world did the German warriors find so long and so stubborn a resistance.]

UNDER the long dominion of the Emperors Britain had been insensibly moulded into the elegant and servile form of a Roman province, whose safety was intrusted to a foreign power. The subjects of Honorius[1] contemplated their new freedom with surprise and terror; they were left destitute of any civil or military constitution; and their uncertain rulers wanted either skill, or courage, or authority to direct the public force against the common enemy. The introduction of the Jutes betrayed their internal weakness, and degraded the character both of the prince and people. Their consternation magnified the danger; the want of union diminished their resources; and the madness of civil factions was more solicitous to accuse, than to remedy the evils, which they imputed to the misconduct of their

[1] *The Roman Empire was parted between two brothers, Honorius and Arcadius. Honorius ruled all its western provinces, including Britain, till the withdrawal of the Roman administration from that island in* 411.

adversaries.[2] Yet the Britons were not ignorant, they could not be ignorant, of the manufacture or the use of arms: the successive and disorderly attacks of the invaders allowed them to recover from their amazement, and the prosperous or adverse events of the war added discipline and experience to their native valour.

While the continent of Europe and Africa yielded without resistance to the barbarians, the British island, alone and unaided, maintained a long, a vigorous, though an unsuccessful struggle against the formidable pirates,[3] who, almost at the same instant, assaulted the northern, the eastern, and the southern coasts. The cities which had been fortified with skill were defended with resolution: the advantages of ground, hills, forests, and morasses, were diligently improved by the inhabitants; the conquest of each district was purchased with blood; and the defeats of the invaders are strongly attested by the discreet silence of their annalist.[4] Hengist might hope to achieve the conquest of Britain; but his ambition in an active reign of thirty-five years was confined to the possession of Kent. The monarchy of the West Saxons was laboriously founded by the persevering efforts of three martial generations. The life of Cerdic, one of the bravest of the children of Woden, was consumed in the conquest of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight; and the loss which he sustained in the battle of Mount Badon,[5] reduced him to a state of inglorious repose.

Kenric, his valiant son, advanced into Wiltshire; besieged

[2] *It is probable that in the withdrawal of the Roman authorities two parties disputed the rule of Britain, one that of the townsfolk, who were of Roman blood and speech, the other that of the country folk, who were chiefly of British blood, and probably spoke the British tongue.* [3] *The Jutes, Engle, and Saxons, who together are known as Englishmen.* [4] *The Saxon Chronicler.* [5] *In this battle the British general, Arthur, repulsed the Saxons.*

Old Sarum, at the time seated on a commanding eminence; and vanquished an army which advanced to the relief of the city. In a subsequent battle near Marlborough, his British enemies displayed their military science. Their troops were formed in three lines; each line consisted of three distinct bodies; and the cavalry, the archers, and the pikemen, were distributed according to the principles of Roman tactics. The Saxons charged in one weighty column, boldly encountered with their short swords the long lances of the Britons, and maintained an equal conflict till the approach of night. Two decisive victories, the death of three British kings, and the reduction of Cirencester, Bath, and Gloucester, established the fame and power of Ceaulin, the grandson of Cerdic, who carried his victorious arms to the banks of the Severn

After a war of a hundred years, the independent Britons still occupied the whole extent of the western coast, from the Firth of Clyde to the extreme promontory of Cornwall; and the principal cities of the inland country still opposed the arms of the barbarians. Resistance became more languid as the number and boldness of the assailants continually increased. Winning their way by slow and painful efforts, the Saxons, the Angles, and their various confederates, advanced from the north, from the east, and from the south, till their victorious banners were united in the centre of the island. Beyond the Severn, the Britons still asserted their national freedom, which survived the heptarchy and even the monarchy of the Saxons. The bravest warriors, who preferred exile to slavery, found a secure refuge in the mountains of Wales;[6] the reluctant submission of Cornwall was delayed for some ages,[7] and a band of fugitives acquired

[6] *South Wales was reduced by Henry the First; North Wales retained its freedom till the time of Edward the First.* [7] *Its conquest was completed in the tenth century by King Æthelstan.*

a settlement in Gaul, by their own valour or the liberality of the Merovingian kings.[8] The western angle of Armorica[9] acquired the new appellation of *Cornwall* and the *Lesser Britain;* and the vacant lands of the Osismii were filled by a strange people, who, under the authority of their counts and bishops, preserved the laws and language of their ancestors. To the feeble descendants of Clovis and Charlemagne the Britons of Armorica refused the customary tribute, subdued the neighbouring dioceses of Vannes, Rennes, and Nantes, and formed a powerful though vassal state which has been united to the crown of France.

In a century of perpetual, or at least implacable war, much courage and some skill must have been exerted for the defence of Britain. Yet, if the memory of its champions is almost buried in oblivion, we need not repine; since every age, however destitute of science or virtue, sufficiently abounds with acts of blood and military renown. The tomb of Vortimer, the son of Vortigern,[10] was erected on the margin of the sea-shore as a landmark formidable to the Jutes, whom he had thrice vanquished in the fields of Kent. Ambrosius Aurelianus[11] was descended from a noble family of Romans; his modesty was equal to his valour, and his valour, till the last fatal action, was crowned with splendid success. But every British name is effaced by the illustrious name of Arthur, the hereditary prince of the Silures[12] in South Wales, and the elective king or general of the nation. According to the most rational account, he defeated in twelve successive battles the Angles of the North, and the

[8] *The Merovings or Meerwings were the royal race of the Franks, who conquered Gaul.* [9] *Brittany.* [10] *Vortigern was the leader of the Britons in their resistance to Hengist He was followed in this by his son Vortimer.* [11] *A head of the Roman or townsfolk party, who continued the struggle against the invaders.* [12] *More probably a prince of Cornwall.*

Saxons of the West: but the declining age of the hero was embittered by popular ingratitude and domestic misfortunes.

The events of his life are less interesting than the singular revolutions of his fame. During a period of five hundred years the tradition of his exploits was preserved and rudely embellished by the obscure bards of Wales and Britany, who were odious to the Saxons and unknown to the rest of mankind. The pride and curiosity of the Norman conquerors prompted them to inquire into the ancient history of Britain; they listened with fond credulity to the tale of Arthur, and eagerly applauded the merit of a prince who had triumphed over the Saxons, their common enemies. His romance, transcribed in the Latin of Jeffrey of Monmouth, and afterwards translated into the fashionable idiom of the times,[13] was enriched with the various, though incoherent ornaments which were familiar to the experience, the learning, or the fancy of the twelfth century. The gallantry and superstition of the British hero, his feasts and tournaments, and the memorable institution of his Knights of the Round Table, were faithfully copied from the reigning manners of chivalry, and the fabulous exploits of Uther's son appear less incredible than the adventures which were achieved by the enterprising valour of the Normans. Pilgrimage and the holy wars[14] introduced into Europe the specious miracles of Arabian magic. Fairies and giants, flying dragons and enchanted palaces, were blended with the more simple fictions of the West; and the fate of Britain was made to depend on the art or the predictions of Merlin.[15] Every nation embraced and adorned the popular romance of Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table: their names were celebrated in Greece and Italy, and the

[13] *The French tongue.* [14] *The Crusades.* [15] *Merlin was fabled to be a great enchanter in Arthur's days, whose prophecies were held in honour through the middle ages.*

voluminous tales of Sir Lancelot and Sir Tristram [16] were devoutly studied by the princes and nobles, who disregarded the genuine heroes and historians of antiquity. At length the light of science and reason was rekindled; the talisman was broken; the visionary fabric melted into air; and by a natural, though unjust, reverse of the public opinion, the severity of historic criticism came to question the *existence* of Arthur.

III.

CONVERSION OF THE ENGLISH

FREEMAN.

[The fight between the Britons and their invaders was a long and stubborn one; and it was not till the end of the sixth century that the eastern half of Britain had become a country of Englishmen. But these Englishmen were broken up into many separate tribes, and were far from being as yet a single people. To bring about their union into one nation was the work of many hundred years; but the first great step made in it was the binding all the English tribes together in one Christian religion. At their conquest they had been heathen, worshipping Woden and other gods, from whom they believed their kings to have sprung, and thus their winning of Britain had driven Christianity from the land. But Gregory the Great, a bishop of Rome, who had long cherished the hope of converting them at last, sent a band of missionaries to Kent, one of the kingdoms which the English had set up in in Britain, whose King Æthelberht had married a Christian

[16] *Lancelot and Tristram were the two most famous knights in the fabled court of Arthur.*

wife. Their conversion of Kent was a starting-point for the conversion of Britain.]

SOME time before Gregory became Pope, perhaps about the year 574, he went one day through the market at Rome, where, among other things, there were still men, women, and children to be sold as slaves. He there saw some beautiful boys who had just been brought by a slave-merchant, boys with a fair skin and long fair hair, as English boys then would have. He asked from what part of the world they came, and whether they were Christians or heathens. He was told that they were heathen boys from the Isle of Britain. Gregory was sorry to think that forms which were so fair without should have no light within, and he asked again what was the name of their nation. "*Angles*,"[1] he was told. "*Angles*," said Gregory; "they have the faces of *Angels*, and they ought to be made fellow-heirs of the Angels in heaven. But of what province or tribe of the Angles are they?" "Of *Deira*,"[2] said the merchant. "*De irâ!*"[3] said Gregory: "then they must be delivered from the wrath of God. And what is the name of their King?" "Ælla." "*Ælla;* then *Alleluia* shall be sung in his land." Gregory then went to the Pope, and asked him to send missionaries into Britain, of whom he himself would be one, to convert the English. The Pope was willing, but the people of Rome, among whom Gregory was a priest and was much beloved, would not let him go. So nothing came of the matter for some while.

We do not know whether Gregory was able to do anything for the poor little English boys whom he saw in the market, but he certainly never forgot his plan for converting the English people. After a while he became Pope him-

[1] "*Angles*" *is the same word with our present word* "*Englishmen.*" [2] *Deira was our present Yorkshire.* [3] "*De irâ*" *in Latin means* "*from the wrath.*"

self. Of course he now no longer thought of going into Britain himself, as he had enough to do at Rome. But he now had power to send others. He therefore presently sent a company of monks, with one called Augustine at their head, who became the first Archbishop of Canterbury, and is called the Apostle of the English. This was in 597. The most powerful king in Britain at that time was Æthelberht of Kent, who is said to have been lord over all the kings south of the Humber. This Æthelberht had done what was very seldom done by English kings then or for a long time after: he had married a foreign wife, the daughter of Chariberht, one of the kings of the Franks in Gaul.[4] Now the Franks had become Christians; so when the Frankish Queen came over to Kent, Æthelberht promised that she should be allowed to keep to her own religion without let or hindrance. She brought with her therefore a Frankish Bishop named Liudhard, and the Queen and her Bishop used to worship God in a little church near Canterbury called Saint Martin's, which had been built in the Roman times. So you see that both Æthelberht and his people must have known something about the Christian faith before Augustine came. It does not, however, seem that either the King or any of his people had at all thought of turning Christians. This seems strange when one reads how easily they were converted afterwards. One would have thought that Bishop Liudhard would have been more likely to convert them than Augustine, for, being a Frank, he would speak a tongue not very different from English, while Augustine spoke Latin, and, if he ever knew English at all, he must have learned it after he came into the island. I cannot tell you for certain why this was. Perhaps they did not think that a man who had merely

[4] *The Franks had conquered Roman Gaul as the English had conquered Roman Britain.*

come in the Queen's train was so well worth listening to as one who had come on purpose all the way from the great city of Rome, to which all the West still looked up as the capital of the world.

So Augustine and his companions set out from Rome, and passed through Gaul,[5] and came into Britain, even as Cæsar had done ages before. But this time Rome had sent forth men not to conquer lands, but to win souls. They landed first in the Isle of Thanet, which joins close to the east part of Kent, and thence they sent a message to King Æthelberht saying why they had come into his land. The King sent word back to them to stay in the isle till he had fully made up his mind how to treat them; and he gave orders that they should be well taken care of meanwhile. After a little while he came himself into the isle, and bade them come and tell him what they had to say. He met them in the open air, for he would not meet them in a house, as he thought they might be wizards, and that they might use some charm or spell, which he thought would have less power out of doors. So they came, carrying an image of our Lord on the Cross wrought in silver, and singing litanies as they came. And when they came before the King, they preached the Gospel to him and to those who were with him, telling them, no doubt, how there was one God, who had made all things, and how He had sent His Son Jesus Christ to die upon the cross for mankind, and how He would come again at the end of the world to judge the quick and the dead.

So King Æthelberht hearkened to them, and he made answer like a good and wise man. "Your words and promises," said he, "sound very good unto me; but they are new and strange, and I cannot believe them all at once, nor can I leave all that I and my fathers and the whole

[5] *Gaul here means modern France.*

English folk have believed so long. But I see that ye have come from a far country to tell us that which ye yourselves hold for truth; so ye may stay in the land, and I will give you a house to dwell in and food to eat; and ye may preach to my folk, and if any man of them will believe as ye believe, I hinder him not." So he gave them a house to dwell in in the royal city of Canterbury, and he let them preach to the people. And, as they drew near to the city, they carried their silver image of the Lord Jesus, and sang litanies, saying, "We pray Thee, O Lord, let Thy anger and Thy wrath be turned away from this city, and from Thy holy house, because we have sinned. Alleluia!" Thus Augustine and his companions dwelt at Canterbury, and worshipped in the old church where the Queen worshipped, and preached to the men of the land. And many men hearkened to them and were baptized, and before long King Æthelberht himself believed and was baptized; and before the year was out there were added to the Church more than ten thousand souls.

IV

CADMON AND EARLY ENGLISH POETRY.

STOPFORD BROOKE.

[The work of conversion which began in Kent spread over Britain; and before another hundred years had passed every English kingdom had become Christian. With Christianity returned much of that older knowledge and learning which had been driven from the land by the English conquest. Schools were set up, and Englishmen at last began to write both in Latin and in their own

tongue. The earliest and noblest of these earlier writings were poems; and at the head of them stand the story of Beowulf, and Cadmon's Paraphrase of the Bible. The first is the story of the deeds and death of a hero named Beowulf, which seems to have been brought into England from some Danish land, and to have been translated or re-written by some Christian poet of Northumbria. Thus Beowulf can hardly be looked upon as a true English poem. The first true English poem is that of Cadmon, which was also of Northumbrian origin.]

THE story of Cadmon, as told by Bæda,[1] proves that the making of songs was common at the time. Cadmon was a servant to the monastery of Hild, an abbess of royal blood, at Whitby in Yorkshire. He was somewhat aged when the gift of song came to him, and he knew nothing of the art of verse, so that at the feasts when for the sake of mirth all sang in turn he left the table. One night, having done so, and gone to the stables, for he had care of the cattle, he fell asleep, and one came to him in vision and said, "Cadmon, sing me some song." And he answered, "I cannot sing; for this cause I left the feast and came hither." Then said the other, "However, you shall sing." "What shall I sing?" he replied. "Sing the beginning of created things," answered the other. Whereupon he began to sing verses to the praise of God, and, awaking, remembered what he had sung, and added more in verse worthy of God. In the morning he came to the steward, and told him of the gift he had received; and being brought to Hild, was ordered to tell his dream before learned men, that they might give judgment whence his verses came. And when they had heard, they all said that heavenly grace had been conferred on him by our Lord.

Cadmon's Poem, written about 670, is for us the beginning

[1] *Bæda was the first English historian.*

of English poetry, and the story of its origin ought to be loved by us. Nor should we fail to reverence the place where it began. Above the small and land-locked harbour of Whitby rises and juts out towards the sea the dark cliff where Hild's monastery stood, looking out over the German Ocean. It is a wild, wind-swept upland, and the sea beats furiously beneath, and standing there one feels that it is a fitting birthplace for the poetry of the sea-ruling nation. Nor is the verse of the first poet without the stormy note of the scenery among which it was written. In it the old fierce war element is felt when Cadmon comes to sing the wrath of the rebel angels with God, and the overthrow of Pharaoh's host, and the lines, repeating, as was the old English way, the thought a second time, fall like stroke on stroke in battle. But the poem is religious throughout. Christianity speaks in it simply, sternly, with fire, and brings with it a new world of spiritual romance and feeling. The subjects of the poem were taken from the Bible; in fact Cadmon paraphrased the history of the Old and New Testament. He sang the creation of the world, the history of Israel, the book of Daniel, the whole story of the life of Christ, future judgment, purgatory, hell and heaven. All who heard it thought it divinely given. "Others after him," says Bæda, "tried to make religious poems, but none could vie with him, for he did not learn the art of poetry from men, nor of men, but from God." It was thus that English song began in religion. The most famous passage of the poem not only illustrates the dark sadness, the fierce love of freedom, and the power of painting distinct characters, which has always marked our poetry, but it is also famous for its likeness to a parallel passage in Milton. It is when Cadmon describes the proud and angry cry of Satan against God from his bed of chains in hell. The two great English poets may be brought together over a space of a thousand years in another

way, for both died in such peace that those who watched beside them knew not when they died.

Of the poetry that came after Cadmon we have few remains. But we have many things said which show us that his poem, like all great works, gave birth to a number of similar ones. The increase of monasteries, where men of letters lived, naturally made the written poetry religious. But an immense quantity of secular poetry was sung about the country. Aldhelm, a young man when Cadmon died, and afterwards Abbot of Malmesbury, united the song-maker to the religious poet. He was a skilled musician, and it is said that he had not his equal in the making or singing of English verse. His songs were popular in King Ælfred's time, and a pretty story tells that when the traders came into the town on the Sunday, he, in the character of a gleeman,[2] stood on the bridge and sang them songs, with which he mixed up Scripture texts and teaching. Of all this widespread poetry we have now only the few poems brought together in a book preserved at Exeter, in another found at Vercelli, and in a few leaflets of manuscripts. The poems in the Vercelli book are all religious: legends of saints and addresses to the soul; those in the Exeter book are hymns and sacred poems. The famous Traveller's Song, and the Lament of Deor inserted in it, are of the older and pagan time. In both there are poems by Cynewulf, whose work is remarkably fine. They are all Christian in tone. The few touches of love of nature in them dwell on gentle, not on savage scenery. They are sorrowful when they speak of the life of men, tender when they touch on the love of home, as tender as this little bit which still lives for us out of that old world: "Dear is the welcome guest to the Frisian wife when the vessel strands; his ship is come, and

[2] *A minstrel.*

her husband to his house, her own provider. And she welcomes him in, washes his weedy garment, and clothes him anew. It is pleasant on shore to him whom his love awaits."

Of these scattered pieces the finest are two fragments, one long, on the story of Judith, and another short, in which Death speaks to Man, and describes "the low and hateful, and doorless house," of which he keeps the key. But stern as the fragment is, with its English manner of looking dreadful things in the face, and with its English pathos, the religious poetry of our old fathers always went with faith beyond the grave. Thus we are told that King Eadgar, in the ode on his death in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, "chose for himself another light, beautiful and pleasant, and left this feeble life."

V.

ALFRED AT ATHELNEY.

LINGARD.

[Important as was this revival of learning, Christianity brought with it a yet more important result in furthering the union of the small English tribes into a single English kingdom. After long struggles this was brought about by Ecgberht, King of the West-Saxons, who conquered the other English peoples, and brought all of them under his rule. But his work was soon undone. Sea-rovers from the Scandinavian lands, called the Danes, at this time attacked all the western countries of Europe; and their heaviest attack fell on Britain. They conquered all the northern, eastern, and central parts of the country; and not only broke the rule of the West-Saxon kings over them, but at last fell upon the West-Saxons themselves. Alfred, the West-Saxon king, for a time held them bravely at bay, but a sudden surprise made them masters of his country, and drove him for a while to the marshes of Athelney.]

GUTHRUM[1] had fixed his residence at Gloucester, and rewarded the services of his veterans by dividing among them the lands in the neighbourhood. But while this peaceful occupation seemed to absorb his attention, his mind was actively employed in arranging a plan of warfare, which threatened to extinguish the last of the Saxon governments in Britain. A winter campaign had hitherto been unknown in the annals of Danish devastation; after their summer expeditions the invaders had always devoted the succeeding months to festivity and repose, and it is probable that the followers of Guthrum were as ignorant as the Saxons of the real design of their leader. On the first day of the year 878 they received an unexpected summons to meet him on horseback at an appointed place; on the night of the 6th of January they were in possession of Chippenham, a royal villa on the left bank of the Avon. There is reason to believe that Alfred was in the place when the alarm was given; it is certain that he could not be at any great distance. From Chippenham, Guthrum dispersed his cavalry in different directions over the neighbouring counties; the Saxons were surprised by the enemy before they had heard of the war; and the king saw himself surrounded by the barbarians, without horses, and almost without attendants. At first he conceived the rash design of rushing on the multitude of his enemies; but his temerity was restrained by the more considerate suggestions of his friends; and he consented to reserve himself for a less dangerous and more hopeful experiment. To elude suspicion he dismissed the few thanes[2] who were still near his person, and endeavoured alone and on foot to gain the centre of Somersetshire. There he found a secure retreat in a small island situated in a morass formed

[1] *The leader of the Danes who attacked Wessex.* [2] *Thanes were nobles who held land from the king on condition of serving him in war.*

by the conflux of the Tone and the Parret, which was afterwards distinguished by the name of Ethelingey, or Prince's Island.

Though the escape of Alfred had disappointed the hopes of the Danes, they followed up their success with indefatigable activity. The men of Hampshire, Dorset, Wilts, and Berkshire, separated from each other, ignorant of the fate of their prince, and unprepared for any rational system of defence, saw themselves compelled to crouch beneath the storm. Those who dwelt near the coast crossed with their families and treasure to the opposite shores of Gaul; the others sought to mitigate by submission the ferocity of the invaders, and by the surrender of a part to preserve the remainder of their property. One county alone, that of Somerset, is said to have continued faithful to the fortunes of Alfred; and yet in the county of Somerset he was compelled to conceal himself at Ethelingey, while the ealdorman [3] Æthelnoth with a few adherents wandered in the woods. By degrees the secret of the royal retreat was revealed, Alfred was joined by the more trusty of his subjects; and in their company he occasionally issued from his concealment, intercepted the straggling parties of the Danes, and returned, loaded with the spoils, often of the enemy, sometimes (such was his hard necessity) of his own people. As his associates multiplied, these excursions were more frequent and successful; and at Easter, to facilitate the access to the island, he ordered a communication to be made with the land by a wooden bridge, of which he secured the entrance by the erection of a fort.

While the attention of Alfred was thus fixed on the enemy who had seized the eastern provinces of his kingdom, he was unconscious of the storm which threatened to burst on

[3] *An ealdorman was the chief officer of a province or shire under the king.*

him from the west. Another of the sons of Ragnar,[4] probably the sanguinary Ubbo, with three-and-twenty sail, had lately ravaged the shores of South Wales; and, crossing to the northern coast of Devonshire, had landed his troops in the vicinity of Apledore. It appears as if the two brothers had previously agreed to crush the king between the pressure of their respective armies. Alarmed at this new debarkation, Odun, the ealdorman, with several thanes fled for security to the castle of Kynwith. It had no other fortification than a loose wall erected after the manner of the Britons; but its position on the summit of a lofty rock rendered it impregnable. The Danish leader was too wary to hazard an assault; and calmly pitched his tent at the foot of the mountain, in the confident expectation that the want of water would force the garrison to surrender. But Odun, gathering courage from despair, silently left his entrenchments at the dawn of morning, burst into the enemy's camp, slew the Danish chief with twelve hundred of his followers, and drove the remainder to their fleet. The bravery of the Saxons was rewarded with the plunder of Wales; and among the trophies of their victory was the Reafan, the mysterious Standard of the Raven, woven in one noon-tide by the hands of the three daughters of Ragnar. The superstition of the Danes was accustomed to observe the bird as they marched to battle. If it appeared to flap its wings, it was a sure omen of victory; if it hung motionless in the air, they anticipated nothing but defeat.

The news of this success infused courage into the hearts of the most pusillanimous. Alfred watched the reviving spirit of his people, and by trusty messengers invited them to meet him in the seventh week after Easter at the stone of

[4] *Ragnar was a Danish hero, who was said to have been slain in England, and whose sons swore to avenge his death by conquering the island. Guthrum was one of these sons, Ubbo another.*

Egbert, in the eastern extremity of Selwood[5] forest. On the appointed day the men of Hampshire, Wiltshire, and Somerset cheerfully obeyed the summons. At the appearance of Alfred they hailed the avenger of their country; the wood echoed their acclamations; and every heart beat with the confidence of victory. But the place was too confined to receive the multitudes that hastened to the royal standard; and the next morning the camp was removed to Icglea, a spacious plain lying on the skirts of the wood, and covered by marshes in its front. The day was spent in making preparations for the conflict, and in assigning their places to the volunteers that hourly arrived; at the dawn of the next morning Alfred marshalled his forces, and occupied the summit of Ethandune, a neighbouring and lofty eminence.

In the meanwhile Guthrum had not been an idle spectator of the motions of his adversary. He had recalled his scattered detachments, and was advancing with hasty steps to chastise the insolence of the insurgents. As the armies met they vociferated shouts of mutual defiance; and after the discharge of their missive weapons, rushed to a closer and more sanguinary combat. The shock of the two nations, the efforts of their leaders, the fluctuations of victory, and the alternate hopes and fears of the contending armies, must be left to the imagination of the reader. The Danes displayed a courage worthy of their former renown and their repeated conquests. The Saxons were stimulated by every motive that could influence the heart of man. Shame, revenge, the dread of subjugation, and the hope of independence, impelled them forward; their perseverance bore down all opposition; and the Northmen, after a most obstinate but unavailing resistance, fled in crowds to their camp.

[5] *The great forest of Selwood ran along the valley of the Frome and by Dorset to the sea.*

The pursuit was not less murderous than the engagement; the Saxons immolated to their resentment every fugitive who fell into their hands. Immediately, by the king's orders, lines were drawn round the encampment; and the escape of the survivors was rendered impracticable by the vigilance and the multitude of their enemies. Famine and despair subdued the obstinacy of Guthrum, who on the fourteenth day offered to capitulate. The terms imposed by the conqueror were: that the king and principal chieftains should embrace Christianity; that they should entirely evacuate his dominions; and that they should bind themselves to the fulfilment of the treaty by the surrender of hostages, and by their oaths. After a few weeks, Guthrum, with thirty of his officers, was baptized at Aulre, near Athelney. He took the surname of Athelstan, and Alfred was his sponsor. After the ceremony both princes removed to Wedmore, where on the eighth day Guthrum put off the white robe and chrysmal fillet, and on the twelfth bade adieu to his adopted father, whose generosity he had now learned to admire as much as he had before respected his valour.

VI.

ALFRED AND HIS BOOKS.

PALGRAVE.

[The triumph over Guthrum secured Wessex, or southern England, from the Danes; and gave Alfred leisure to prepare for the re-conquest of the rest of the country. For this purpose he steadily got ready a new fleet and army. But he did more to gather England round him

by showing in himself what a true and noble king should be, by living uprightly and ruling justly; and by doing what he could to restore to England the law and good government which seemed to have perished in the troubles of the time. Not less earnestly did he strive to restore learning, which had suffered most of all; and in the face of overwhelming difficulties he did so much, both by himself and through other scholars, that as English poetry is said to begin with Cadmon, so English prose looks back for its beginning to Alfred.]

ALFRED was wholly ignorant of letters until he attained twelve years of age. He was greatly loved by his parents, who fondled the boy for his beauty; but that instruction which the poorest child can now acquire with the greatest ease was withheld from the son of the Anglo-Saxon king. Alfred was taught to wind the horn and to bend the bow, to hunt and to hawk; and he acquired great skill in the art of the chase, considered throughout the middle ages as the most necessary accomplishment of the nobility, whilst book-learning was thought of little use to them. Alfred's eager mind did not, however, remain unemployed. Though he could not read he could attend, and he listened eagerly to the verses which were recited in his father's hall by the minstrels and the gleemen, the masters of Anglo-Saxon song. Day and night would he employ in hearkening to these poems; he treasured them in his memory, and during the whole of his life, poetry continued to be his solace and amusement in trouble and care.

It chanced one day that Alfred's mother, Osburgha, showed to him and his brothers a volume of Anglo-Saxon poetry which she possessed. "He who first can read the book shall have it," said she. Alfred's attention was attracted by the bright gilding and colouring of one of the illuminated capital letters. He was delighted with the gay volume, and enquired of his mother,—would she really keep

her word? She confirmed the promise, and put the book into his hands; and he applied so steadily to his task, that the book became his own.

The information which Alfred now possessed rendered him extremely desirous of obtaining more; but his ignorance of Latin was an insuperable obstacle. Science and knowledge could not then be acquired otherwise than from Latin books; and earnestly as he sought for instruction in that language, none could be found. Sloth had overspread the land;[1] and there were so few "Grammarians," that is to say Latinists, in Wessex, that he was utterly unable to discover a competent teacher. In after life, Alfred was accustomed to say, that of all the hardships, privations, and misfortunes which had befallen him, there was none which he felt so grievous as this, the enforced idleness of his youth, when his intellect would have been fitted to receive the lesson, and his time was unoccupied. At a more advanced period, the arduous toils of royalty, and the pressure of most severe and unintermitting pain, interrupted the studies which he was then enabled to pursue, and harassed and disturbed his mind,—yet he persevered;—and the unquenchable thirst for knowledge which the child had manifested, continued, without abatement, until he was removed from this stage of exertion. When the Treaty of Wedmore freed him from the Danes, Alfred's plans for the intellectual cultivation of his country were directed, in the first instance, to the diffusion of knowledge amongst the great body of the people. Hence he earnestly recommended the translation "of useful books into the language which we all understand; so that all the youth of England, but more especially those who are of gentle-kind and at ease in their circumstances, may be grounded in letters,—for they cannot profit in any pursuit

[1] *Or rather, the war with the Danes had discouraged learning.*

until they are well able to read English." This opinion is extracted from a document appearing to have been a circular letter addressed by Alfred to the Bishops; and the desire which it expresses is the best proof of the sincerity of his intentions, and the grasp and comprehensiveness of his mind. Much had been done on the Continent for the cultivation of learning, particularly by Charlemagne; but the munificence of the Frankish emperor, and of those who thought like him, was calculated to confine the gift within the pale of the cloister. The general tendency of the middle ages was to centre all erudition in a particular caste, severed from the rest of society. Alfred's labours, on the contrary, were directed to enable every individual to have a share, according to his station and degree, in the common inheritance of wisdom

Alfred taught himself Latin by translating. You will recollect his regret at the want of masters in early life. As soon as he was settled in his kingdom he attempted to supply this deficiency, not only for himself, but also for his people, by inviting learned men from foreign parts. Asser, a native of St. David's, whom he appointed Bishop of Sherbourne, was one of them. Great confidence and friendship prevailed between Alfred and the British priest; and to the pen of Asser we owe a biography of the Anglo-Saxon monarch, written with equal simplicity and fidelity. Grimbald, at the invitation of Alfred, left Gaul, his own country, and settled in England. A third celebrated foreigner was called Johannes *Scotus*, from his nation, or *Erigena*, the Irishman, from the place of his birth. From these distinguished men, to whom must be added Plegmund, Archbishop of Canterbury, Alfred was enabled to acquire that learning which he had so long sought. Asser permits us to contemplate Alfred beginning his literary labours. They were engaged in pleasant converse; and it chanced that

Asser quoted a text or passage, either from the Bible or from the works of some of the Fathers. Alfred asked his friend to write it down in a blank leaf of that collection of psalms and hymns which he always carried in his bosom, but not a blank could be found of sufficient magnitude. Pursuant therefore to Asser's proposal, a *quire*, or *quaternion*, that is to say, a sheet of vellum folded into *fours*, was produced, on which these texts were written; and Alfred afterwards working upon them, translated the passages so selected into the Anglo-Saxon tongue.

He continued the practice of writing down such remarkable passages as were quoted in conversation. His "handboc" or manual, however, included some matters of his own observation, anecdotes, or sayings of pious men; but the body of the collection appears to have consisted of extracts from the Scriptures, intermingled with reflections of a devotional cast. He attempted a complete version of the Bible, and some have supposed that he completed the greater portion of the task; but it seems that the work was prevented by his early death. As far as we can judge from those portions of the plan which were carried into execution, his translations were intended to present a complete course of such works as were then considered the most useful and best calculated to form the groundwork of a liberal education. The chronicle of Orosius was the best compendium of universal history which had yet been composed. In translating this work Alfred presented his subjects with a geographical account of the natives of Germany; and the voyages of Other towards the North Pole, and of Wolfstan in the Baltic, were detailed as these travellers related them to the king. The history of Bæda, which was also rendered into English, instructed the learner in the annals of his own country. In this work Alfred did not depart from his original; but in his version of the "Consolations of Philo-

sophy," by Boethius, the narratives taken from ancient mythology, like the story of Orpheus and Eurydice, are expanded into pleasing tales, such as the gleeman recited during the intervals of his song. "Pastoral Instructions" of St. Gregory and the "Dialogues" composed by that Pope, also form a portion of Alfred's translations, and are yet existing. His other works are no longer extant; and we must lament the loss of his "Apologues" of "wonderful sweetness," which seem to have been a collection of Esopian fables imitated from Phædrus, or perhaps from some other of the collections into which these eastern parables had been transfused.

VII.

DUNSTAN.

GREEN.

[Death removed Alfred before he could carry out his plans of winning back England from the Danes; but this was done by the kings of his house who followed him, Eadward, Æthelstan, and Eadmund. The Danes were conquered after long struggles, and all England brought under the West-Saxon rule. The last great struggle took place under King Eadred; and the final settlement of the country was brought about by his friend and counsellor, the Abbot Dunstan, who remained minister of the kingdom through the reign of the greatest of those kings, Eadgar.]

THE completion of the West-Saxon realm was reserved for the hands, not of a king or warrior, but of a priest. Dunstan stands first in the line of ecclesiastical statesmen who counted among them Lanfranc and Wolsey,

and ended in Laud. He is still more remarkable in himself, in his own vivid personality, after eight centuries of revolution and change. He was born in the little hamlet of Glastonbury,[1] the home of his father, Heorstan, a man of wealth and brother of the bishops of Wells and of Winchester. It must have been in his father's hall that the fair, diminutive boy, with his scant but beautiful hair, caught his love for "the vain songs of heathendom, the trifling legends, the funeral chaunts," which afterwards roused against him the charge of sorcery. Thence too he may have derived his passionate love of music, and his custom of carrying his harp in hand on journey or visit. Wandering scholars of Ireland[2] had left their books in the monastery of Glastonbury, as they left them along the Rhine and the Danube; and Dunstan plunged into the study of sacred and profane letters till his brain broke down in delirium. So famous became his knowledge in the neighbourhood that news of it reached the court of Æthelstan,[3] but his appearance there was the signal for a burst of ill-will among the courtiers. They drove him from the king's train, threw him from his horse as he passed through the marshes, and with the wild passion of their age trampled him under foot in the mire.

The outrage ended in fever, and Dunstan rose from his sick-bed a monk. But the monastic profession was then little more than a vow of celibacy,[4] and his devotion took no ascetic turn. His nature in fact was sunny, versatile, artistic; full of strong affections, and capable of inspiring others with affections as strong. Quick-witted, of tenacious

[1] *Near Wells in Somerset.* [2] *Ireland in early times was full of schools and learning, and its scholars and missionaries wandered over Europe. This learning came to an end with the ravages of the Danes.* [3] *King Æthelstan was the grandson of Alfred.* [4] *That is, abstinence from marriage.*

memory, a ready and fluent speaker, gay and genial in address, an artist, a musician; he was at the same time an indefatigable worker at books, at building, at handicraft. As his sphere began to widen we see him followed by a train of pupils, busy with literature, writing, harping, painting, designing. One morning a lady summoned Dunstan to her house to design a robe which she was embroidering, and as he bent with her maidens over their toil his harp hung upon the wall sounded, without mortal touch, tones which the excited ears around framed into a joyous antiphon.

From this scholar-life Dunstan was called to a wider sphere of activity by the accession of Eadmund.[5] But the old jealousies revived at his reappearance at court, and, counting the game lost, Dunstan prepared again to withdraw. The King had spent the day in the chase; the red deer which he was pursuing dashed over Cheddar cliffs,[6] and his horse only checked itself on the brink of the ravine at the moment when Eadmund in the bitterness of death was repenting of his injustice to Dunstan. He was at once summoned on the King's return. "Saddle your horse," said Eadmund, "and ride with me." The royal train swept over the marshes to his home; and the King, bestowing on him the kiss of peace, seated him in the abbot's chair as Abbot of Glastonbury. Dunstan became one of Eadmund's councillors and his hand was seen in the settlement of the North. It was the hostility of the states around it to the West-Saxon rule which had roused so often revolt in the Danelagh; but from this time we hear nothing more of the hostility of Bernicia,[7] while Strathclyde was conquered

[5] *The son and successor of Æthelstan.* [6] *In the Mendip Hills of Somerset.* [7] *Bernicia comprized all England between Yorkshire and the Firth of Forth. Strathclyde was the country from the Firth of Clyde southward to near Carlisle.*

by Eadmund and turned adroitly to account in winning over the Scots to his cause. The greater part of it was granted to their King Malcolm on terms that he should be Eadmund's fellow-worker by sea and land. The league of Scot and Briton was thus finally broken up, and the fidelity of the Scots secured by their need of help in holding down their former ally.

The settlement was soon troubled by the young king's death. As he feasted at Pucklechurch in the May of 946, Leofa, a robber whom Eadmund had banished from the land, entered the hall, seated himself at the royal board, and drew sword on the cup-bearer when he bade him retire. The king sprang in wrath to his thegn's aid, and seizing Leofa by the hair flung him to the ground; but in the struggle the robber drove his dagger to Eadmund's heart. His death at once stirred fresh troubles in the north; the Danelagh[8] rose against his brother and successor, Eadred, and some years of hard fighting were needed before it was again driven to own the English supremacy. But with its submission in 954 the work of conquest was done. Dogged as his fight had been, the Northman at last owned himself beaten. From the moment of Eadred's final triumph all resistance came to an end. The Danelagh ceased to be a force in English politics. North might part anew from South; men of Yorkshire might again cross swords with men of Hampshire; but their strife was henceforth a local strife between men of the same people; it was a strife of Englishmen with Englishmen, and not of Englishmen with Northmen.

The death of Eadred in 955 handed over the realm to a child king, his nephew Eadwig. Eadwig was swayed by a woman of high lineage, Æthelgifu; and the quarrel between

[8] *All from the Tees southward to a line across Mid-England was settled by Danes and called the Danelagh.*

her and the older counsellors of Eadred broke into open strife at the coronation feast. On the young king's insolent withdrawal to her chamber, Dunstan, at the bidding of the Witan, drew him roughly back to his seat. But the feast was no sooner ended than a sentence of outlawry drove the abbot over sea, while the triumph of Æthelgifu was crowned in 957 by the marriage of her daughter to the King and the spoliation of the monasteries which Dunstan had befriended. As the new Queen was Eadwig's kinswoman, the religious opinion of the day regarded his marriage as incestuous, and it was followed by a revolution. At the opening of 958 Archbishop Odo[9] parted the King from his wife by solemn sentence; while the Mercians[10] and Northumbrians rose in revolt, proclaimed Eadwig's brother Eadgar their King, and recalled Dunstan. The death of Eadwig a few months later restored the unity of the realm, but his successor Eadgar was only a boy of fourteen, and throughout his reign the actual direction of affairs lay in the hands of Dunstan, whose devotion to the See of Canterbury set him at the head of the Church as of the State. The noblest tribute to his rule lies in the silence of our chroniclers. His work indeed was a work of settlement, and such a work was best done by the simple enforcement of peace. During the years of rest in which the stern hand of the Primate enforced justice and order Northmen and Englishmen drew together into a single people. Their union was the result of no direct policy of fusion; on the contrary Dunstan's policy preserved to the conquered Danelagh its local rights and local usages. But he recognized the men of the Danelagh as Englishmen, he employed Northmen in the royal service, and promoted them to high posts in Church and State. For the rest he trusted to time, and time justified his trust. The fusion was marked by a memorable change in the name of

[9] *Archbishop of Canterbury.* [10] *People of mid-England.*

the land. Slowly as the conquering tribes had learned to know themselves by the one national name of Englishmen, they learned yet more slowly to stamp their name on the land they had won. It was not till Eadgar's day that the name of Britain passed into the name of Engla-land, the land of Englishmen, England.

VIII.

BATTLE OF HASTINGS

FREEMAN.

[England had now become a great kingdom: but it had yet sore trials to bear before Englishmen could be thoroughly welded and blended together into one people, looking on themselves as a single nation. First, as the kingdom grew weak under Eadgar's successors, came a second Danish attack, which ended for a while in the conquest of England, and in its rule by the Danish king Cnut. But the oppression of his sons put an end to the Danish rule; and the old English kingdom was set up again under Eadward the Confessor, who was guided by wise ministers, Earl Godwine and his son Harold. On Eadward's death, however, Harold sought the crown, and had himself chosen king. This woke rivalry and dissension among the other nobles, and so laid England open to the ambition of its neighbour over-sea, William the Duke of the Normans. Pretending that the Confessor had named him as his successor, William crossed the Channel with a great army, and landing at Pevensey marched to the field of Senlac, north of the town of Hastings, and near to the present town of Battle, to which the fight that followed gave its name. Here he found Harold with an English army awaiting his attack on a low hill or rise of ground, which he had strengthened with barricades.]

KING Harold had risen early and had put his men in order. On the slope of the hill, just in the face of William's army as it came from Hastings, he planted the two ensigns which were always set up in an English royal army, and between which the King had his royal post. The one was the golden Dragon, the old ensign of Wessex; the other was the Standard, which seems to have been the King's own device. King Harold's Standard was a great flag, richly adorned with precious stones and with the figure of a fighting-man wrought upon it in gold. As the English thus had two ensigns, they had also two war-cries. They shouted "God Almighty," which I take to have been the national war-cry, and they also shouted "Holy Cross," that is no doubt the Holy Cross of Waltham which King Harold held in such reverence. Perhaps this last was the cry of the King's own men. For there were in the English army two very different kinds of men. There were King Harold's own followers, his own kinsmen and friends and Thanes[1] and housecarls, the men of whom the Northmen said that any one could fight any other two men. These were, in short the men who had won the fight of Stamfordbridge.[2] They wore coats of mail, and they had javelins to hurl at the beginning of the fight, and their great two-handed axes to use when the foe came to close quarters. But besides these tried soldiers there were the men who came together from the whole South and East of England, who were armed as they could arm themselves, many of them very badly. Most of them had no coats of mail or other armour, and many had neither swords nor

[1] *Thanes were nobles who were bound to fight for their lord; housecarls were soldiers kept specially for the king's service.*

[2] *Just before William's landing, Harold had fought and beaten at Stamfordbridge his own brother Tostig, who had invaded England with an army of Northmen under their king, Harold Hardrada.*

axes. Some of them had pikes, forks, anything they could bring; a very few seem to have had bows and arrows. Now in a battle on the open ground these men would have been of no use at all; the Norman horsemen would have trampled them down in a moment. But even these badly armed troops, when placed on the hill side, behind barricades, could do a good deal in driving the Normans back as they rode up. But as far as I can see King Harold put these bad troops in the back, towards what we may call the isthmus of the peninsula,[3] where the worse troops on the other side were likely to make the attack. But his picked men he put in front, where the best troops of the enemy were likely to come.

Thus the English stood on the hill ready for the French host, horse and foot, who were coming across from Telham to attack them. About nine o'clock on Saturday morning they came near to the foot of the hill. The Norman army was in three parts. Alan[4] and the Bretons had to attack on the left, to the west of the Abbey buildings. Roger of Montgomery with the French and Picards were on the right, near where the railway station is now. Duke William himself and the native Normans were in the midst, and they came right against the point of the hill which was crowned by the Standard, where King Harold himself stood ready for them.

And now began the great battle of Senlac or Hastings. The Norman archers let fly their arrows against the English; then the heavy-armed foot were to come up; and lastly the horsemen. They hoped of course that the shower of arrows would kill many of the English and put the rest

[3] *The ground on which the English army stood was a low rise, cut off from the ground near it, and so like a peninsula.*

[4] *The Count of Britanny, who had brought troops to William's aid.*

into confusion, and that the heavy-armed foot would then be able to break down the barricades, so that the horsemen might ride up the hill. But first of all a man named, or rather nicknamed, *Taillefer* or *Cut-iron*, rode out alone from the Norman ranks. He was a juggler or minstrel, who could sing songs and play tricks, but he was a brave man all the same, and he asked Duke William's leave that he might strike the first blow, hand to hand. So Taillefer the minstrel rode forth, singing as he went, like Harold Hardrada at Stamfordbridge, and, as some say, throwing his sword up in the air and catching it again. As he came near to the English line, he managed to kill one man with his lance and another with his sword, but then he was cut down himself. Then the French army pressed on at all points, shouting "God help us," while our men shouted, "God Almighty" and "Holy Cross." They tried very hard, first the foot and then the horse, to break down the barricade. But it was all in vain. The English hurled their javelins at them as they were drawing near, and when they came near enough, they cut them down with their axes. The Norman writers themselves tell us how dreadful the fight was, and how the English axe, in the hand of King Harold or of any other strong man, cut down the horse and his rider with a single blow.

Duke William and his army tried and tried again to get up the hill, but it was all in vain; our men did not swerve an inch, and they cut down every Frenchman who came near, King Harold himself and his brothers fighting among the foremost. Soon the French lines began to waver; the Bretons on the right turned and fled, and soon the Normans themselves followed. The English were now sorely tempted to break their lines and pursue, which was just what King Harold had told them not to do. Some of them, seemingly the troops in the rear, where the Bretons had first given way,

were foolish enough to disobey the King's orders, and to follow their flying enemies down into the plain. It seemed as if the French were utterly beaten, and a cry was raised that Duke William himself was dead. So, just as our King Edmund [5] had done at Sherstone, he tore off his helmet that men might see that he was alive, and cried out, "I live, and by God's help I will conquer." Then he and his brother the Bishop contrived to bring their men together again. They turned again to the fight; those who were pursued by the English cut their pursuers in pieces, and another assault on the hill began. Duke William this time had somewhat better luck. He got so near to the barricade just before the Standard that Earl Gyrth, who we know fought near his brother the King, was able to hurl a spear directly at him. It missed the Duke, but his horse was killed and fell under him, as two others did before the day was out. Duke William then pressed on on foot, and met Gyrth face to face, and slew him with his own hand. Earl Leofwine too was killed about the same time, and Roger of Montgomery and his Frenchmen on the right contrived to break down part of the barricade on that side.

So this second attack was by no means so unsuccessful as the first. The two Earls were killed, and the barricade was beginning to give way. Still Duke William saw that he could never win the battle by making his horsemen charge up the hill in the teeth of the English axes. He saw that his only chance was to tempt the English to break their shield-wall, and come down into the plain. So he tried a very daring and dangerous trick. He had seen the advantage which by his good generalship he had contrived to gain out of the real flight of his men a little time before; so he ordered his troops to pretend flight, and, if the English followed, to turn upon them. And

[5] *Edmund Ironside.*

so it was; the whole French army seemed to be fleeing a second time; so a great many of the English ran down the hill to chase them. As far as I can make out, it was only the light-armed, the troops on the right, who did this; I do not think that any of King Harold's own housecarls left their ranks. But presently the Normans turned, and now the English had to fly. Those who had made this great mistake did their best to make up for it. Some managed to seize a little hill which rose in front of the English position, and thence they hurled down javelins and stones on those who attacked them, and thus they completely cut off a party who were sent against them. Others, who knew the ground well, led the Frenchmen who chased them to a place near the isthmus where the ground is very rough, and where there is a little narrow cleft with steep sides, all covered with bushes and low trees. So the Normans came riding on, and their horses came tumbling head over heels into the trap which was thus ready for them, and the English who were flying now turned round and killed the riders.

All this was bravely and cleverly done; but it could not recover the battle, now that King Harold's wise orders had once been disobeyed. The English line was broken; the hill was defenceless at many points, so the Normans could ride up, and the battle was now fought on the hill. The fight was by no means over yet; the English had lost their great advantage of the ground; but King Harold and all his mighty men were still there; so they still formed their shield-wall and fought with their great axes. Luck had no doubt turned against the English; still they were by no means beaten yet, and it is by no means clear that they would have been beaten after all, if King Harold had only lived till nightfall. Here, as always in these times, everything depended on one man. Harold still

lived and fought by his Standard, and it was against that point that all the devices of the Normans were now aimed. The Norman archers had begun the fight, and the Norman archers were now to end it. Duke William now bade them shoot up in the air, that the arrows might fall like bolts from heaven. This device proved the most successful of all; some men were pierced right through their helmets; others had their eyes put out; others lifted up their shields to guard their heads, and so could not wield their axes so well as before. King Harold still stood—you may see him in the Tapestry,[6] standing close by the Golden Dragon, with his axe in his hand, and his shield pierced with several arrows. But now the hour of our great King was come. Every foe who had come near him had felt the might of that terrible axe, but his axe could not guard against this awful shower of arrows. One shaft, falling, as I said, from heaven, pierced his right eye; he clutched at it and broke off the shaft; his axe dropped from his hand, and he fell, all disabled by pain, in his own place as King, between the two royal ensigns. Twenty Norman knights swore to take the Standard now that the King no longer defended it; they rushed on; most of them were killed by the English who still fought around their wounded King; but those who escaped succeeded in beating down the Standard of the Fighting Man and in bearing off the Golden Dragon. That ancient ensign, which had shone over so many battlefields, was never again carried before a true English King. Then four knights, one of whom was Count Eustace, rushed upon King Harold as he lay dying; they killed him with several wounds, and mangled his body. Such was the end of the last native King of the

[6] *At Bayeux is preserved a long roll of linen, on which is worked the story of the Norman Conquest, perhaps by the hand of William's queen, Matilda.*

English, Harold the son of Godwine. He fell by the most glorious of deaths, fighting for the land and the people which he had loved so well.

IX.

THE HARRYING OF THE NORTH.

FREEMAN.

[The work of conquest which began at Hastings was carried out in a series of campaigns which left William after five years of warfare undisputed master of England. Of the suffering which this warfare caused the most terrible instance was the pitiless laying waste of all Northern England, from which the most formidable resistance had come.]

Now came that fearful deed, half of policy, half of vengeance, which has stamped the name of William with infamy, and which forms a clearly marked stage in the downward course of his moral being. He had embarked in a wrongful undertaking; but hitherto we cannot say that he had aggravated the original wrong by reckless or wanton cruelties. But, as ever, wrong avenged itself by leading to deeper wrong. The age was a stern one, and hitherto William had certainly not sinned against the public opinion of the age. Hitherto he had been on the whole a merciful conqueror. He had shown that he belonged to another type of beings from the men who had wasted his own Duchy in his childhood, and from the men on whom [1] Siward and Tostig had striven to put some check within the land

[1] *Siward and Tostig had been successively Earls of Northumbria, and had ruled its wild population with terrible sternness.*

which he had now won. Siward and Tostig were both of them men of blood, stained with the guilt of private murder, from which we may be sure that William would have shrunk at any time of his life. But we may be no less sure that Siward and Tostig, harsh as they were, would have shrunk from the horrors which William now proceeded deliberately to inflict on Northern England.

The harryings of which Sussex and Kent had seen something on his first landing[2] were now to be carried out far more systematically, far more unflinchingly, through the whole of Yorkshire and several neighbouring shires. The King took the work of destruction as his personal share of the conquest of Northumberland. He left others to build his castles in York; he left others to watch the Danish fleet in the Humber;[3] but he himself went through the length and breadth of the land, through its wildest and most difficult regions, alike to punish the past revolts of its people and to cripple their power of engaging in such revolts for the time to come. That all who resisted were slain with the sword was a matter of course. But now William went to and fro over points a hundred miles from one another, destroying, as far as in him lay, the life of the earth. It was not mere plunder, which may at least enrich the plunderer; the work of William at this time was simple unmitigated havoc. Houses were everywhere burned with all that was in them; stores of corn, goods and property of every kind, were brought together and destroyed in the like sort; even living animals seem to have been driven to perish in the universal burning.

The authentic records of the Conquest give no hint of any exceptions being made or favour being shown in any

[2] *Before the battle of Hastings.* [3] *The revolt which William had come to suppress had begun at York, and had been supported by a Danish fleet, which appeared in the Humber.*

part of the doomed region. But local legends as usual supply their tale of wonder. Beverley was saved by the interposition of its heavenly patron, the canonized Archbishop John.[4] The King had pitched his camp seven miles from the town, when news was brought that the people of the whole neighbourhood had taken shelter with all their precious things in the inviolable sanctuary which was afforded by the frithstool[5] of the saint. On hearing this, some plunderers, seemingly without the royal orders, set forth to make a prey of the town and of those who had sought shelter in it. They entered Beverley without meeting with any resistance, and made their way to the churchyard, where a vast crowd of people was gathered together. The leader of the band, Toustain by name, marked out an old man in goodly apparel with a golden bracelet on his arm. This was doubtless the badge of his official rank, or the prize which Harold or Siward or some other bracelet-giver[6] had bestowed as the reward of good service against Scot or Briton or Northman. The Englishmen fled within the walls of the minster. The sacrilegious Toustain, sword in hand, spurred his horse within the consecrated doors. But the vengeance of Saint John of Beverley did not slumber. The horse fell with its neck broken, and Toustain himself, smitten in his own person, his arms and legs all twisted behind his back, no longer seemed a man but a monster. His affrighted comrades laid aside all their schemes of plunder and slaughter, and humbly implored the mercy of the saint. They made their way back to William and told him the tale of wonder. The King had already shown himself a friend to the church of Saint John, and now, fearing the wrath of

[4] *John was Archbishop of York in early days, and canonized as St. John of Beverley.* [5] *The shrine of a saint was held to give shelter to all.* [6] *Bracelets or armlets were given in reward of good service, as medals are now.*

the saint, he summoned the chief member of the chapter before him, and again confirmed all their possessions by charters under the royal seal. He added new grants of land and precious gifts for the adornment of the minster, and, what was of more immediate value than all, that there might be no further danger of the peace of Saint John being broken, he at once broke up his camp by sound of trumpet, and removed his headquarters to a place far removed from the hallowed spot.

The lands of Saint John of Beverley were thus, according to the local legend, spared among the general havoc, and remained tilled while all around was a wilderness. The long-abiding traces of the destruction which was now wrought were its most fearful feature. The accounts of the immediate ravaging are graphic and terrible enough, but they are perhaps outdone in significance by the passionless witness of the great Survey,[1] the entries of "Waste," "Waste," "Waste," attached through page after page to the Yorkshire lordships which, seventeen years after, had not recovered from the blow. Indeed, we may be inclined to ask whether Northern England ever fully recovered from the blow till that great developement of modern times which has reversed the respective importance of the North and the South. For nine years at least no attempt was made at tilling the ground; between York and Durham every town stood uninhabited; their streets became lurking-places for robbers and wild beasts. Even a generation later the passing traveller beheld with sorrow the ruins of famous towns, with their lofty towers rising above the forsaken dwellings, the fields lying untilled and tenantless, the rivers flowing idly through the wilderness. At the time the scene was so fearful that the contemporary writers seem to lack words to

[1] *Doomsday-book, a survey of all England drawn up by William's orders.*

set forth its full horrors. Men, women, and children died of hunger; they laid them down and died in the roads and in the fields, and there was no man to bury them. Those who survived kept up life on strange and unaccustomed food. The flesh of cats and dogs was not disdained, and the teaching which put a ban on the flesh of the horse as the food of Christian men[8] was forgotten under the stress of hunger. Nay, there were those who did not shrink from keeping themselves alive on the flesh of their own kind. Others, in the emphatic words of our old records, bowed their necks for meat in the evil days. They became slaves to any one who would feed them, sometimes, when happier days had come, to be set free by the charity of their masters. Before the end of the year Yorkshire was a wilderness. The bodies of its inhabitants were rotting in the streets, in the highways, or on their own hearthstones; and those who had escaped from sword, fire, and hunger, had fled out of the land.[9]

X.

LANFRANC.

CHURCH.

[The Norman Conquest of England was very different from any conquest that had gone before it. William not only subdued the land; he changed the whole face of it. Its old nobles and landowners were for the most part cast out, and their lands given to foreign soldiers who had helped in the Conquest. Thus a foreign baronage was planted on the soil around the foreign king. And as in the State, so

[8] *The horse was eaten by the Northmen, but as its flesh was offered in sacrifices to their gods, the eating of it was forbidden by the Christian priesthood.* [9] *To Scotland.*

William did his work in the Church. Here he had as counsellor, as wise and great as himself, the Lombard Lanfranc, whom he called from the Abbey of Bec to be Archbishop of Canterbury.]

LANFRANC was a Lombard from Pavia.[1] He is said to have been of a noble family, and to have taught and practised law in his native city. He was, at any rate, according to the measure of the time, a scholar, trained in what was known of the Classic Latin literature, in habits of dialectical debate, and especially in those traditions of Roman legal science which yet lingered in the Italian municipalities. For some unknown reason, perhaps in quest of fame and fortune, he left Italy and found his way northwards. It was a fashion among the Lombards. At Avranches in the Côtentin[2] he had opened a sort of school, teaching the more advanced knowledge of Italy among people who, Norse[3] as they were in blood, were rapidly and eagerly welcoming everything Latin, just as the aspiring and the ambitious half-civilization of Russia tried to copy the fuller civilization of Germany and France. After a time, for equally unknown reasons, he left Avranches.

The story which was handed down at Bec in after days, when he had become one of the most famous men of his day, was that he was on his way to Rouen when he was spoiled by robbers and left bound to a tree, in a forest near the Rille. Night came on and he tried to pray; but he could remember nothing—psalm or office. "Lord," he cried, "I have spent all this time and worn out body and mind in learning; and now when I ought to praise Thee I know not how. Deliver me from this tribulation, and with Thy help I will so correct and frame my life that henceforth

[1] *A town in Northern Italy.* [2] *The peninsula which juts out from Normandy on its Breton border.* [3] *Normandy had been won and settled by Northmen.*

I may serve Thee." Next morning, when some passers-by set him free, he asked his way to the humblest monastery in the neighbourhood, and was directed to Bec.[4] To this place, as to the poorest and humblest of brotherhoods, Lanfranc came. The meeting between him and Herlwin[5] is thus told. "The abbot happened to be busy building an oven, working at it with his own hands. Lanfranc came up and said, 'God save you!' 'God bless you,' said the abbot; 'are you a Lombard?' 'I am,' said Lanfranc. 'What do you want?' 'I want to become a monk.' Then the abbot bade a monk named Roger, who was doing his own work apart, to show Lanfranc the Book of the Rule,[6] which he read, and answered that with God's help he would gladly observe it. Then the abbot hearing this, and knowing who he was, and from whence he came, granted him what he desired. And he, falling down at the mouth of the oven, kissed Herlwin's feet."

In welcoming Lanfranc, Herlwin found that he had welcomed a great master and teacher. Lanfranc, under his abbot's urging, began to teach; the monastery grew into a school, and Bec, intended to be but the refuge and training-place of a few narrow and ignorant but earnest devotees, thirsting after God and right amid the savagery of a half-tamed heathenism, sprang up, with the rapidity with which changes were made in those days, into a centre of thought and cultivation for Western Christendom. It was the combination more than once seen in modern Europe, where Italian genius and Northern strength have been brought together; where the subtle and rich and cultivated Southern nature has been braced and tempered into purpose and

[4] *Bec, or Bec-Herlouin, a monastery in mid-Normandy, by the valley of the Rille.* [5] *Herlwin was a knight who founded the abbey of Bec, and himself became its first abbot.* [6] *The rule of St. Benedict, which all monks were bound to obey.*

energy by contact with the bolder and more strong-willed society of the North. Lanfranc supplied to the rising religious fervour of Normandy just the element which it wanted and which made it fruitful and noble.

The great Norman ruler,[7] whose mind was so full of great thoughts both in Church and State and whose hand was to be so heavy on those whom he ruled and conquered, soon found him out, and discovered that in Lanfranc he had met a kindred soul and a fit companion in his great enterprise of governing and reducing to order the wild elements of his age. In Lanfranc William had a man who could tell him all that any one of that age could tell him of what was then known of the history, philosophy, and literature of the Church and the world, and of the actual state of questions, tendencies, and parties in the stirring ecclesiastical politics of the day. He could trust Lanfranc's acquaintance with his proper department of knowledge; he could trust his honesty and untiring perseverance; he could trust his good sense and his wise sobriety of mind; he could trust his loyalty the more because he knew that it had bounds, though wide ones. For what seems to have riveted the connection between William and Lanfranc was Lanfranc's perilous boldness in siding at first with the ecclesiastical opposition to William's marriage;[8] an opposition which probably touched his jealousy as a ruler, and certainly stung him to rage as a husband. When he heard that Lanfranc had condemned it, he ordered not only that the Prior of Bec should be banished from Normandy at once, but that the house should be punished also; that the home farmstead of the abbey, or, as it was called, its "park," should be burned and destroyed.

[7] *Duke William, afterwards the conqueror of England.*
[8] *William's marriage with Matilda, a daughter of the Count of Flanders, was long condemned by the Church.*

The savage order was obeyed. Lanfranc set out on a lame horse which went on three legs, for the monks had no better to give him, says his biographer—unable, as so often we find it in these writers, to resist the joke which mixes with their tears and quotations from Scripture. He met the Duke, bitter and dangerous in his wrath; he saluted him, "the lame horse, too, bowing his head to the ground at every step," as the biographer is careful to add. Lanfranc was sure that if he could only get a chance of explaining himself, his case was not desperate. The Duke first turned away his face; then, "the Divine mercy touching his heart," he allowed Lanfranc to speak. "Lanfranc began," says the story, "with a pretty pleasantry," which betrays, as some other stories do, his astute Lombard humour; "'I am leaving the country by your orders,' he said, 'and I have to go as if on foot, troubled as I am with this useless beast; for I have to look after him so much that I cannot get on a step. So, that I may be able to obey your command, please to give me a better horse.'" This joke took. The Duke replied in the same strain, that he never heard of an offender asking for a present from his displeased judge. So a beginning being made, Lanfranc gained a hearing, and was able to make his position clear. William was too wise a man to throw away lightly an ally like Lanfranc. A complete reconciliation and a closer confidence followed.

XI.

DEATH OF THE CONQUEROR.

PALGRAVE.

[What William did in the State Lanfranc did in the Church, casting out all Englishmen from bishoprics and great abbacies, and putting Normans and Frenchmen in their

stead. But both King and Archbishop did nobler and better work than this. Lanfranc revived religion and learning throughout the land; while William, though he ruled sternly, kept peace and enforced justice as no English King had been strong enough to do before him. He was drawn however from England in his later days to petty wars in France; and while fighting on the Norman border found his death, while entering the town of Mantes which he had besieged.]

An imprudent sally of the inhabitants of Mantes, with the intention of saving their crops, enabled William to enter their town, which was fired by the soldiery. Churches and dwellings alike sank in the flames, many of the inhabitants perished, even the recluses were burned in their cells. William, aged and unwieldy in body, yet impetuous and active in mind, cheered the desolation, and galloped about and about through the burning ruins. His steed stumbled amidst the glowing embers: the royal rider received a fatal injury from his fall. A lingering inflammation ensued, which the skill of his attendants could neither allay nor heal. He called in Gilbert Maminot, Bishop of Lisieux, and Gunthard, Abbot of Jumièges, both well competent to comfort him, if he could be comforted, in body and in mind. The noise, the disturbance, the tainted atmosphere of Rouen, became intolerable to the fevered sufferer, and he was painfully removed to the conventual buildings of St. Gervase, on the adjoining hill. The inward combustion spread so rapidly that no hope of recovery remained, and William knew that there was none.

Firmly contemplating the end, and yet dreading its approach, he sent for Rufus [1] and Henry, his sons; and now ensued that conflict of feeling never entirely absent from

[1] *William Rufus, or the Red, was his second son, Henry his youngest.*

the death-bed, but sometimes so painfully visible, when, as personified in the symbolical paintings of old, we behold the good angel and the evil demon contending for the mastery of the departing soul: the clinging to earthly things with a deep consciousness of their worthlessness, self-condemnation, and self-deceit, repentance, and obduracy, the scales of the balance trembling between heaven and hell. "No tongue can tell," said William, "the deeds of wickedness I have perpetrated in my weary pilgrimage of toil and care." He deplored his birth, born to warfare, polluted by bloodshed from his earliest years, his trials, the base ingratitude he had sustained. He also extolled his own virtues, praised his own conscientious appointments in the Church: expatiated upon his good deeds, his alms, and the monasteries and nunneries which under his reign had been founded by his munificence.

But Rufus and Henry were standing by that bed-side, and who was to be the Conqueror's heir? How were his dominions to be divided? William must speak of his earthly authority; but every word relating to the object of his pride was uttered in agony. Robert, as first-born, was to take Normandy: it was granted to him before William met Harold in the field of the valley of blood. "Wretched," declared the King, "will be the country subjected to his rule; but he has received the homage of the barons, and the concession, once made, cannot be withdrawn. Of England, I will appoint no heir: let Him in whose hands are all things, provide according to His will."

A night of somewhat diminished suffering ensued, when the troubled and expiring body takes a dull, painful, unrestful rest before its last earthly repose. But as the cheerful, life-giving rays of the rising sun were darting above the horizon, across the sad apartment, and shedding brightness on its walls, William was half awakened from his imperfect

slumbers by the measured, mellow, reverberating swelling tone of the great cathedral bell. "It is the hour of prime," replied the attendants in answer to his inquiry. Then were the priesthood welcoming with voices of thanksgiving the renewed gift of another day, and sending forth the choral prayer, that the hours might flow in holiness till blessed at their close. But his time of labour and struggle, sin and repentance, was past. William lifted up his hands in prayer and expired. As was very common in those times, the death of the great and rich was the signal for a scene of disgraceful neglect and confusion. The King's sons had already departed: all who remained of higher degree rushed out to horse, each hastening to his home, for the purpose of protecting his property against the dreaded confusion of an interregnum, or preparing to augment it. Those of meaner rank, the servants and ribalds of the court, stripped the corpse, even of its last garments, plundered every article within reach, and then, all quitting him, left William's body lying naked on the floor.

Consternation and apathy were, after some hours, diminished. The clergy recollected their duty, and offered up the prayers of the Church; and the Archbishop directed that the body should be conveyed to Caen. But there was no one to take charge of the obsequies, not one of those who were connected with William by consanguinity, or bound to him by blood or by gratitude; and the duty was performed by the care and charity of Herlouin, a knight of humble fortune, who himself defrayed the expenses, grieved at the indignity to which the mortal spoil of the Sovereign was exposed, and who, as the only mourner, attended the coffin during its conveyance to Caen. At the gates of Caen, clergy and laity came forth to receive the body, but at that very time flames arose, the streets were filled with heavy smoke: a fire had broken out which destroyed good part

of the city: the procession was dispersed, and the monks alone remained. They brought the body to St. Stephen's monastery, and took order for the royal sepulture.

The grave was dug deep in the presbytery, between altar and choir. All the bishops and abbots of Normandy assembled. After mass had been sung, Gilbert, Bishop of Evreux, addressed the people: and when he had magnified the fame of the departed, he asked them all to join in prayer for the sinful soul; and that each would pardon any injury he might have received from the monarch. A loud voice was now heard from the crowd. A poor man stood up before the bier, Asceline, the son of Arthur, who forbade that William's corpse should be received into the ground he had usurped by reckless violence. The Bishop forthwith instituted an inquiry into the charge. They called up witnesses, and the fact having been ascertained, they treated with Asceline and paid the debt, the price of that narrow little plot of earth, the last bed of the Conqueror. Asceline withdrew his ban; but as the swollen corpse sank into the grave, it burst, filling the sacred edifice with corruption. The obsequies were hurried through, and thus was William the Conqueror gathered to his fathers, with loathing, disgust, and horror.

XII.

ANSELM'S ELECTION.

CHURCH.

[As William had feared, the reign of his son, the Red King, proved a curse to England. The nobles indeed were held firmly down, and peace was enforced. But the land was vexed with heavy taxes and sore oppression;

while the Church suffered from the King's extortion, its bishoprics and greater abbacies being left vacant that their revenues might go to the King's treasury. But so stern was the King that none dared withstand him, till a sore sickness brought him for a while to repent. He consented to fill the see of Canterbury, which had been left vacant since Lanfranc's death, and named to it the good Abbot of Bec, Anselm.]

ANSELM was born about 1033 at Aosta,[1] or in its neighbourhood. The scenery of his birthplace, "wild Aosta, lulled by the Alpine rills," is familiar to the crowds who are yearly attracted to its neighbourhood by the love of Alpine grandeur and the interest of Alpine adventure, and who pass through it on their way to and from the peaks and valleys of the wonderful region round it.[2] The district itself is a mountain land, but one with the richness and warmth of the South, as it descends towards the level of the river, the Dora Baltea, which carries the glacier torrents from the mountains round Mont Blanc and the Matterhorn to the plains where they meet the Po. Great ridges masking the huge masses of the high Alps behind them, flank its long valley as it runs straight from east to west. Closely overhanging the city on the south rises rapidly a wall of sub-alpine mountain, for great part of the day in shadow, torn by ravines, with woods and pastures hanging on its steep flanks, and with white houses gleaming among them, but towering up at last into the dark precipices of the Becca di Nona and the peak of Mont Emilius. At the upper end of the valley, towards the west, seen over a vista of walnuts, chestnuts, and vines, appear high up in the sky, resting as it were on the breast of the great hills, the white glaciers of the Ruitor, bright in sunshine, or veiled by storms; and

[1] *In the north of Piedmont.* [2] *Switzerland lies to the north of Aosta.*

from the bridge over the torrent which rushes by the city from the north, the eye goes up to the everlasting snows of the "domed Velan" and the majestic broken Pikes of the Grand Combin.

The only trace of the influence on Anselm of the scenery in the midst of which he grew up is found in the story of a boyish dream which made an impression on him, as it is one of the few details about his life at Aosta which, doubtless from his own mouth, Eadmer[3] has preserved. The story is not without a kind of natural grace, and fits in like a playful yet significant overture to the history of his life. "Anselm," it says, "when he was a little child, used gladly to listen, as far as his age allowed, to his mother's conversation; and having heard from her that there is one God in heaven above, ruling all things and containing all things, he imagined, like a boy bred up among the mountains, that heaven rested on the mountains, that the palace of God was there, and that the way to it was up the mountains. His thoughts ran much upon this; and it came to pass on a certain night that he dreamed that he ought to go up to the top of the mountain, and hasten to the palace of God, the Great King. But before he began to ascend he saw in the plain which reached to the foot of the mountain women reaping the corn, who were the King's maidens; but they did their work very carelessly and slothfully. The boy grieved at their sloth, and rebuking it, settled in his mind to accuse them before the Lord the King. So having pressed on to the top of the mountain, he came into the palace of the King. There he found the Lord with only his chief butler: for, as it seemed to him, all the household had been sent to gather the harvest; for it was autumn. So he went in and the Lord called him; and he drew near and sat at his feet. Then the Lord asked him with

[3] *His biographe*

gracious kindness who he was and whence he came, and what he wanted. He answered according to the truth. Then the Lord commanded, and bread of the whitest was brought to him by the chief butler; and he ate and was refreshed before the Lord. Therefore in the morning, when he recalled what he had seen before the eyes of his mind, he believed, like a simple and innocent child, that he really had been in heaven, and had been refreshed by the bread of the Lord; and so he declared publicly before others."

Anselm's biographer, perhaps he himself in after life, saw the hand of providence in his father's harshness to him, which no submission could soften, and which at last drove him in despair to leave his home, and, after the fashion of his countrymen, to seek his fortune in strange lands. Italians, especially Lombards,[4] meet us continually in the records and letters of this time as wanderers, adventurers, monks in Normandy and even England. He crossed Mont Cenis with a single clerk for his attendant, and he did not forget the risk and fatigue of the passage. Then following perhaps the track of another Italian, Lanfranc of Pavia, he came to Normandy, and remained for a time at Avranches, where Lanfranc had once taught. Finally he followed Lanfranc, now a famous master, to the monastery where he had become prior, the newly-founded monastery of Bec.

[At Bec Anselm rose from being monk to the posts of prior and abbot, gathering as years went by a fame for learning and for holiness yet greater than that of his predecessor Lanfranc. It was on a visit to England at the time when the Red King lay sick almost to death that William named him to the See of Canterbury.]

When the King's choice was announced to Anselm, he trembled and turned pale. The bishops came to bring

[4] *People of north Italy.*

him to the King, to receive the investiture of the archbishopric in the customary way, by the delivery of a pastoral staff. Anselm absolutely refused to go. Then the bishops took him aside from the bystanders, and expostulated with him. "What did he mean? How could he strive against God? He saw Christianity almost destroyed in England, all kinds of wickedness rampant, the churches of God nigh dead by this man's tyranny; and when he could help, he scorned to do so." "It is no use," he said; "what you propose shall not be." At last they dragged him by main force to the sick King's room: William, in his anguish and fear, was deeply anxious about the matter, and entreated him with tears, by the memory of his father and mother, who had been Anselm's friends, to deliver their son from the deadly peril in which he stood. The sick man's distress moved some of the bystanders, and they turned with angry remonstrances on Anselm. "What senseless folly this was! The King could not bear this agitation. Anselm was embittering his dying hours; and on him would rest the responsibility of all the mischiefs that would follow, if he would not do his part by accepting the pastoral charge."

Anselm in his trouble appealed for encouragement to two of his monks, Baldwin and Eustace, who were with him. "Ah, my brethren, why do not you help me?" "Might it have been the will of God," he used to say, speaking of those moments, "I would, if I had the choice, gladly have died, rather than been raised to the archbishopric." Baldwin could only speak of submitting to the will of God; and burst, says Eadmer, into a passion of tears, blood gushing from his nostrils. "Alas! your staff is soon broken," said Anselm. Then the king bade them all fall at Anselm's feet to implore his assent; he, in his turn, fell down before them, still

holding to his refusal. Finally, they lost patience; they were angry with him, and with themselves for their own irresolution. The cry arose, "A pastoral staff! a pastoral staff!" They dragged him to the King's bed-side, and held out his right arm to receive the staff. But when the King presented it, Anselm kept his hand firmly clenched and would not take it. They tried by main force to wrench it open; and when he cried out with the pain of their violence, they at last held the staff closely pressed against his still closed hand. Amid the shouts of the crowd, "*Long live the Bishop!*" with the *Te Deum* of the bishops and clergy, "he was carried, rather than led, to a neighbouring church, still crying out, It is nought that ye are doing, it is nought that ye are doing." He himself describes the scene in a letter to his monks at Bec. "It would have been difficult to make out whether madmen were dragging along one in his senses, or sane men a madman, save that they were chanting, and I, pale with amazement and pain, looked more like one dead than alive."

XIII.

DEATH OF THE RED KING.

PALGRAVE.

[Reluctant as Anselm was to be made Archbishop, when once installed in his see he resolutely withstood the king. Rufus recovered from his illness only to fall back into his old oppression and greed; but though all others bent to him, he could not bend Anselm. His steady rebukes at last goaded William to drive him from England; and from that day the King's ill rule went on without a check. At last Rufus was found slain by an arrow in the New Forest, whether by chance or of set purpose was never known.]

On the first day of August, the feast of St. Peter ad Vincula, Lammas-Day, Rufus assembled a large and jovial party in the leafy lodge of the Lindwood, the Dragon's-Wood, the most pleasant of his bowers.—His brother Henry, William de Breteuil, Gilbert de Aquila, Gilbert Fitz-Richard, Robert Fitz-Hamo, Ralph de Aix, or de Aquis, and Walter Tyrrell: together with a vast meisney[1] of the Court-followers, Prickers, Verdurers, Ribalds.—Rufus never moved unless encircled by the vilest ruffianage.

Rufus was exuberant in his conversation, boisterous: he addressed his conversation to Tyrrell in particular, roughly and merrily—insult mingled with whim and familiarity. The Chastellain of Poix[2] was excited up to the same tone, and flouted Rufus in return. He joked to teaze the King, mocked him, telling him that whilst all was open and the way clear, Breton and Angevine at his commands, he did nothing, in spite of all his great words and talk. Rufus became more coarse and rude, and, unmindful of any national pride which Tyrrell might feel, boasted how he would lead his army beyond the Alps, and hold his Court at Poitiers next Christmas.[3] Tyrrell laughed at such a vaunt. "To the Alps, and back again within so short a time?—but if ever they submit to the English," continued Tyrrell, "an evil death may Frenchman and Burgundian die!" The dialogue began in jest, but ended in anger. The ranting words thus passing were marked, repeated, perhaps exaggerated.—It should seem that few, if any, of the party could be said to have been in a state of sobriety.

Night closed in; the darkness brought a sudden sadness upon the King's heart: when alone, how troubled, how

[1] *Company.* [2] *Walter Tyrrell was a French noble who held the castle of Poix.* [3] *Rufus had won Normandy from his brother, and conquered Maine. He hoped to become master of all Southern France, and perhaps to make his way over the Alps.*

unhappy was Rufus. In the still of the night, the last night-season in which he laid himself down to sleep, but not in peace, the attendants were startled by the King's voice; —a bitter cry—a cry for help—a cry for deliverance—he had been suddenly awakened by a dreadful dream, as of exquisite anguish befalling him in a ruined Church at the foot of the Malwood rampart.—No more would he be left alone: the extinguished lamps were lighted in the chamber, where Rufus impatiently awaited the early morn.

Dawn broke on Thursday the second of August, the morrow of St. Peter ad Vincula: Robert Fitz-Hamo entered, hastily, anxious, bearing tidings of a warning given through the dream of a holy Monk beyond the sea, speaking clearly of great and threatening danger: he therefore earnestly supplicated the King not to hunt for that one day. Rufus burst out into a horse-laugh—"He is a Monk; monks dream for money: money let him have—an hundred shillings, his fitting guerdon." Rufus showed no signs of fear, yet a secret misgiving, unconfessed even to himself, weighed upon his soul. Many of the party agreed with Fitz-Hamo, and thought caution might be advisable. Rufus lingered and paused. It was their custom to hunt in the morning-tide, but Rufus postponed the sport till the afternoon, and the mid-day banquet was served before him. He indulged even more than usual in food and wine: the debauch was prolonged till the decline of day, when Rufus rose, reeking from the table, and, surrounded by his joyous companions, prepared to start. An Armourer presented the King with six newly-headed shafts for the deadly arbalest.[4] Rufus took them, tried them, and selecting the two keenest, gave them (as the confused report afterwards prevailed) to Tyrrell, telling the Chastellain of Poix (according to one of the versions which became current) that it was he

[4] *Crossbow.*

who deserved the arrow—let that bowman bear the prize who can best deal the mortal wound: and others also recounted that he afterwards cried out to Tyrrell, *Shoot Devil*, or, *Shoot in the Devil's name.*

Still more delay. Rufus continued in vehement and idle talk: the evening was coming on, when Serlo's messenger appeared.[5] More cause of laughter for Rufus, mixed with a nettled feeling of impatient anger:—"It is strange," said he,—"that my Lord Serlo, the wise and discreet, should teaze me, tired and harassed as I am with business, by transmitting to me such stories and silly dreams. Does he think I am an Englishman who will put off a journey for an old wife's fancy, a token or a sign?"—He rose hastily: the saddled steed was brought. Rufus, placing his foot in the great stirrup, vaulted on his courser: the Hunters now dispersed, Henry in one direction, William de Breteuil in another, Rufus in a third, dashing on towards the depths of the Forest, through the chequered gleams of transparent green, the lengthened lines of cheerful shade, the huge stems shining in the golden light of the setting sun.

No man ever owned that he had spoken afterwards to Rufus—no man owned to having again heard the voice of Rufus, except in the inarticulate agonies of death. Separated unaccountably from his suite and companions, Robert Fitz-Hamo and Gilbert de Aquila found him expiring—stretched on the ground, within the walls of the ruined Church, just below the Malwood Castle, transpierced by the shaft of a Norman arbalest, the blood gurgling in his throat.

It is said they tried to pray with him, but in vain. Forthwith ensued a general dispersion—Hunters and Huntsmen,

[5] *The Abbot Serlo had dreamed of the King's death, and sent to warn him.*

Earl and Churl, scattering in every direction. It seemed as if the intelligence sounded out of the ground throughout the Forest. At the same time a consentaneous outcry arose, no one can tell how it began, that Walter Tyrrell had slain the King. All the ruffian soldiery, the ribalds, the villainous and polluted Court-retainers, who surrounded Rufus, vowing vengeance against the Traitor, began a hot pursuit: but while they were chafing and scurrying after Tyrrell, many would have protected him; either believing in his innocence, or rejoicing in the deed. Tyrrell fled as for his life, and crossing the river, at the ford which bears his name, he baffled his pursuers. A yearly rent, payable into the Exchequer by the Lord of the Manor through which the water flows, is traditionally supposed to have been the fine imposed for the negligence in permitting the escape of the accused Murderer. Be this as it may, Tyrrell received no further impediment, and passing over to France, he settled in his Seigneury of Poix, where he lived long, honoured and respected; but though holding (as it is supposed) lands in Essex, and connected by marriage with the Giffords, he never returned again to England.

XIV.

THE BLENDING OF CONQUERORS AND CONQUERED.

GREEN.

[On the Red King's death the English throne was seized by his younger brother, Henry the First. With him the disorder and oppression under which England had suffered, came to an end. His rule was as stern as that of his father, but it was just and orderly, and secured peace

and justice for the people through a reign of thirty years. In this long period of rest the Normans and Englishmen drew quietly and unconsciously together into one people, and all distinction of conquerors and conquered was lost. Henry himself led the way in this fusion of the two races by his marriage with Matilda, a daughter of the Scottish King by his English wife, and thus a representative of the old English royal blood.]

On his accession Henry promised to restore the law of Eadward the Confessor, in other words, the old constitution of the realm, with the changes which his father[1] had introduced. His marriage gave a significance to these promises which the meanest English peasant could understand. Edith, or Matilda, was the daughter of King Malcolm of Scotland and of Margaret, the sister of Eadgar Ætheling. She had been brought up in the nunnery of Romsey by its abbess, her aunt Christina, and the veil[2] which she had taken there formed an obstacle to her union with the King, which was only removed by the wisdom of Anslem. The Archbishop's recall had been one of Henry's first acts after his accession, and Matilda appeared before his court to tell her tale in words of passionate earnestness. She had been veiled in her childhood, she asserted, only to save her from the insults of the rude soldiery who infested the land,[3] had flung the veil from her again and again, and had yielded at last to the unwomanly taunts, the actual blows of her aunt. "As often as I stood in her presence," the girl pleaded passionately to the saintly Primate, "I wore the veil, trembling as I wore it with indignation and grief. But as soon as I could get out of her sight I used to snatch it from my head, fling it on the ground, and trample it under foot.

[1] *William the Conqueror.* [2] *Taking the veil was the ceremony by which a woman became a nun.* [3] *At the time of the Conquest and during the reign of Rufus.*

That was the way, and none other, in which I was veiled." Anslem at once declared her free from conventual bonds, and the shout of the English multitude when he set the crown on Matilda's brow drowned the murmur of Churchman or of baron. The taunts of the Norman nobles, who nicknamed the King and his spouse in irony Godric and Godfigu, were lost in the joy of the people at large. For the first time since the Conquest an English sovereign sat on the English throne. The blood of Cerdic[4] and Ælfred was to blend itself with that of Rolf[5] and the Conqueror. It was impossible that the two peoples should henceforth be severed from one another, and their fusion proceeded so rapidly that the name of Norman had passed away at the accession of Henry the Second, and the descendants of the victors at Senlac[6] boasted themselves to be Englishmen.

We can dimly trace the progress of this blending of the two races together in the case of the burgher population in the towns.

One immediate result of the Conquest had been a great immigration into England from the Continent. A peaceful invasion of the industrial and trading classes of Normandy followed quick on the conquest of the Norman soldiery. Every Norman noble as he quartered himself upon English lands, every Norman abbot as he entered his English cloister, gathered French artists or French domestics around his new castle or his new church. Around the Abbey of Battle, for instance, which William[7] had founded on the site of his great victory, "Gilbert the Foreigner, Gilbert the Weaver, Benet the Steward, Hugh the Secretary, Baldwin the Tailor," mixed with the English tenantry. More especially was this

[4] *The conqueror of Wessex and head of the lines of West-Saxon kings.* [5] *The conqueror of Normandy and ancestor of its dukes.* [6] *Or the battle of Hastings.* [7] *The Conqueror*

the case with the capital. Long before the landing of William the Normans had had mercantile establishments in London. Their settlement would naturally have remained a mere trading colony, but London had no sooner submitted to the Conqueror than "many of the citizens of Rouen and Caen[5] passed over thither, preferring to be dwellers in this city, inasmuch as it was fitter for their trading, and better stored with the merchandise in which they were wont to traffic." At Norwich and elsewhere the French colony isolated itself in a separate French town, side by side with the English borough. In London it seems to have taken at once the position of a governing class. The name of Gilbert Beket, the father of the famous Archbishop, is one of the few that remain to us of the Portreeves[6] of London, the predecessors of its mayors; he held in Stephen's time a large property in houses within the walls, and a proof of his civic importance was preserved in the annual visit of each newly-elected chief magistrate to his tomb in the little chapel which he had founded in the churchyard of St. Paul's. Yet Gilbert was one of the Norman strangers who followed in the wake of the Conqueror; he was by birth a burgher of Rouen, as his wife was of a burgher family from Caen.

It was partly to this infusion of foreign blood, partly no doubt to the long internal peace and order secured by the Norman rule, that the English towns owed the wealth and importance to which they attained during the reign of Henry the First. In the silent growth and elevation of the English people the boroughs led the way: unnoticed and despised by prelate and noble, they had alone preserved the full tradition of Teutonic liberty. The rights of self-government,

[5] *The chief towns of Normandy.* [6] *Port-reeve, the reeve or royal officer over a "port" or town; as sheriff or shire-reeve is the royal officer over a county or shire.*

of free speech in free meeting, of equal justice by one's equals, were brought safely across the ages of Norman tyranny by the traders and shopkeepers of the towns. In the quiet, quaintly-named streets, in town-mead and market-place, in the lord's mill[7] beside the stream, in the bell which swung out its summons to the crowded borough-mote,[8] in the jealousies of craftsmen and gilds,[9] lay the real life of Englishmen, the life of their home and trade, their ceaseless, sober struggle with oppression, their steady, unwearied battle for self-government. It is difficult to trace the steps by which borough after borough won its freedom. The bulk of them were situated in the royal demesne,[10] and, like other tenants, their customary rents were collected and justice administered by a royal officer. Amongst such towns London stood chief, and the charter which Henry granted it became the model for the rest. The King yielded the citizens the right of justice; every townsman could claim to be tried by his fellow-townsmen in the town-courts or hustings, whose sessions took place every week. They were subject only to the old English trial by oath, and exempt from the trial by battle, which the Normans had introduced. Their trade was protected from toll or exaction over the length and breadth of the land.

The King however still nominated, in London and elsewhere, the Portreeve, or magistrate of the town, nor were the citizens as yet united together in a commune or corporation; but an imperfect civic organization existed in the "wards" or quarters of the town, each governed by its own alderman, and in the "gilds" or voluntary associations of merchants or traders which ensured order and mutual pro-

[7] *Men were forced to carry their wheat to be ground at their lord's mill.* [8] *Meeting of the townsmen for self-government.* [9] *Trade companies.* [10] *Land where no noble but the king was lord.*

tection for their members. Loose too as these bonds may seem, they were drawn firmly together by the older English traditions of freedom which the towns preserved. In London, for instance, the burgesses gathered in town-mote when the bell swung out from St. Paul's to deliberate freely on their own affairs under the presidency of their aldermen. Here too they mustered in arms, if dangers threatened the city, and delivered the city-banner to their captain, the Norman baron Fitz-Walter, to lead them against the enemy. Few boroughs had as yet attained to power such as this, but charter after charter during Henry's reign raised the townsmen of boroughs from mere traders, wholly at the mercy of their lord, into customary tenants,[11] who had purchased their freedom by a fixed rent, regulated their own trade, and enjoyed exemption from all but their own justice.

The advance of towns which had grown up nôt on the royal demesne, but around abbey or castle, was slower and more difficult. The story of Bury St. Edmund's shows how gradual was the transition from pure serfage to an imperfect freedom. Much that was plough-land there in the time of the Confessor was covered with houses under the Norman rule. The building of the great abbey-church drew its craftsmen and masons to mingle with the ploughmen and reapers of the abbot's demesne. The troubles of the time helped here as elsewhere the progress of the town; serfs, fugitives from justice or their lord, the trader, the Jew, naturally sought shelter under the strong hand of St. Edmund. But the settlers were wholly at the abbot's mercy. Not a settler but was bound to pay his pence to the abbot's treasury, to plough a rood of his land, to reap in his harvest field, to fold his sheep in the abbey folds, to help to bring the

[11] *Tenants secure of their holding so long as they paid the customary services in labour or dues in money.*

annual catch of eels from the abbey waters. Within the four crosses that bounded the abbot's domain, land and water were his; the cattle of the townsmen paid for their pasture on the common; if the fullers refused the loan of their cloth, the cellarer [12] would refuse the use of the stream, and seize their looms wherever he found them. No toll might be levied from tenants of the abbey farms, and customers had to wait before shop and stall till the buyers of the abbot had had the pick of the market. There was little chance of redress, for if burghers complained in the folk-mote, it was before the abbot's officers that its meeting was held; if they appealed to the alderman, he was the abbot's nominee, and received the horn, the symbol of his office, at the abbot's hands. Like all the greater revolutions of society, the advance from this mere serfage was a silent one; indeed its more galling instances of oppression seem to have slipped unconsciously away. Some, like the eel-fishing, were commuted for an easy rent; others, like the slavery of the fullers and the toll of flax, simply disappeared. By usage, by omission, by downright forgetfulness, here by a little struggle, there by a present to a needy abbot, the town won freedom.

The moral revolution which events like this indicate was backed by a religious revival which forms a marked feature in the reign of Henry the First. Pious, learned, and energetic as the bishops of William's [13] appointment had been, they were not Englishmen. Till Beket's time no Englishman occupied the throne of Canterbury; till Jocelyn, in the reign of John, no Englishman occupied the see of Wells. In language, in manner, in sympathy, the higher clergy were thus completely severed from the lower priesthood and the people, and the whole influence of the Church, constitutional

[12] *The officer of the abbey who dealt with its tenants.*
[13] *The Conqueror's.*

as well as religious, was for the moment paralyzed. Lanfranc indeed exercized a great personal influence over William; but Anselm stood alone against Rufus, and no other voice of ecclesiastical freedom broke the silence of the reign of Henry the First. But at the close of the latter reign and throughout that of Stephen,[14] the people, left thus without shepherds, was stirred by the first of those great religious movements which England was to experience afterwards in the preaching of the Friars, the Lollardism of Wyclif, the Reformation, the Puritan enthusiasm, and the mission-work of the Wesleys. Everywhere in town and country men banded themselves together for prayer, hermits flocked to the woods, noble and churl[15] welcomed the austere Cistercians, a reformed outshoot of the Benedictine order, as they spread over the moors and forests of the North. A new spirit of devotion woke the slumber of the religious houses, and penetrated alike to the home of the noble Walter d'Espec at Rievaulx, or of the trader Gilbert Beket in Cheapside.

London took its full share in the great revival. The city was proud of its religion, its thirteen conventual and more than a hundred parochial churches. The new impulse changed, in fact, its very aspect. In the midst of the city Bishop Richard busied himself with the vast cathedral[16] which Bishop Maurice had begun; barges came up the river with stone from Caen for the great arches that moved the popular wonder, while street and lane were being levelled to make space for the famous churchyard of St. Paul's. Rahere, the King's minstrel, raised the priory of St. Bartholomew beside Smithfield, Alfune built St. Giles's at Cripplegate. The old English Cnihtena-gild surrendered

[14] *Stephen succeeded Henry the First.* [15] *Labourer.*
[16] *Of St. Paul.*

their soke[17] of Aldgate as a site for the new priory of the Holy Trinity. The tale of this house paints admirably the temper of the citizens at this time. Its founder, Prior Norman, had built church and cloister and bought books and vestments in so liberal a fashion that at last no money remained to buy bread. The canons were at their last gasp when many of the city folk, looking into the refectory as they paced round the cloisters in their usual Sunday procession, saw the tables laid, but not a single loaf on them. "Here is a fine set-out," cried the citizens, "but where is the bread to come from?" The women present vowed to bring a loaf every Sunday, and there was soon bread enough and to spare for the priory and its guests. We see the strength of the new movement in the new class of ecclesiastics that it forces on the stage; men like Anslem or John of Salisbury, or the two great prelates who followed one another after Henry's death in the See of Canterbury, Theobald and Thomas, derived whatever might they possessed from sheer holiness of life or unselfishness of aim. The revival left its stamp on the fabric of the constitution itself; the paralysis of the Church ceased as the new impulse bound the prelacy and people together, and its action, when at the end of Henry's reign it started into a power strong enough to save England from anarchy, has been felt in our history ever since.

[17] *A piece of ground held on terms of military service.*

XV.

BATTLE OF THE STANDARD.

THIERRY.

[The progress of the country was broken by the death of Henry the First, and by the long strife for the crown which followed it between his nephew Stephen and his daughter Matilda. But even in the midst of the anarchy which this strife brought about, the union of Norman and Englishmen into a single and united people was seen in the gathering of all the men of Yorkshire and the North to withstand an invasion of the Scots. David, King of Scotland, was Matilda's uncle; and under pretext of supporting her cause he strove to take advantage of the weakness of England and to seize all north of the Humber for his own. With this end he crossed the border; and cruelly ravaging as he went, at last entered Yorkshire. Here however he was met and routed in the Battle of the Standard.]

In order to rouse their subjects to march with them against the Scottish King,[1] the Norman barons of the North skilfully took advantage of the older superstitions of the country's side. They invoked the aid of those English saints whom in the early days of the Conquest they had treated with contempt, and took them, so to say, for the leaders of their army. Archbishop Thurstan[2] raised the banners of St. Cuthbert of Durham, of St. John of Beverley, and of St. Wilfrid of Ripon. The Standards of these popular saints were drawn from their churches and carried to North-Allerton, some thirty-two miles to the north of York, a spot where the Norman chiefs, William Peperel and Walter Espec, had decided to await the enemy's

[1] *David.* [2] *The Archbishop of York.*

attack. The Archbishop, who was kept by sickness from the field, sent in his place the Bishop of Durham, who had probably been driven from his church by the Scotch invasion. An instinct, partly of religion, partly of patriotism, gathered the English inhabitants of the neighbouring towns and country round these English banners, raised though they were on the field of Allerton by lords of a foreign race. The Englishmen no longer bore the battle-axe, which had been the favourite arm of their forefathers: they were armed with huge bows and long arrows. The change in their equipment[3] had been wrought by the Conquest in two different ways; in the first place, those of the English who had been forced to serve the Norman Kings in their wars for bread and pay had been compelled to train themselves in the Norman mode of fighting, while those who, preferring a struggle for independence, had become bandits on the roads or outlaws in the forest had equally been obliged to exchange weapons which were only fitted for hand-to-hand combat for arms more capable of reaching from afar the Norman knight or a king's deer. As the children both of one and of the other had been from their boyhood trained in the use of the bow, England had in less than a century become a country of good archers, as Scotland was a country of good spearmen.

While the Scotch army crossed the Tees, the Norman barons were actively preparing to receive its attack. On a platform supported by four wheels they raised a ship's mast, on whose top was placed a small silver pyx, which contained the consecrated host, while from the mast hung

[3] *The bow was originally a purely Norman weapon, and to it William the Conqueror owed his victory at Hastings. The old English weapons were the sword and lance; the Danes introduced their broad axe into the English equipment; with the Normans came the bow.*

those banners of the saints which were intended to rouse the Englishmen to fight hard. This Standard, one of a kind very common in the middle ages, occupied the centre of the line of battle. The Anglo-Norman knighthood took post about it after having been leagued by a solemn oath in which they swore to hold together for the defence of the land, whether in life or in death. The Saxon archers formed the wings and advanced guard of the army.

The Scottish host, whose Standard was nothing but a banner borne upon a spear, marched to the field in several distinct bodies. Their King's young son, Henry, commanded the men of the Lowlands and the Englishmen of Cumberland and of Northumberland;[4] the Scotch King himself was at the head of the Highland clans and of the men of the Western Isles; while knights of Norman birth, armed from head to foot, formed his body-guard.[5] One of these, named Robert the Bruce, an old man, who, though he held his fief in Annandale from the Scottish King, had no personal motive of enmity against his fellow barons in England, drew near to David at the moment when he was going to give the signal for attack, and said to him, with a look of sorrow, "Have you thought well, Sir King, against whom you are going to fight? It is against Normans and Englishmen, the men who have always served you so well, whether in arms or at the council-board, and who have succeeded in making your own peoples obey you. Do you

[4] *Cumberland was held by the Scotch King as a fief, or grant, on terms of military tenure, from the English sovereign. Northumberland he had overrun, and pressed its men into his host.*

[5] *Under David, many Norman nobles had been drawn to the Scottish court, and had received grants of land on condition of serving the Scottish king in war. Englishmen also had received like grants on like terms; and it was on the aid of this knighthood that David depended for support against the native Highlanders and Galloway men, whom it was hard to hold in obedience.*

hold yourself so sure, then, of the submission of those clans, or hope you to hold them to their duty with no other support than your Scotch men-of-arms? But remember that it was we Normans who first put them in your power, and that it is from this that the hate springs which nerves them to attack our fellow Normans."

The words of Bruce seemed to make a great impression on the King, but his nephew, William, cried with impatience, "Those are a traitor's words!" and the old baron met the affront by renouncing, in the usual terms, his oath of fealty and homage to David, and by spurring at once into the camp of his enemies. Then the Highlanders who surrounded the Scottish King shouted aloud the old name of their country, "Alban! Alban!" The shout was the signal for the combat. The men of Cumberland, of Liddesdale, and of Teviotdale[6] made a strong and quick onset on the centre of the Norman line, and, as an old chronicler tells us, broke it like a spider's web; but they were ill-supported by the other Scotch troops, and failed to make their way to the Standard. Round this the Anglo-Normans re-formed their ranks, and drove back their assailants with heavy loss. The first charge was followed by a second one, in which the long lances of the men from the south-west of Scotland[7] broke fruitlessly against the iron mail and the shields of the Norman knighthood. Then the Highlanders drew in their two-handed swords, rushed forward for a hand-to-hand engagement; but the English archers wheeling on their flanks riddled them with a flight of arrows, while the Norman horsemen, in serried line and with lances at rest, charged their front. Valiant as they were, the clansmen were ill fitted for a regular engagement, and from the moment that

[6] *Liddesdale on the western border of Scotland; Teviotdale on the eastern.* [7] *The men of Galloway.*

they felt themselves unable to pierce the ranks of the enemy, they broke in disorder. The whole of the Scotch army was now forced to give way, and fell back as far as the Tyne.

XVI.

THOMAS THE CHANCELLOR.

MISS YONGE.

[After twenty years of terrible suffering, the death of Stephen brought peace to the realm. Matilda had long since withdrawn from the strife, and waived her claim in favour of her son Henry. Henry had already inherited the French counties of Anjou and Maine from his father, Geoffry Plantagenet; he married Eleanor, the Duchess of Aquitaine, and thus became virtually master of nearly all Southern France; he was Duke of Normandy in right of his mother, and his accession to the throne of England on Stephen's death made him one of the greatest sovereigns in the world of his day. But great as was his power, his ability was yet greater. He had no sooner become king than he put an end to the disorder which had so long reigned in England; subduing the barons, driving out the foreign soldiery, forcing all to keep good peace, and carrying justice through all the realm. In this work he was aided by the genius of his Chancellor, Thomas Becket, the son of a London trader of Norman blood, but whose ability raised him to the highest posts in Church and State.]

THOMAS received a clerkly education from the canons of Merton,[1] and showed such rare ability that his family deemed him destined for great things. He was very tall and handsome, with aquiline nose, quick eyes, and long slender,

[1] *A religious house in Surrey.*

beautiful hands; and he was very vigorous and athletic, delighting in the manly sports of the young men of his time. In his boyhood, while he was out hawking with a knight who used to lodge in his father's house when he came to London, he was exposed to a serious danger. They came to a narrow bridge, fit only for foot-passengers, with a mill-wheel just below. The knight nevertheless rode across the bridge, and Thomas was following when his horse, making a false step, fell into the river. The boy could swim, but would not make for the bank without rescuing the hawk that had shared his fall, and thus was drawn by the current under the wheel, and in another moment would have been torn to pieces, had not the miller stopped the machinery and pulled him out of the water more dead than alive.

It seems that it was the practice for wealthy merchants to lodge their customers when brought to London by business, and thus young Thomas became known to several persons of high estimation in their several stations. A rich merchant called Osborn gave him his accounts to keep; knights noticed his riding, and dukes his learning and religious life. Some of the clergy of Theobald, Archbishop of Canterbury, who were among these guests, were desirous of presenting Thomas to their master. He at first held back, but they at length prevailed with him: he became a member of the Archbishop s household, and after he had improved himself in learning, was ordained deacon, and presented with the Archdeaconry of Canterbury, an office which was then by no means similar to what we at present call by that name. It really then meant being chief of the deacons, and involved the being counsellor and, in a manner, treasurer to the bishop of the diocese; and thus to be Archdeacon of Canterbury was the highest ecclesiastical dignity in the kingdom next to that of the prelates and great mitred abbots.

Thomas Becket was a secular clerk, bound by none of the vows of monastic orders, and therefore though he led a strictly pure and self-denying life, he did not consider himself obliged to abstain from worldly business or amusements, and in the year 1155 he was appointed Chancellor by Henry II. He was then in his thirty-eighth year, of great ability and cultivation, graceful in demeanour, ready of speech, clear in mind, and his tall frame (reported to have been no less than six feet two in height) fitting him for martial exercise and bodily exertion. The King, a youth of little past twenty, delighting in ability wherever he found it, became much attached to his gallant Chancellor, and not only sought his advice in the regulation of England after its long troubles, but when business was done they used to play together like two schoolboys. It must have been a curious scene in the hall of Chancellor Thomas, when at the daily meal earls and barons sat round his table, and knights and nobles crowded so thickly at the others that the benches were not sufficient, and the floor was daily strewn with hay or straw in winter, or in summer with green boughs that those who sat on it might not soil their robes. Gold and silver dishes, and goblets, and the richest wines were provided, and the choicest, most costly viands were purchased at any price by his servants for these entertainments: they even gave a hundred shillings for a dish of eels. But the Chancellor seldom touched these delicacies, living on the plainest fare as he sat in his place as the host, answering the pledges of his guests, amusing them with his converse, and providing minstrelsy and sports of all kinds for their recreation. Often the King would ride into the hall in the midst of the gay crowd seated on the floor, throw himself off his horse, leap over the table, and join in the mirth.

These rich feasts afforded afterwards plentiful alms for the poor, who were never forgotten in the height of Becket's

magnificence, and the widow and the oppressed never failed to find a protector in the Chancellor.

His house was full of young squires and pages, the sons of the nobility, who placed them there as the best school of knighthood; and among them was the King's own son Henry, who had been made his pupil. The King seems to have been very apt to laugh at Becket for his strict life and overflowing charity. One very cold day, as they were riding, they met an old man in a thin ragged coat. "Poor old man!" cried Henry, "would it not be a charity to give him a good warm cloak?" "It would indeed," said Becket; "you had better keep the matter in mind." "No, no, it is you that shall have the credit of this great act of charity," said Henry, laughing. "Ha, old man, should you not like this fine warm cloak?" and with these words he began to pull at the scarlet and grey mantle which the Chancellor wore. Becket struggled for it, and in this rough sport they were both nearly pulled off their horses, till the cloak gave way, and the King triumphantly tossed his prize to the astonished old man.

The Chancellor was in the habit of daily giving more costly gifts than these both to rich and poor; gold and silver, robes and jewels, fine armour and horses, hawks and hounds, even fine new ships were bestowed by him, from the wealth of the old merchant Gilbert, as well as from the revenues of his archdeaconry, and of several other benefices, which the lax opinions of his time caused him to think no shame to keep in his own hands.

We cannot call Thomas Becket by any means a perfect character; but thoroughly conscientious he must ever have been, and very self-denying, keeping himself free from every stain in the midst of the court, and guarding himself by strict discipline. He was found to be in the habit of sleeping on the bare boards beside his rich bed, and in secret he

wore sackcloth, and submitted to the lash of penance. His uprightness and incorruptibility as a judge, his wisdom in administering the affairs of State, and his skill in restoring peace to England, made the reign of Henry Plantagenet a relief indeed to his subjects In almost every respect he lived like a layman. He hunted and hawked, and was found fault with by the Prior of Leicester for wearing a cape with sleeves, which it seems was an unclerical garment. The Prior said it was more unsuitable in one who held so many ecclesiastical preferments, and was likely to become Archbishop of Canterbury. To this Thomas answered: "I know of four priests, each of whom I would rather see Archbishop than myself. If I had that rank I know full well I must either lose the King's favour, or set aside my duty to God."

When Henry went to war with France respecting the inheritance of Eleanor of Aquitaine, his wife, the Chancellor brought to his aid seven hundred knights of his own household, besides twelve hundred in his pay, and four thousand foot soldiers. He fed the knights themselves at his own table, and paid them each three shillings a day for the support of their squires and horses; and he himself commanded them, wearing armour, and riding at their head. He kept them together by the sound of a long slender trumpet, such as was then used only by his own band; and in combat he showed himself strong and dexterous in the use of lance and sword, winning great admiration and respect even from the enemy.

Henry resolved to come to a treaty, and to seal it by asking the King of France, Louis le Jeune, to give his daughter Margaret in marriage to Henry,[2] the heir of England. Becket was sent on this embassy, and the splendour of his equipment was such as might become its importance. Two

[2] *The English King's eldest son.*

hundred men on horseback, in armour or gay robes, were his immediate followers, and with them came eight waggons, each drawn by five horses, a groom walking beside each horse, and a driver and guard to each waggon, besides a large fierce dog chained beneath each. The waggons carried provisions and garments, and furniture for the night: two were filled with ale for the French, who much admired that English liquor; another was fitted up as a kitchen, and another for a chapel. There were twelve sumpter-horses carrying smaller articles, and on the back of each of these sat a long-tailed ape! Dogs and hawks with their attendants accompanied the procession, the whole marshalled in regular order, the men singing as they went; and the impression on the minds of all beholders was, "If such was the Chancellor, what must be the King!"

At Paris all these riches were given away; and so resolved was Becket to keep up his character for munificence that he did not choose to be maintained at the expense of the French King; and when Louis, wishing to force him into being his guest, sent orders to the markets round to sell nothing to the English Chancellor, his attendants disguised themselves and bought up all the provisions in the neighbourhood. King Louis acquired a great esteem and admiration for the Chancellor, and willingly granted his request, betrothing Margaret, who was only seven years old, to Prince Henry. She, as well as her little husband, became Becket's pupil by desire of King Henry, and she at least never seems to have lost her attachment to him.

The time Becket dreaded came. The good old peaceable Archbishop Theobald died in 1162, and Henry, who was then at Falaise,[3] ordered his Chancellor to England ostensibly to settle a disturbance in the western counties, but in reality, as he declared in a private interview, that he might

[3] *In Normandy.*

be elected to the primacy. Becket smiled, and pointing to his gay robes said, "You are choosing a pretty dress to figure at the head of your monks at Canterbury. If you do as you say, my lord, you will soon hate me as much as you love me now, for you assume an authority in Church affairs to which I shall not consent, and there will be plenty of persons to stir up strife between us." Henry did not heed the warning, and King, Bishops, and the Chapter of Canterbury unanimously chose Becket as Archbishop.

XVII.

THE MURDER OF BECKET.

STANLEY.

[The struggle which Becket foresaw was quick to come. Henry's passion was for law and for the enforcement of the same order and justice through every class of society. By the custom of the time no Churchman was subject to the King's justice; every cleric was judged by his bishop, and subjected only to spiritual penalties for a crime, if convicted of it. This brought great disorders; and Henry had raised Becket to the Archbishoprick, believing that he would join him in putting an end to it. Becket however saw the danger of putting all men alike under the King's absolute control, and refused his assent to the plan. A long and bitter strife began between them, which only ended after some years in a seeming reconciliation, that allowed Becket to return from banishment. But he was no sooner in England than the King's wrath was kindled anew against him; and four knights swore to avenge Henry on his enemy, crossed the sea, made their way to Canterbury, and threatened Becket with death. He was drawn into the church by the frightened monks, and found there by the knights who murdered him.]

THE vespers[1] had already begun, and the monks were singing the service in the choir, when two boys rushed up the nave announcing more by their terrified gestures than by their words that the soldiers were bursting into the palace[2] and monastery. Instantly the cathedral[3] was thrown into the utmost confusion; part[4] remained at prayer, part fled into the numerous hiding-places the vast fabric affords; and part went down the steps of the choir into the transept, to meet the little band at the door. "Come in, come in!" exclaimed one of them, "come in; let us die together." The Archbishop continued to stand outside; and said, "Go and finish the service. So long as you keep in the entrance I shall not come in." They withdrew a few paces, and he stepped within the door; but finding the whole place thronged with people, he paused on the threshold and asked, "What is it that all these people fear?" One general answer broke forth, "The armed men in the cloister." As he turned and said, "I shall go out to them," he heard the clash of arms behind. The knights[5] had just forced their way through the door from the palace to the monastery, and were advancing along the northern side of the cloister. They were in mail,[6] with their vizors down, and carried their swords drawn. Three had hatchets. Fitzurse, with the axe he had taken from the carpenters[7] was foremost, shouting as he came, "Here, here, king's men!" Immediately behind followed four other knights and a motley group—some their own followers, some from the town—with weapons, though not in armour, brought up the rear. At this sight, so unwonted in the peaceful cloisters

[1] *Evening service.* [2] *Of the Archbishop.* [3] *Of Canterbury.* [4] *Of the monks worshipping.* [5] *Reginald Fitzurse, William Tracy, Hugh of Morville, and William Brito.* [6] *Armed in iron coats of mail. Vizors, the moveable part of the helmet, covering the face.* [7] *The knights found some carpenters at work in the monastery, and took their axe.*

of Canterbury, not probably beheld since the time when the monastery was sacked by the Danes, the monks within, regardless of all remonstrance, shut the great door of the cathedral,[8] and proceeded to barricade it with iron bars. A loud knocking was heard from the terrified band without, who, having vainly endeavoured to prevent the entrance of the knights into the cloister, now rushed before them to take refuge in the church. Becket, who had stepped some paces into the cathedral, but was resisting the solicitations of those immediately about him to remove up into the choir for safety, darted back, calling as he went, "Away, you cowards! by virtue of your obedience I command you not to shut the door—the church must not be turned into a castle." With his own hands he thrust them from the door, opened it himself, and catching hold of the excluded monks, dragged them into the building, exclaiming, "Come in, come in—faster, faster!"

At this moment the ecclesiastics, who had hitherto clung round him, fled in every direction; some to the altars in the numerous side chapels, some to the secret chambers with which the walls and roof of the cathedral are filled. Even John of Salisbury, his tried and faithful counsellor, escaped with the rest. Three only remained—Robert, canon of Merton, his old instructor; William Fitzstephen (if we may believe his own account), his lively and worldly-minded chaplain; and Edward Grim the monk, who had joined his household only a few days, but who had been with him once before, on the memorable day when he signed the Constitutions of Clarendon,[9] and had ventured to rebuke him for the act. Two hiding-places had been specially pointed out to the Archbishop, one was the venerable crypt of the church, with its many dark recesses and chapels, to which a door,

[8] *Opening from the cloister.*

[9] *In which Henry's plan was embodied.*

then as now, opened immediately from the spot where he stood; the other was the chapel of St. Blaize in the roof, itself communicating with the triforium [10] of the cathedral, and to which there was a ready access through a staircase cut in the thickness of the wall at the corner of the transept. But he positively refused. A last resource remained to the staunch trio who formed his body-guard. They urged him to ascend to the choir; and hurried him, still resisting, up one of the flights of steps which led from the transept. They no doubt considered that the greater sacredness of that portion of the church would form their best protection. Becket gave way, as when he left the palace, from the thought flashing across his mind that he would die at his post. He would go (such at least was the impression on their minds) to the high altar, and perish in the patriarchal chair,[11] in which he and all his predecessors from time immemorial had been enthroned. But this was not to be.

What has taken long to describe must have been compressed in action within a few minutes. The knights who had been checked for a moment by the sight of the closed door, on seeing it unexpectedly thrown open, rushed into the church. It was, we must remember, about five o'clock on a winter evening[12]; the shades of night were gathering round, and were deepened into a still darker gloom within the high massive walls of the cathedral, which was only illuminated here and there by the solitary lamps that burned before the altars. The twilight lengthening from the shortest day, which was a fortnight before, was just sufficient to reveal the outline of objects, though not enough to show any one distinctly. The transept in which the knights found themselves was in the same relative position as the existing

[10] *The upper floor above the side-aisles.* [11] *Then placed behind the high altar, and overlooking the whole church.*
[12] *The 29th of December.*

portion of the cathedral, still known by the name of the "Martyrdom," which it obtained within five years after the Primate's death. Its arrangements, however, much more closely resembled those which we now see in the corresponding transept on the southern side. Two staircases led from it, one on the east to the northern aisle, one on the west to the entrance of the choir. At its south-west corner, where it joined the nave, there was the little chapel and altar of the Virgin. Its eastern apse was formed by two chapels, raised one above the other; the upper in the roof containing the relics of St. Blaize, the first martyr whose bones had been brought into the church, and which gave to the chapel a peculiar sanctity; the lower containing the altar of St. Benedict, under whose rule from the time of Dunstan the monastery had been placed. Before and around this altar were the tombs of four Saxon and two Norman archbishops. In the centre of the transept was a pillar supporting a gallery leading to the chapel of St. Blaize, and hung at great festivals with curtains and draperies.

Such was the outward aspect and such the associations of the scene which now perhaps opened for the first time on the four soldiers, though the darkness, coupled with their eagerness to find their victim, would have prevented them from noticing anything more than its prominent features. At the moment of their entrance the central pillar exactly intercepted their view of the Archbishop ascending (as it would appear from this circumstance) the eastern staircase. Fitzurse, with his drawn sword in one hand and the carpenter's axe in the other, sprang in first, and turned at once to the right of the pillar. The other three went round it to the left. They could just discern a group of figures mounting the steps, and one of the knights called out to them, "Stay!" Another demanded, "Where is Thomas Becket, traitor to the King?" to which no answer was

returned. Fitzurse rushed forward, and stumbling against one of the monks on the lower step, and still unable to distinguish clearly in the darkness, exclaimed, "Where is the Archbishop?" Instantly the answer came—"Reginald, here I am; no traitor, but the Archbishop and Priest of God; what do you wish?"—and from the fourth step which he had reached in his ascent, with a slight motion of his head, apparently a gesture of some significance to the monks who remembered it, he descended to the transept. Fitzurse sprang back two or three paces, and Becket, passing by him, took up his station between the central pillar and the massive wall which still forms the south-west corner of what was then the chapel of St. Benedict. Here they gathered round him, with the cry,[13] "Absolve the bishops whom you have excommunicated." "I cannot do other than I have done," he replied, and turning to Fitzurse, he added—"Reginald, you have received many favours at my hands, why do you come into my church armed?" Fitzurse planted the axe against his breast, and returned for answer, "You shall die,—I will tear out your heart." Another, perhaps in kindness, struck him between the shoulders with the flat of his sword, exclaiming, "Fly; you are a dead man." "I am ready to die," replied the prelate, "for God and the Church; but I warn you in the name of God Almighty to let my men escape."

The well-known horror which in that age was felt at an act of sacrilege, together with the sight of the crowds who were rushing in from the town through the nave, turned their efforts for the next few moments to carrying him out

[13] *On landing in England Becket had excommunicated the prelates who had joined in crowning the young Henry, Henry the Second's son; as to crown kings was a privilege of his see of Canterbury. This was one of the causes of Henry's outburst of wrath.*

of the church. Fitzurse threw down the axe, and tried to drag him out by the collar of his cloak, calling, "Come with us—you are our prisoner." "I will not fly, you detestable fellow," was the reply of the Archbishop, roused to his usual vehemence. The four knights, to whom was now added a sub-deacon, Hugh of Horsea, surnamed Mauclerc, chaplain of Robert de Broc, struggled violently to put him on Tracy's shoulders, but Becket set his back against the pillar, and resisted with all his might, whilst Grim threw his arms around him to aid his efforts. In the scuffle Becket fastened upon Tracy, shook him by his coat of mail, and, exerting his great strength, flung him down on the pavement. Fitzurse rejoined the fray, with a drawn sword, and, as he drew near, Becket gave full vent to his anger; the spirit of the Chancellor rose within him, and with a coarse epithet, not calculated to turn away his adversary's wrath, he exclaimed, "You profligate wretch, you are my man—you have done me fealty[14]—you ought not to touch me." Fitzurse, roused to frenzy, retorted—"I owe you no fealty or homage, contrary to my fealty to the King," and waving his sword over his head, cried, "Strike, strike!" but merely dashed off the prelate's cap. The Archbishop covered his eyes with his joined hands, bent his neck, and said, "I commend myself to God, to St. Denys of France, to St. Alfege, and to the saints of the Church." Meanwhile Tracy, who since his fall had thrown off his hauberk[15] to move more easily, sprang forward and struck a more decided blow. Grim, who up to this moment had his arm round Becket, threw it up to intercept the blade, Becket exclaiming, "Spare this defence." The sword lighted on the arm of the monk, which fell wounded or broken; and he fled

[14] *When a knight did homage, or became "man" to a lord, who endowed him with lands, he swore to be faithful to him against the king. His oath was "doing fealty."* [15] *Body coat of mail.*

disabled to the nearest altar, probably that of St. Benedict, within the chapel. It is a proof of the confusion of the scene that Grim, the receiver of the blow, as well as most of the narrators, believed it to have been dealt by Fitzurse, while Tracy, who is known to have been the man from his subsequent boast, believed that the monk whom he had wounded was John of Salisbury.

The spent force of the stroke descended on Becket's head, grazed the crown, and finally rested on his left shoulder, cutting through the clothes and skin. The next blow, whether struck by Tracy or Fitzurse, was only with the flat of the sword, and again on the bleeding head, which Becket drew back as if stunned, and then raised his clasped hands above it. The blood from the first blow was trickling down his face in a thin streak; he wiped it with his arm, and when he saw the stain he said—"Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit." At the third blow, which was also from Tracy, he sank on his knees—his arms falling—but his hands still joined as if in prayer. With his face turned towards the altar of St. Benedict he murmured in a low voice, which might just have been caught by the wounded Grim, who was crouching close by, and who alone reports the words—"For the name of Jesus, and the defence of the Church, I am willing to die." Without moving hand or foot, he fell flat on his face as he spoke, in front of the corner wall of the chapel, and with such dignity that his mantle, which extended from head to foot, was not disarranged. In this posture he received from Richard the Breton a tremendous blow, accompanied with the exclamation (in allusion to a quarrel of Becket with Earl William) [16] "Take this for love of my Lord William, brother of the King." The stroke was aimed with such violence that the

[16] *A bastard son of Henry the Second, Earl William of Salisbury, known as William Longsword.*

scalp or crown of the head—which, it was remarked, was of unusual size—was severed from the skull, and the sword snapped in two on the marble pavement. Hugh of Horsea, the sub-deacon who had joined them as they entered the church, taunted by the others with having taken no share in the deed, planted his foot on the neck of the corpse, thrust his sword into the ghastly wound and scattered the brains over the pavement. "Let us go, let us go," he said in conclusion; "the traitor is dead; he will rise no more."

XVIII.

DEATH OF HENRY THE SECOND.

STUBBS.

[Brutal as was Becket's murder, Henry was a great and noble king. His passion was for justice; and it was he who gave our courts of justice the form and shape they have preserved to our own day. To England he was a beneficent ruler; and his faults, great as they were, were so terribly punished as to force us to pity. His later years were broken with the rebellions of his own sons; at last his son Richard leagued himself with the French King, Philip, and suddenly attacking his father in Anjou, when bereft of troops, drove him from Tours, and forced him to submit to a humiliation which brought him to the grave.]

HENRY nerved himself for an interview which he knew could have but one issue. Ill as he was, he moved from Saumur to Azai, and in the plain of Colombieres met Philip and Richard on the day after the capture of Tours.

Henry, notwithstanding his fistula and his fever, was able to sit on horseback. His son Geoffrey[1] had begged leave

[1] *Geoffrey was a bastard son of Henry, but faithful to him throughout.*

of absence, that he might not see the humiliation of his father; but many of his other nobles, and probably two of his three archbishops, rode beside him. The terms which he had come to ratify had been settled beforehand. He had but to signify his acceptance of them by word of mouth. They met face to face, the unhappy father and the undutiful son.[2] It was a clear, sultry day, a cloudless sky and still air. As the kings[3] advanced towards one another a clap of thunder was heard, and each drew back. Again they advanced, and again it thundered louder than before. Henry, wearied and excited, was ready to faint. His attendants held him up on his horse, and so he made his submission. He had but one request to make; it was for a list of the conspirators who had joined with Richard to forsake and betray him. The list was promised, and he returned to Azai. Before he parted with Richard he had to give him the kiss of peace; he did so, but the rebellious son heard his father whisper, and was not ashamed to repeat it as a jest to Philip's ribald courtiers, "May God not let me die until I have taken me due vengeance on thee."

But not even his submission and humiliation procured Henry rest. Among the minor vexations of the last months had been the pertinacious refusal of the monks of Canterbury to obey their archbishop in certain matters in which they believed their privileges to be infringed. Henry had, as usual with him in questions of ecclesiastical law, taken a personal interest in the matter, and had not scrupled to back the archbishop with arms at Canterbury and support of a still more effective kind at Rome. A deputation from the convent, sent out in the vain idea that Henry's present misfortunes would soften his heart towards them, had been looking for him for some days. They found him at Azai,

[2] *Richard.* [3] *Philip of France and Henry.*

most probably on his return from the field of Colombieres. "The convent of Canterbury salute you as their lord," was the greeting of the monks. "Their lord I have been, and am still, and will be yet," was the King's answer; "small thanks to you, ye traitors," he added below his breath. One of his clerks prevented him from adding more invective. He bethought himself probably that even now the justiciar was asking the convent for money towards the expenses of the war; he would temporize as he had always seemed to do with them. "Go away, and I will speak with my faithful," he said when he had heard their plea. He called William of S. Mere l'Eglise, one of the chiefs of the chancery, and ordered him to write in his name. The letter is extant, and is dated at Azai. It is probably the last document he ever issued. It begins, "Henry, by the grace of God King of England, Duke of Normandy and Aquitaine, and Count of Anjou, to the convent of Christ Church, Canterbury, greeting, and by God's mercy on his return to England, peace." The substance of the letter is, that the monks should take advantage of the delay in his return to reconsider their position, and the things that make for peace, that they might find an easier way out of their difficulties when he should come.

The monks, delighted with their success, retired, and the King lay down to rest. It was then, probably, that the fatal schedule was brought him, which he had so unwisely demanded at Colombieres. It was drawn up in the form of a release from allegiance; all who had adhered to Richard were allowed to attach themselves henceforth to him, in renunciation of the father's right over them. He ordered the names to be read. The first on the list was that of John.[4] The sound of the beloved name startled

[4] *John was Henry's youngest son; and it was his excessive love of him which had roused the jealousy of his other sons, and*

him at once. He leaped up from his bed as one beside himself, and looking round him with a quick troubled glance exclaimed, "Is it true that John, my very heart, the best beloved of all my sons, for whose advancement I have brought upon me all this misery, has forsaken me?" The reader had no other answer to make than to repeat the name. Henry saw that it was on the list, and threw himself back on the couch. He turned his face to the wall, and groaned deeply. "Now," he said, "let all things go what way they may; I care no more for myself nor for the world." His heart was broken, and his death-blow struck.

He could not, however, remain at Azai. His people carried him in a litter to Chinon,[5] where Geoffrey was waiting for him. It was the fifth day of the fever, and in all probability he was delirious with the excitement of the morning. It was remembered and reported in England that after he was brought to Chinon he cursed the day on which he was born, and implored God's malison [6] on his sons: the bishops and priests about him implored him to revoke the curse, but he refused. But Giraldus,[7] bitter enemy as he was, somewhat softened by his misfortune, tells a different tale. He draws the picture of the dying King leaning on Geoffrey's shoulder whilst one of his knights held his feet in his lap. Geoffrey was fanning the flies from the King's face, as he seemed to be sleeping. As they watched, the King revived and opened his eyes. He looked at Geoffrey and blessed him. "My son," he said, "my dearest, for that thou hast ever striven to show towards me such faithfulness and gratitude as son could show to father, if by God's mercy I shall recover of this sickness, I will of a

brought about Richard's revolt. In spite of this John had secretly joined in the conspiracy. [5] *A town and castle on the Vienne, south of the Loire.* [6] *Curse.* [7] *A historian of the time, who hated Henry and his sons.*

surely do to thee the duty of the best of fathers, and I will set thee among the greatest and mightiest men of my dominion. But if I am to die without requiting thee, may God, who is the author and rewarder of all good, reward thee, because in every fortune alike thou hast shown thyself to me so true a son." Geoffrey, of whose sincere sorrow there can be no doubt, was overwhelmed with tears; he could but reply that all he prayed for was his father's health and prosperity. Another day passed, and the King's strength visibly waned. He kept crying at intervals, "Shame, shame on a conquered king." At last, when Geoffrey was again by his side, the poor King kept telling him how he had destined him for the see of York, or, if not York, Winchester; but now he knew that he was dying.[8] He drew off his best gold ring with the device of the panther, and bade him send it to his son-in-law, the King of Castile; and another very precious ring, with a sapphire of great price and virtue, he ordered to be delivered out of his treasure. Then he desired that his bed should be carried into the chapel, and placed before the altar. He had strength still to say some words of confession, and received "the Communion of the Body and Blood of the Lord with devotion." And so he died, on the seventh day of the fever, on the sixth of July, the octave of the Apostles Peter and Paul.

[8] *Geoffrey afterwards became Archbishop of York.*

XIX.

KING RICHARD IN THE HOLY LAND.

MISS YONGE.

[Richard, who succeeded his father as King of England, only visited his realm to gather money for a Crusade, or war for the rescue of Jerusalem from the Mahommedans, which he had vowed to undertake with King Philip of France. Philip and he, however, quarrelled at their first exploit, the siege of Acre; and on the capture of the city the French King returned home. Richard then led his troops to the siege of Jerusalem.]

At the end of August, 1191, Richard led his crusading troops from Acre into the midst of the wilderness of Mount Carmel, where their sufferings were terrible; the rocky, sandy, and uneven ground was covered with bushes full of long sharp prickles, and swarms of noxious insects buzzed in the air, fevering the Europeans with their stings; and in addition to these natural obstacles, multitudes of Arab horsemen harassed them on every side, slaughtering every straggler who dropped behind from fatigue, and attacking them so unceasingly that it was remarked that throughout their day's track there was not one space of four feet without an arrow sticking in the ground. Richard fought indefatigably, always in the van and ready to reward the gallant exploits of his knights. A young knight who bore a white shield in hopes of gaining some honourable bearing so distinguished himself that Richard thus greeted him at the close of the day: "Maiden knight, you have borne yourself as a lion, and

done the deed of six *croisés*;"[1] and granted him a lion between six crosses on a red field with the motto, "*Tinctus crurore Saraceno*," tinted with Saracen blood, whence his family are said to have assumed the name of Tynte.

At Arsaaf, on the 7th of September, a great battle was fought. Saladin[2] and his brother had almost defeated the two Religious Orders,[3] and the gallant French knight, Jacques d'Avesne, after losing his leg by a stroke from a scimitar, fought bravely on, calling on the English King until he fell overpowered by numbers. Cœur de Lion[4] and Guillaume des Barres retrieved the day, hewed down the enemy on all sides, and remained masters of the field. It is even said that Richard and Saladin met hand to hand, but this is uncertain. This victory opened the way to Joppa, where the Crusaders spent the next month in the repair of the fortifications, while the Saracen forces lay at Ascalon. While here Richard often amused himself with hawking, and one day was asleep under a tree when he was aroused by the approach of a party of Saracens, and springing on his horse Frannelle, which had been taken at Cyprus, he rashly pursued them and fell into ah ambush. Four knights were slain, and he would have been seized had not a Gascon knight, named Guillaume des Parcelets, called out that he himself was the Malek Rik,[5] and allowed himself to be taken. Richard offered ten noble Saracens in exchange for this generous knight, whom Saladin restored, together with a valuable horse that had been captured at the same time. A present of another Arab steed accompanied them; but Richard's half-brother, William Longsword, insisted on trying

[1] *Crusaders: so called from their bearing the mark of a cross on their shoulders.* [2] *The Sultan of Egypt, who was in possession of the Holy Land.* [3] *The Templars and Hospitallers; orders formed for defence of the Holy Land.* [4] *Richard, so called from his lion-like courage.* [5] *Great King, or Richard.*

the animal before the King should mount it. No sooner was he on its back than it dashed at once across the country, and before he could stop it he found himself in the midst of the enemy's camp. The two Saracen princes were extremely shocked and distressed lest this should be supposed a trick, and instantly escorted Longsword back with a gift of three chargers which proved to be more manageable.

From Joppa the Crusaders marched to Ramla, and thence on New Year's Day, 1192, set out for Jerusalem through a country full of greater obstacles than they had yet encountered. They were too full of spirit to be discouraged until they came to Bethany, where the two Grand Masters[6] represented to Richard the imprudence of laying siege to such fortifications as those of Jerusalem at such a season of the year, while Ascalon was ready in his rear for a post whence the enemy would attack him.

He yielded and retreated to Ascalon, which Saladin had ruined and abandoned, and began eagerly to repair the fortifications so as to be able to leave a garrison there. The soldiers grumbled, saying they had not come to Palestine to build Ascalon, but to conquer Jerusalem; whereupon Richard set the example of himself carrying stones, and called on Leopold[7] to do the same. The sulky reply, "He was not the son of a mason," so irritated Richard that he struck him a blow; Leopold straightway quitted the army and returned to Austria.

It was not without great grief and many struggles that Cœur de Lion finally gave up his hopes of taking Jerusalem. He again advanced as far as Bethany; but a quarrel with Hugh of Burgundy and the defection of the Austrians made it impossible for him to proceed, and he turned back to Ramla. While riding out with a party of knights, one of

[6] *The masters of the two orders of religious knighthood, the Templars and Hospitallers.* [7] *The Duke of Austria.*

them called out, "This way, my lord, and you will see Jerusalem!" "Alas!" said Richard, hiding his face with his mantle, "those who are not worthy to win the Holy City are not worthy to behold it!" He returned to Acre, but there hearing that Saladin was besieging Joppa, he embarked his troops and sailed to its aid. The Crescent[8] shone on its walls as he entered the harbour; but while he looked on in dismay he was hailed by a priest who had leaped into the sea and swum out to inform him that there was yet time to rescue the garrison, though the town was in the hands of the enemy. He hurried his vessel forward, leapt into the water breast-high, dashed upwards on the shore, ordered his immediate followers to raise a bulwark of casks and beams to protect the landing of the rest, and rushing up a flight of steps, entered the city alone. "St. George! St. George!" That cry dismayed the Infidels, and those in the town to the number of three thousand fled in the utmost confusion, and were pursued for two miles by three knights who had been fortunate enough to find him.

Richard pitched his tent outside the walls, and remained there with so few troops that all were contained in ten tents. Very early one morning, before the King was out of bed, a man rushed into his tent, crying out, "O King! we are all dead men!" Springing up, Richard fiercely silenced him, "Peace! or thou diest by my hand!" Then while hastily donning his suit of mail, he heard that the glitter of arms had been seen in the distance, and in another moment the enemy were upon them, seven thousand in number. Richard had neither helmet nor shield, and only seventeen of his knights had horses; but undaunted he drew up his little force in a compact body, the knights kneeling on one knee covered by their shields, their lances pointing outwards, and between each pair an archer with an assistant to load his cross-bow;

[8] *The standard of the Mussulman Saracens.*

and he stood in the midst encouraging them with his voice, and threatening to cut off the head of the first who turned to fly. In vain did the Saracens charge that mass of brave men, not one-seventh of their number; the shields and lances were impenetrable; and without one forward step or one bolt from the cross-bows their passive steadiness turned back wave after wave of the enemy.

At last the King gave the word for the cross-bowmen to advance, while he with the seventeen mounted knights charged lance in rest. His curtal axe bore down all before it, and he dashed like lightning from one part of the plain to another, with not a moment to smile at the opportune gift from the polite Malek-el-Afdal, who, in the hottest of the fight, sent him two fine horses, desiring him to use them in escaping from this dreadful peril. Little did the Saracen princes imagine that they would find him victorious, and that they would mount two more pursuers! Next came a terrified fugitive with news that three thousand Saracens had entered Joppa! Richard summoned a few knights, and without a word to the rest galloped back into the city. The panic inspired by his presence instantly cleared the streets, and riding back, he again led his troops to the charge; but such were the swarms of Saracens that it was not till evening that the Christians could give themselves a moment's rest, or look round and feel that they had gained one of the most wonderful of victories. Since day-break Richard had not laid aside his sword or axe, and his hand was all over blistered. No wonder that the terror of his name endured for centuries in Palestine, and that the Arab chided his starting horse with, "Dost think that yonder is the Malek Rik?" while the mother stilled her crying child by threats that the Malek Rik should take it.

These violent exertions seriously injured Richard's health, and a low fever placed him in great danger, as well as

several of his best knights. No command or persuasion could induce the rest to commence any enterprise without him, and the tidings from Europe induced him to conclude a peace and return home. Malek-el-Afdal came to visit him, and a truce was signed for three years, three months, three weeks, three days, three hours, and three minutes, thus so quaintly arranged in accordance with some astrological views of the Saracens. Ascalon was to be demolished on condition that free access to Jerusalem was to be allowed to the pilgrims; but Saladin would not restore the piece of the True Cross, as he was resolved not to conduce to what he considered idolatry. Richard sent notice that he was coming back with double his present force to effect the conquest, and the Sultan answered that if the Holy City was to pass into Frank hands, none could be nobler than those of the Malek Rik. Fever and debility detained Richard a month longer at Joppa, during which time he sent the Bishop of Salisbury to carry his offerings to Jerusalem. The prelate was invited to the presence of Saladin, who spoke in high terms of Richard's courage, but censured his rash exposure of his own life. On October 9, 1193, Cœur de Lion took leave of Palestine, watching with tears its receding shores, as he exclaimed, "O Holy Land, I commend thee and thy people unto God. May He grant me yet to return to aid thee."

XX.

JOHN AND THE CHARTER.

GREEN.

[On his return from the Crusade Richard was taken prisoner by the Duke of Austria. He bought his release only to find King Philip attacking his French dominions; and to

plunge into wearisome and indecisive wars, in the midst of which he was slain at the Castle of Chaluz. His brother John, who followed him on the throne, was a vile and weak ruler, under whom the great sovereignty built up by Henry the Second broke utterly down. Normandy, Maine, and Anjou were reft from him by Philip of France, and only Aquitaine remained to him on that side the sea. In England his lust and oppression drove people and nobles to join in resistance to him; and their resistance found a great leader in the Archbishop of Canterbury, Stephen Langton.]

FROM the moment of his landing in England Stephen Langton had taken up the constitutional position of the Primate in upholding the old customs and rights of the realm against the personal despotism of the kings. As Anselm had withstood William the Red, as Theobald had withstood Stephen, so Langton prepared to withstand and rescue his country from the tyranny of John. He had already forced him to swear to observe the laws of Edward the Confessor, in other words the traditional liberties of the realm. When the baronage refused to sail for Poitou[1] he compelled the King to deal with them not by arms but by process of law. But the work which he now undertook was far greater and weightier than this. The pledges of Henry the First had long been forgotten when the Justiciar brought them to light, but Langton saw the vast importance of such a precedent. At the close of the month he produced Henry's charter in a fresh gathering of barons at St. Paul's, and it was at once welcomed as a base for the needed reforms. From London Langton hastened to the King, whom he reached at Northampton on his way to attack the nobles of the north, and wrested from him a

[1] *John had summoned the barons to follow him oversea to reconquer his French dominions, but they refused, saying they owed service to him in England, but not in foreign lands.*

promise to bring his strife with them to legal judgement before assailing them in arms.

With his allies gathering abroad John had doubtless no wish to be entangled in a long quarrel at home, and the Archbishop's mediation allowed him to withdraw with seeming dignity. After a demonstration therefore at Durham John marched hastily south again, and reached London in October. His Justiciar at once laid before him the claims of the Council of St. Alban's and St. Paul's; but the death of Geoffry[2] at this juncture freed him from the pressure which his minister was putting upon him. "Now, by God's feet," cried John, "I am for the first time King and Lord of England," and he entrusted the vacant justiciarship to a Poitevin Peter des Roches, the Bishop of Winchester, whose temper was in harmony with his own. But the death of Geoffry only called the Archbishop to the front, and Langton at once demanded the King's assent to the Charter of Henry the First.

In seizing on this Charter as a basis for national action Langton showed a political ability of the highest order The enthusiasm with which its recital was welcomed showed the sagacity with which the Archbishop had chosen his ground. From that moment the baronage was no longer drawn together in secret conspiracies by a sense of common wrong or a vague longing for common deliverance: they were openly united in a definite claim of national freedom and national law. Secretly, and on the pretext of pilgrimage, the nobles met at St. Edmundsbury, resolute to bear no longer with John's delays. If he refused to restore their liberties they swore to make war on him till he confirmed them by Charter under the King's seal, and they parted to raise forces with the purpose of presenting their demands at Christmas. John,

[2] *The Justiciar, Geoffry Fitz-Peter.*

knowing nothing of the coming storm, pursued his policy of winning over the Church by granting it freedom of election,[3] while he embittered still more the strife with his nobles by demanding scutage[4] from the northern nobles who had refused to follow him to Poitou. But the barons were now ready to act, and early in January, in the memorable year 1215, they appeared in arms to lay, as they had planned, their demands before the King.

John was taken by surprise. He asked for a truce till Easter-tide, and spent the interval in fevered efforts to avoid the blow. Again he offered freedom to the Church, and took vows as a Crusader against whom war was a sacrilege, while he called for a general oath of allegiance and fealty from the whole body of his subjects. But month after month only showed the King the uselessness of further resistance. Though Pandulf[5] was with him, his vassalage had as yet brought little fruit in the way of aid from Rome; the commissioners whom he sent to plead his cause at the shire-courts brought back news that no man would help him against the charter that the barons claimed: and his efforts to detach the clergy from the league of his opponents utterly failed. The nation was against the King. He was far indeed from being utterly deserted. His ministers still clung to him, men such as Geoffrey de Lucy, Geoffrey de Furnival, Thomas Basset, and William Briwere, statesmen trained in the administrative school of his father, and who, dissent as they might from John's

[3] *The Church demanded the free election of bishops by their chapters and abbots by their monks. John, and the kings before him had forced them to elect in the king's presence, that is practically on his nomination.* [4] *Scutage, or shield-money, was the commutation paid in lieu of military service by all who owed service to the king.* [5] *The Pope's legate. To escape from a sentence of excommunication John had stooped to own himself vassal of the see of Rome.*

mere oppression, still looked on the power of the Crown as the one barrier against feudal anarchy: and beside them stood some of the great nobles of royal blood, his father's bastard Earl William of Salisbury, his cousin Earl William of Warenne, and Henry Earl of Cornwall, a grandson of Henry the First. With him too remained Ranulf, Earl of Chester, and the wisest and noblest of the barons, William Marshal, the elder Earl of Pembroke. William Marshal had shared in the rising of the younger Henry against Henry the Second, and stood by him as he died; he had shared in the overthrow of William Longchamp and in the outlawry of John.[6] He was now an old man, firm, as we shall see in his aftercourse, to recall the government to the path of freedom and law, but shrinking from a strife which might bring back the anarchy of Stephen's day, and looking for reforms rather in the bringing constitutional pressure to bear upon the King than in forcing them from him by arms.

But cling as such men might to John, they clung to him rather as mediators than adherents. Their sympathies went with the demands of the barons when the delay which had been granted was over and the nobles again gathered in arms at Brackley in Northamptonshire to lay their claims before the King. Nothing marks more strongly the absolutely despotic idea of his sovereignty which John had formed than the passionate surprise which breaks out in his reply. "Why do they not ask for my kingdom?" he cried. "I will never grant such liberties as will make me a slave!" The imperialist theories of the lawyers of his father's court had done their work. Held at bay by the

[6] *William Longchamp, who had been left as regent of England by Richard, was driven from the realm by the nobles; and John, who strove to take advantage of his brother's absence for his own ambition, was forced to follow him oversea.*

practical sense of Henry, they had told on the more headstrong nature of his sons. Richard and John both held with Glanvill that the will of the prince was the law of the land; and to fetter that will by the customs and franchises which were embodied in the barons' claims seemed to John a monstrous usurpation of his rights.

But no imperialist theories had touched the minds of his people. The country rose as one man at his refusal. At the close of May London threw open her gates to the forces of the barons, now arrayed under Robert Fitz-Walter as "Marshal of the Army of God and Holy Church." Exeter and Lincoln followed the example of the capital; promises of aid came from Scotland and Wales; the northern barons marched hastily under Eustace de Vesci to join their comrades in London. Even the nobles who had as yet clung to the King, but whose hopes of conciliation were blasted by his obstinacy, yielded at last to the summons of the "Army of God." Pandulf indeed and Archbishop Langton still remained with John, but they counselled as Earl Ranulf and William Marshal counselled his acceptance of the Charter. None in fact counselled its rejection save his new Justiciar, the Poitevin Peter des Roches, and other foreigners who knew the barons purposed driving them from the land. But even the number of these was small, there was a moment when John found himself with but seven knights at his back and before him a nation in arms. Quick as he was, he had been taken utterly by surprize. It was in vain that in the short respite he had gained from Christmas to Easter he had summoned mercenaries to his aid and appealed to his new suzerain,[7] the Pope. Summons and appeal were alike too late. Nursing wrath in his heart, John bowed to necessity and called the barons to a conference on an island in the Thames between

[7] *Overlord.*

Windsor and Staines, near a marshy meadow by the river side, the meadow of Runnymede. The King encamped on one bank of the river, the barons covered the flat of Runnymede on the other. Their delegates met on the 15th of July in the island between them, but the negotiations were a mere cloak to cover John's purpose of unconditional submission. The Great Charter was discussed and agreed to in a single day.

XXI.

THE FRIARS AND THE TOWNS.

BREWER.

[The rest of the reign of John and almost the whole reign of his son, Henry the Third, was a struggle between king and people for the confirmation and developement of the rights embodied in the Great Charter. Politically it was a time of much misgovernment and trouble, a trouble which ended at last in the great outbreak called the Barons' War. But socially and religiously it was a time of vast progress. England grew richer and more vigorous, the universities became great centres of learning and education; art flourished; and religion was revived by the energy of the Friars. The Friars were the missionaries of the towns, which were now rising into importance.]

It may be difficult, perhaps impossible, at this distance, to realize the social condition of the towns of Europe in the thirteenth century, and consequently the importance of this new movement. The evidence for the history of the land is complete; for the towns it is meagre and unsatisfactory. Their municipal institutions are in full vigour long before history affords the least insight into their social condition

or material prosperity. A political order is established among them, has been working harmoniously for centuries, in a state of society utterly inadequate, in all appearance, to the creation of such wise laws, of authority so judiciously modified. In these communities we trace not the germs, but the fully developed forms of self-government, at a time when, in material comforts, the towns of Western Europe differed little from the rudest mud hovels or shanties of the remotest country village in Ireland or the West of Scotland. If it be true that the English artizan stepped out of his mud-hovel into a more muddy street, when the Moor at one corner of Europe[1] and the Florentine at the other were enjoying the luxury of palaces and the civic improvements of a polished capital; equally true it is that the English mechanic was living in the enjoyment of municipal institutions and privileges which, with all the advantages of imitation and the lapse of five centuries, his predecessors in the arts have yet failed to realize.

Notwithstanding, then, the many material discomforts, and the absence of all due means of cleanliness and health, requisite for preserving large masses of population, crowded into narrow streets, from degenerating into brutality, the town populations of England and of Europe were preserved in some measure from that moral degradation which might have been anticipated from their social condition. Perhaps the exertion necessary for defending their privileges may have secured this happy result; still a vast amount of squalor and wretchedness, of ignorance and poverty, existed in the towns without any adequate means for counteraction. Improvement could not keep pace with the rapid increase of population. Fever and plague, strange and destructive epidemics, spread with unexampled rapidity. Whole quarters of the city suffered from the scourge, without

[1] *The Moors held Southern Spain.*

adequate means of prevention; without remedy or reparation for the evil when it had occurred. Markets were scantily and irregularly supplied; roads intercepted by a feudal aristocracy or a discontented sovereign; an entire population, as in the industrious towns of the Low Countries, exposed to periodical starvation. The narrowness and intricacy of the streets, serving as a protection against the mounted knight and his men-at-arms, served also a worse enemy, the plague or the sweating sickness, and decimated the population, to whom sanitary precautions were unknown. The lazy ditches and stagnant ponds, into which ran the refuse and garbage of the shambles,—a poor protection to the various quarters of the town,—sent up their fetid odours, rank with fever and ague, into the stifled chamber and open booth of the artizan.

Upon the higher ground, as may be seen in many towns in England at the present day, stood the Guildhall and the Ward of the Aldermen, distinguished by houses partially built of stone pilfered from the old Roman monuments, forming a striking contrast to the outer circle and the suburbs, where, down to the water's edge and straggling beyond it, in an uncertain and precarious tenure, rose wooden sheds, rudely plastered or white-washed, on the edge of the town-ditch, sheltering the last new settlers that had flocked into the town for occupation or protection; a mixed race, of whom little inquiry was made; tolerated, not acknowledged; of all blood, all climates, and all religions; permitted to live or die, as it pleased God or themselves, provided only that they yielded due obedience to the proper civic authorities. Here the leprosy and the plague were certain to enter first; here infection did its worst. In the higher city there might be parish churches and schools; a skilful leech[2] to look after the welfare, bodily and spiritual, of the inhabitants. In

[2] *Physician.*

defect of these, the different guilds [3] established in the City proper provided in some measure for the instruction and comfort of the master and his apprentices. The city ponds and rivulets yielded fresh water to those who were willing to fetch it; the chaplain of the guild, its church or chapel, provided for the common worship and spiritual welfare of its members; the common purse of the guild furnished relief against sudden misfortune, and paid for the funeral obsequies and masses of the defunct brother. But for the unguilded population, who resided in the suburbs, and increased daily and rapidly in the unsettled condition of the country; or as the oppression or harshness or stern justice of the feudal baron made the town a more safe and desirable abiding place than the country, for these there were no such advantages. Imagination can only conceive their condition; history is silent.

Now, it was to this class of the population, in the first instance, that the attention of the Franciscan [4] was directed; in these wretched localities his convent and Order were seated. I have not been able to examine the primitive position of all their religious houses in England; but a glance at the more important will show the general correctness of this statement. In London, York, Warwick, Oxford, Bristol, Lynn, and elsewhere, their convents stood in the suburbs and abutted on the city walls. They made choice of the low, swampy, and undrained spots in the large towns, among the poorest and most neglected quarters. Unlike the magnificent monasteries and abbeys, which excite admiration to this day, their buildings, to the very last, retained their primitive squat, low, and meagre proportions. Their first house, at their settlement in London, stood in the neighbourhood of Cornhill, where they built cells, stuffing

[3] *Companies for trade.* [4] *An order of friars founded by Francis of Assisi.*

the party-walls with dried grass. Near the shambles in Newgate, and close upon the city gate of that name, on a spot appropriately called Stinking Lane, rose the chief house of the Order in England. In Oxford the parish of St. Ebbe's, in Cambridge the decayed town gaol, in Norwich the water side, running close to the walls of the town, are the special and chosen spots of the Franciscan missionary.

In all instances the poverty of their buildings corresponded with those of the surrounding district: their living and lodging are no better than the poorest among whom they settle. At Cambridge their chapel was erected by a single carpenter in one day. At Shrewsbury, where owing to the liberality of the townsmen, the dormitory [5] walls had been built of stone, the minister of the Order had them removed and replaced with mud. Decorations and ornaments of all kinds were zealously excluded. At Gloucester, a friar was deprived of his hood for painting his pulpit, and the warden of the same place suffered similar punishment for tolerating pictures. Their meals corresponded with the poverty of their buildings. Mendicancy [6] might encourage idleness, but it also secured effectually the mean and meagre diet of the friars. It kept them on a par with the masses among whom their founder intended them to labour. They could not sell their offerings; they were not permitted to receive more than their actual necessities required; meal, salt, figs, and apples; wood for firing; stale beer or milk. Whatever the weather, however rough the way, they threaded the muddy streets and unpaved roads barefooted and bareheaded, leaving the prints of their bleeding feet upon the ground, in gowns of the coarsest cloth, which an economical vestryman of this nineteenth century would be ashamed to offer to the most refractory pauper in a parish workhouse.

[5] *Place for sleeping.* [6] *The Friars subsisted by begging for alms.*

XXII.

DEATH OF SIMON OF MONTFORT.

PROTHERO.

[While this great social improvement was going on the misgovernment of Henry the Third was striving to undo all that the Great Charter had done. At last the long struggle between the King and nobles drove the nation to arms: and Earl Simon of Leicester, Simon de Montfort, put himself at the head of the patriotic barons who were resolved to force Henry to rule according to law. For a time they were successful; the King was defeated at Lewes; and the government passed into the hands of Earl Simon and his supporters. But strife broke out among the patriots themselves; the bulk of the nobles forsook the Earl; and the King's son, Edward, afterwards King Edward the First, gathered an army and marched against him. Earl Simon was expecting the coming of reinforcements under his son to strengthen the weak force about him, when Edward (who had already surprized the son's force and cut it to pieces) fell upon De Montfort's army at Evesham.]

When the Earl[1] heard that the troops[2] were seen approaching, he cried out with joy, "It is my son. But nevertheless," he added, "go up and look and bring me word again." His barber, Nicholas, who was gifted with a long sight and had some knowledge of heraldry, mounted the belltower of the abbey[3] and appears to have been followed by his master. At first Nicholas distinguished the ensigns of young

[1] *Earl Simon of Montfort, who was encamped at Evesham.*
[2] *Of Edward.* [3] *Of Evesham.*

Simon and his partisans floating in the van of the advancing force.[4] Another minute, and he saw they were in hostile hands, a bitter proof of the fate of his friends, and a warning of his own. From the tower-roof one can still look out with Simon's eyes upon the beautiful landscape below. Straight in front of him, about a mile distant, he looked upon the slopes of Green Hill, glistening with the weapons of those who were thirsting for his blood. A little to the right, over the shoulder of the hill, his eye followed the course of the winding stream towards the place where his home lay. Between him and the hill stretched a small plain, over which he would have to pass to his death, a plain probably then as now bright with gardens, and golden with the ripening fruit of autumn. Beneath him lay the little town,[5] and as he glanced at the bridge, while one thought of escape crossed his mind, he may have seen the horsemen of Mortimer[6] hastening down to block his path. Behind him lay the river, before him the foe. It needed not many moments to show him that all was over. And bitterer than the thought of his own fate, with years of life and power yet in him, more numbing than the vague sense of what had befallen his son, must have been the conviction that for a time at least the cause which he had at heart, and for the sake of which he had looked death in the face, must perish with him. For a time at least: let us hope that in his moment of agony he was consoled by some vision of what was to come, by the faith that in after years one yet greater and far more fortunate than he would arise and protect the liberties of the nation he had adopted for his own. But it was no time for dreams; he would sell his

[4] *Edward had surprized the young De Montfort's army, and taken its standards, which he displayed in front of his own troops to aid him in taking the Earl by surprize.* [5] *Of Evesham.* [6] *A baron of the Welsh border who was helping Edward.*

life as dearly as he could. "May the Lord have mercy upon our souls," he said, "for our bodies are undone."

Outnumbered as they were by three to one, victory was out of the question. The Earl's friends urged him to fly, but the thought of flight for himself was not in his mind. A natural flash of anger burst forth in the remark that it was the folly of his own sons which had brought him to this pass. Nevertheless he endeavoured to persuade his eldest son Henry, his old comrade Hugh Despenser, and others to fly while there was yet time, and maintain the good cause when fortune should smile again. But one and all refused to desert him, preferring not to live if their leader died. "Come then," he said, "and let us die like men; for we have fasted here and we shall breakfast in heaven." His troops were hastily shriven[7] by the aged Bishop of Worcester, who had performed the same office a year before upon a happier field.[8] Then he led them out against the enemy, with the white cross again upon their shoulders, in as close order as he could. In the midst of them was the King,[9] for Simon seems to the last to have cherished a faint hope of cutting his way through his adversaries; and as at Lewes, the possession of the royal person was everything to him. As they neared the hill, Prince Edward's troops, who had been in no hurry to leave their point of vantage, began to descend upon them. Simon's heart was struck with admiration of the fair array before him, so different from that which he had met a year before; his soldierly pride told him to whom their skill was due. "By the arm of St. James," he cried, "they come on well; they learnt that not of themselves, but of me."

On the south-western slope of Green Hill there is a

[7] *Absolved after confession of their sins.* [8] *At Lewes where Earl Simon won a great victory.* [9] *Henry the Third, whom the Earl had kept a virtual prisoner.*

small valley or combe; in this hollow the chief struggle raged. On the further side, in the grounds of a private house, stands the obelisk, which marks the spot where, according to tradition, Simon de Montfort fell. Towards the higher part of the combe is a spring, still called De Montfort's Well, which, on the day of the battle, is said to have run with blood. Prince Edward began the fray, and while the Earl was engaged with him, Gloucester came up with a second body on his left, so that he was soon surrounded. The Welsh infantry,[10] poor, half-armed troops, fled at once, and were cut down in the neighbouring gardens by Mortimer's forces, which must now have been advancing from the rear. Simon's horse was killed under him; his eldest son was among the first to fall. When this was told him, he cried, "Is it so? then indeed is it time for me to die!" and rushing upon the enemy with redoubled fury, and wielding his sword with both his hands, the old warrior laid about him with so terrific force, that had there been but half a dozen more like himself, says one who saw the fight, he would have turned the tide of battle. As it was he nearly gained the crest of the hill. But it was not to be. For a while he stood "like a tower," but at length a foot soldier, lifting up his coat of mail, pierced him in the back, and, with the words "Dieu merci"[11] on his lips, he fell. Then the battle became a butchery. No quarter was asked or given. The struggle lasted for about two hours in the early summer morning, and then all was over.

[10] *The bulk of the Earl's army consisted of Welshmen, whom he had brought with him across the Severn when marching to join his son.* [11] *Thank God!*

XXIII.

AN EARLY ELECTION TO PARLIAMENT.

PALGRAVE.

[On the death of Earl Simon the cause of English freedom and English law seemed lost. But his conqueror was as averse from lawless rule as the Earl himself; and when Edward became king on his father's death he ruled justly and nobly. What he set himself to do from the first was the work of wise government and the making of wise laws. Till now English kings had made laws only with the consent of their bishops and higher barons, gathered in the Great Council of the realm. It was Edward who first made laws in what has ever since been called Parliament. For this purpose he called on the shires and larger towns to choose men to "represent" them, or appear in their stead in the Great Council; the shires sending knights of the shire, the towns burgesses. These, added to the peers or high nobles and to the bishops, made up Parliament. It was at a later time that Parliament divided itself into two Houses, the House of Lords, in which sate the bishops and peers, and the House of Commons, in which sate the burgesses and knights of the shire. The business of Parliament was not only to make good laws for the realm, but to grant money to the King for the needs of the state in peace and war, and to authorize him to raise this money by taxes or subsidies from his subjects. So at first people saw little of the great good of such Parliaments, but dreaded their calling together, because they brought taxes with them. Nor did men seek as they do now to be chosen as members of Parliament, for the way thither was long and travel costly, and so they did their best not to be chosen, and when chosen had to be bound over under pain of heavy fines to serve in Parliament. This is what Sir Francis Palgrave has striven to bring out in his picture of an election under Edward the First.]

DURING the last half-hour the suitors[1] had been gathering round the shire-oak,[2] awaiting the arrival of the high officer whose duty it was to preside.[3] Notwithstanding the size of the meeting there was an evident system in the crowd. A considerable proportion of the throng consisted of little knots of husbandmen or churls, four or five of whom were generally standing together, each company seeming to compose a deputation. The churls might be easily distinguished by their dress, a long frock of coarse yet snow-white linen, hanging down to the same length before and behind, and ornamented round the neck with broidery rudely executed in blue thread. They wore in fact the attire of the carter and ploughman, a garb which was common enough in country parts about five-and-twenty years ago,[4] but which will probably soon be recollected only as an ancient costume, cast away with all the other obsolete characteristics of merry Old England. These groups of peasantry were the representatives of their respective townships, the rural communes into which the whole realm was divided ;[5] and each had a species of chieftain or headman in the person of an individual who, though it was evident that he belonged to the same rank in society, gave directions to the rest. Interspersed among the churls, though not confounded with them, were also very many well-clad persons, possessing an appearance of rustic respectability, who were also subjected to some kind of organization, being collected into sets of twelve men each, who were busily employed in confabulation among themselves. These were "the sworn centenary deputies," or jurors, the sworn men who answered for

[1] *The holders of land from the Crown, who were bound to attend at the county-court or shire-meeting.* [2] *Round which the shire-meeting was held.* [3] *The sheriff.* [4] *Known as the "smock-frock."* [5] *The township usually answered to the modern parish.*

represented the several hundreds.[6] A third class of members of the shire court could be equally distinguished, proudly known by their gilt spurs and blazoned tabards[7] as the provincial knighthood, and who, though thus honoured, appeared to mix freely and affably in converse with the rest of the commons[8] of the shire.

A flourish of trumpets announced the approach of the high sheriff, Sir Giles de Argentein, surrounded by his escort of javelin men, tall yeomen, all arrayed in a uniform suit of livery, and accompanied amongst others by four knights, the coroners,[9] who took cognizance of all pleas that concerned the king's rights within the county, and who, though they yielded precedence to the sheriff, were evidently considered to be almost of equal importance with him. "My masters," said the sheriff to the assembled crowd, "even now hath the port-joye[10] of the chancery delivered to me certain most important writs of our sovereign lord the King, containing his grace's high commands." At this time the chancellor, who might be designated as principal secretary of state for all departments, was the great medium of communication between king and subject; whatever the sovereign had to ask or to tell was usually asked or told by, or under, the directions of this high functionary. Now although the gracious declarations which the chancellor was charged to deliver were much diversified in their form, yet somehow or other they all conveyed the same intent. Whether directing the preservation of the peace or preparing for the prosecution of a war, whether announcing a royal birth or a royal death, the knighthood of the king's

[6] *A hundred was a group of townships or parishes.*

[7] *The tabard was an overcoat emblazoned with the armorial bearings of the knight.*

[8] *All classes below that of the peers, or greater nobles.*

[9] *The coroners of our day have sunk in dignity, and have now only the duty of inquiry into violent deaths.*

[10] *The port-joye was the messenger of the chancellor.*

son or the marriage of the king's daughter, the mandates of our ancient kings invariably conclude with a request or a demand for money's worth or money.

The present instance offered no exception to the general rule. King Edward,[11] greeting his loving subjects, expatiated upon the miseries which the realm was likely to sustain by the invasion of the wicked, barbarous, and perfidious Scots. Church and state, he alleged, were in equal danger, and "inasmuch as that which concerneth all ought to be determined by the advice of all concerned, we have determined," continued the writ, "to hold our Parliament at Westminster in eight days from the feast of St. Hilary." The effect of the announcement was magical. Parliament! Even before the second syllable of the word had been uttered visions of aids[12] and subsidies rose before the appalled multitude, grim shadows of assessors and collectors floated in the ambient air. Sir Gilbert Hastings instinctively plucked his purse out of his sleeve; drawing the strings together, he twirled, twisted, and tied them in the course of half-a-minute of nervous agitation into a Gordian knot which apparently defied any attempt to undo it, except by the means practised by the son of Ammon.[13] The abbot of Oseney[14] forthwith guided his steed to the right-about and rode away from the meeting as fast as he could trot, turning the deafest of all deaf ears to the monitions which he received to stay. The sheriff and the other functionaries alone preserved a tranquil, but not a cheerful gravity, as Sir Giles commanded his clerk to read the whole of the writ, by which he was commanded "to cause two knights to be elected for the shire; and from every city within his bailiwick two citizens;

[11] *The First.* [12] *Grants of money made to the Crown by Parliament and raised by taxation.* [13] *Alexander the Great, who claimed to be the son of the God Ammon, and cut the Gordian knot, which none could untie, by a stroke of his sword*
[14] *A religious house outside Oxford.*

and from every borough two burgesses: all of them of the more discreet and wiser sort; and to cause them to come before the King in this Parliament at the before mentioned day and place, with full powers from their respective communities to perform and consent to such matters as by common counsel shall then and there be ordained; and this you will in nowise omit, as you will answer at your peril."

A momentary pause ensued. The main body of the suitors retreated from the high sheriff, as though he had been a centre of repulsion. After a short but vehement conversation amongst themselves, one of the bettermost sort of yeomen, a gentleman farmer, if we may use the modern term, stepped forward and addressed Sir Giles: "Your worship well knows that we, poor commons, are not bound to proceed to the election. You have no right to call upon us to interfere. So many of the earls and barons of the shire, the great men, who ought to take the main trouble, burthen, and business of the choice of the knights upon themselves, are absent now in the King's service, that we neither can nor dare proceed to nominate those who are to represent the county. Such slender folk as we have no concern with these weighty matters. How can we tell who are best qualified to serve?"

"What of that, John Trafford," said the sheriff; "do you think that his grace will allow his affairs to be delayed by excuses such as these? You suitors of the shire are as much bound and obliged to concur in the choice of the county members as any baron of the realm. Do your duty; I command you in the King's name." John Trafford had no help. Like a wise debater, he yielded to the pinch of the argument without confessing that he felt it: and having muttered a few words to the sheriff, which might be considered as an assent, a long conference took place

between him and some of his brother stewards, as well as with the other suitors." During this confabulation several nods and winks of intelligence passed between Trafford and a well-mounted knight; and whilst the former appeared to be settling the business with the suitors, the latter, who had been close to Sir Giles, continued gradually backing and sidling away through the groups of shiresmen, and just as he had got clear out of the ring, John Trafford declared, in a most sonorous voice, that the suitors had chosen Sir Richard de Pogeys as one of their representatives.

The sheriff, who, keeping his eye fixed upon Sir Richard as he receded, had evidently suspected some manœuvre, instantly ordered his bailiffs to secure the body of the member, "and," continued he with much vehemence, "Sir Richard must be forthwith committed to custody, unless he gives good bail—two substantial freeholders—that he will duly attend in his place amongst the commons on the first day of the session, according to the law and usage of Parliament." All this however was more easily said than done. Before the verbal precept had proceeded from the lips of the sheriff Sir Richard was galloping away at full speed across the fields. Off dashed the bailiffs after the member amidst the shouts of the surrounding crowd, who forgot all their grievances in the stimulus of the chase, which they contemplated with the perfect certainty of receiving some satisfaction by its termination; whether by the escape of the fugitive, in which case their common enemy, the sheriff, would be liable to a heavy amercement;[15] or by the capture of the knight, a result which would give them almost equal delight, by imposing a disagreeable and irksome duty upon an individual who was universally disliked, in consequence of his overbearing harshness and domestic tyranny. One of the two above-mentioned gratifications might be considered

[15] *Fine.*

as certain. But besides these, there was a third contingent amusement, by no means to be overlooked, namely, the chance that in the contest those respectable and intelligent functionaries, the sheriff's bailiffs, might somehow or another come to some kind of harm. In this charitable expectation the good men of the shire were not entirely disappointed. Bounding along the open fields, whilst the welkin resounded with the cheers of the spectators, the fleet courser of Sir Richard sliddered on the grass, then stumbled and fell down the sloping side of one of the many ancient British entrenchments by which the plain was crossed; and horse and rider rolling over, the latter deposited quite at the bottom of the foss, unhurt, but much discomposed.

Horse and rider were immediately on their respective legs again: the horse shook himself, snorted, and was quite ready to start; but Sir Richard had to regird his sword, and before he could remount the bailiffs were close at him; Dick-o'-the-Gyves attempted to trip him up, John Catchpole seized him by the collar of his pourpoint.[16] A scuffle ensued, during which the nags of the bailiffs slily took the opportunity of emancipating themselves from control. Distinctly seen from the Moot-hill, the strife began and ended in a moment; in what manner it had ended was declared without any further explanation, when the officers rejoined the assembly, by Dick's limping gait and the closed eye of his companion. In the meanwhile Sir Richard had wholly disappeared; and the special return made by the sheriff to the writ, which I translate from the original, will best elucidate the bearing of the transaction. "Sir Richard de Pogeys, knight, duly elected by the shire, refused to find bail for his appearance in Parliament at the day and place within mentioned, and having grievously assaulted my bailiffs in contempt of the King, his crown and dignity, and absconded

[16] *Overcoat or doublet.*

to the Chiltern Hundreds,[17] into which liberty, not being shire-land or guildable, I cannot enter, I am unable to make any other execution of the writ as far as he is concerned." At the present day a nominal stewardship connected with the Chiltern Hundreds, called an office of profit under the Crown, enables the member, by a species of juggle, to resign his seat. But it is not generally known that this ancient domain, which now affords the means of retreating out of the House of Commons, was in the fourteenth century employed as a sanctuary, in which the knight of the shire took refuge in order to avoid being dragged into Parliament against his will. Being a distinct jurisdiction, in which the sheriff had no control, and where he could not capture the county member, it enabled the recusant to baffle the process, at least until the short session had closed.

XXIV.

EXPULSION OF JEWS.

GREEN.

[One of the first results of the meeting of the Parliament was the driving of the Jews from the realm. They had been protected by the kings as valuable subjects, who paid for protection with constant gifts. But they were hated by the people, partly through their extortion, and partly through religious fanaticism; and now that England itself was ready to fill the King's treasury through grants in Parliament, the King had no longer any cause for protecting them.]

JEWISH traders had followed William the Conqueror from Normandy, and had been enabled by his protection to

[17] *The district of the Chilterns, or line of chalk-hills to the east of Buckinghamshire.*

establish themselves in separate quarters or "Jewries" in all larger English towns. The Jew had no right or citizenship in the land. The Jewry in which he lived was exempt from the common law. He was simply the King's chattel,[1] and his life and goods were at the King's mercy. But he was too valuable a possession to be lightly thrown away. If the Jewish merchant had no standing-ground in the local court the king enabled him to sue before a special justiciar; his bonds[2] were deposited for safety in a chamber of the royal palace at Westminster; he was protected against the popular hatred in the free exercise of his religion and allowed to build synagogues and to manage his own ecclesiastical affairs by means of a chief rabbi. The royal protection was dictated by no spirit of tolerance or mercy. To the kings the Jew was a mere engine of finance. The wealth which he accumulated was wrung from him whenever the crown had need, and torture and imprisonment were resorted to when milder means failed. It was the gold of the Jew that filled the royal treasury at the outbreak of war or of revolt. It was in the Hebrew coffers that the foreign kings found strength to hold their baronage at bay.

That the presence of the Jew was, at least in the earlier years of his settlement, beneficial to the nation at large, there can be little doubt. His arrival was the arrival of a capitalist; and, heavy as was the usury he necessarily exacted, in the general insecurity of the time his loans gave an impulse to industry. The century which followed the Conquest witnessed an outburst of architectural energy which covered the land with castles and cathedrals; but castle and cathedral alike owed their erection to the loans of the Jew. His own example gave a new vigour

[1] *Personal property.* [2] *For loans.*

to domestic architecture. The buildings which, as at Lincoln and Bury St. Edmund's, still retain their name of "Jews' Houses" were almost the first houses of stone which superseded the mere hovels of the English burghers. Nor was their influence simply industrial. Through their connexion with the Jewish schools in Spain and the East they opened a way for the revival of physical sciences. A Jewish medical school seems to have existed at Oxford; Roger Bacon himself studied under English rabbis. But the general progress of civilization now drew little help from the Jew, while the coming of the Cahorsine and Italian bankers[3] drove him from the field of commercial finance. He fell back on the petty usury of loans to the poor, a trade necessarily accompanied with much of extortion, and which roused into fiercer life the religious hatred against their race. Wild stories floated about of children carried off to be circumcised or crucified, and a Lincoln boy who was found slain in a Jewish house was canonized by popular reverence as "St. Hugh." The first work of the Friars was to settle in the Jewish quarters and attempt their conversion, but the popular fury rose too fast for these gentler means of reconciliation. When the Franciscans saved seventy Jews from hanging by their prayer to Henry the Third the populace angrily refused the brethren alms.

But all this growing hate was met with a bold defiance. The picture which is commonly drawn of the Jew as timid, silent, crouching under oppression, however truly it may represent the general position of his race throughout mediæval Europe, is far from being borne out by historical fact on this side the Channel. In England the attitude of the Jew, almost to the very end, was an attitude of proud

[3] *Cahors in Southern France, and Lucca and Florence in Italy, were the great banking towns of the time.*

and even insolent defiance. He knew that the royal policy exempted him from the common taxation, the common justice, the common obligations of Englishmen. Usurer, extortioner as the realm held him to be, the royal justice would secure him the repayment of his bonds. A royal commission visited with heavy penalties any outbreak of violence against the King's "chattels." The Red King[4] actually forbade the conversion of a Jew to the Christian faith; it was a poor exchange, he said, that would rid him of a valuable property and give him only a subject. We see in such a case as that of Oxford the insolence that grew out of this consciousness of the royal protection. Here as elsewhere the Jewry was a town within a town, with its own language, its own religion and law, its peculiar commerce, its peculiar dress. No city bailiff could penetrate into the square of little alleys which lay behind the present Town Hall; the Church itself was powerless to prevent a synagogue from rising in haughty rivalry over against the cloister of St. Frideswide. Prior Philip of St. Frideswide complains bitterly of a certain Hebrew who stood at his door as the procession of the saint passed by, mocking at the miracles which were said to be wrought at her shrine. Halting and then walking firmly on his feet, showing his hands clenched as if with palsy and then flinging open his fingers, the Jew claimed gifts and oblations from the crowd that flocked to St. Frideswide's shrine on the ground that such recoveries of life and limb were quite as real as any that Frideswide ever wrought. Sickness and death in the prior's story avenge the saint on her blasphemer, but no earthly power, ecclesiastical or civil, seems to have ventured to deal with him. A more daring act of fanaticism showed the temper of the Jews even at the close of Henry the Third's reign. As the usual procession of scholars and

[4] *William Rufus.*

citizens returned from St. Frideswide's on the Ascension Day of 1268 a Jew suddenly burst from a group of his comrades in front of the synagogue, and wrenching the crucifix from its bearer trod it under foot. But even in presence of such outrage as this the terror of the Crown sheltered the Oxford Jews from any burst of popular vengeance. The sentence of the King condemned them to set up a cross of marble on the spot where the crime was committed, but even this sentence was in part remitted, and a less offensive place was found for the cross in an open plot by Merton College.

Up to Edward's day indeed the royal protection had never wavered. Henry the Second granted the Jews a right of burial outside every city where they dwelt. Richard punished heavily a massacre of the Jews at York, and organized a mixed court of Jews and Christians for the registration of their contracts. John suffered none to plunder them save himself, though he once wrested from them a sum equal to a year's revenue of his realm. The troubles of the next reign brought in a harvest greater than even the royal greed could reap, the Jews grew wealthy enough to acquire estates; and only a burst of popular feeling prevented a legal decision which would have enabled them to own freeholds. But the sack of Jewry after Jewry showed the popular hatred during the Barons' war, and at its close fell on the Jews the more terrible persecution of the law. To the cry against usury and the religious fanaticism which threatened them was now added the jealousy with which the nation that had grown up round the Charter regarded all exceptional jurisdictions or exemptions from the common law and the common burthens of the realm. As Edward looked on the privileges of the Church or the baronage, so his people looked on the privileges of the Jews. The growing weight of the Parliament told against them. Statute after statute hemmed them in. They were

forbidden to hold real property, to employ Christian servants, to move through the streets without the two white tablets of wool on their breasts which distinguished their race. They were prohibited from building new synagogues or eating with Christians or acting as physicians to them. Their trade, already crippled by the rivalry of the bankers of Cahors, was annihilated by a royal order which bade them renounce usury under pain of death. At last persecution could do no more, and Edward, eager at the moment to find supplies for his treasury, and himself swayed by the fanaticism of his subjects, bought the grant of a fifteenth from clergy and laity by consenting to drive the Jews from his realm. No share of the enormities which accompanied this expulsion can fall upon the King, for he not only suffered the fugitives to take their personal wealth with them but punished with the halter those who plundered them at sea. But the expulsion was none the less cruel. Of the sixteen thousand who preferred exile to apostasy few reached the shores of France. Many were wrecked, others robbed and thrown overboard. One ship-master turned out a crew of wealthy merchants on to a sandbank and bade them call a new Moses to save them from the sea.

XXV.

WANDERINGS OF THE BRUCE.

SCOTT.

[While thus ruling within his realm, Edward aimed in his work without it at the union under one government of the different kingdoms which parted Britain between them. In the early years of his reign he succeeded in conquer-

ing Wales and uniting it to the English Crown. In his later years Edward was drawn in like fashion to attempt the union of Scotland with England. There was a contest among the Scotch lords for the Crown of the country, and as all appealed to Edward he gave it to John Balliol, but on terms that made him a vassal of England. Balliol soon revolted against this, and Edward drove him from his realm and conquered Scotland. But the Scottish people were as stout-hearted and fond of freedom as the English themselves; and they soon rose under William Wallace, drove out the English, and invaded England in turn. Edward however won a great victory over Wallace at Stirling, and again subdued the land. Wallace was betrayed into his hands and put to death, and for a while all seemed quiet. But in Edward's last years Robert Bruce, a baron both of England and Scotland, claimed the Scotch Crown and stirred up fresh resistance. Edward himself died as he marched against him, but his troops defeated Bruce, and he was driven to wander over the land, pursued by the English and those Scots who supported them.]

ABOUT the time when the Bruce was yet at the head of but few men, Sir Aymer de Valence, who was Earl of Pembroke,[1] together with John of Lorn,[2] came into Galloway,[3] each of them being at the head of a large body of men. John of Lorn had a bloodhound with him, which it was said had formerly belonged to Robert Bruce himself; and having been fed by the King with his own hands, it became attached to him, and would follow his footsteps anywhere, as dogs are well known to trace their master's steps, whether they be bloodhounds or not. By means of this hound, John of Lorn thought he should certainly find out Bruce, and take revenge on him for the death of his relation Comyn.[4]

[1] *And English regent in Scotland.* [2] *The chieftain of what is now Argyleshire.* [3] *South-western Scotland, where Bruce was lurking.* [4] *John Comyn, another claimant of the Scottish Crown, whom Bruce had stabbed in a church.*

When these two armies advanced upon King Robert, he at first thought of fighting with the English Earl; but becoming aware that John of Lorn was moving round with another large body to attack him in the rear, he resolved to avoid fighting at that time, lest he should be oppressed by numbers. For this purpose, the King divided the men he had with him into three bodies, and commanded them to retreat by three different ways, thinking the enemy would not know which party to pursue. He also appointed a place at which they were to assemble again. But when John of Lorn came to the place where the army of Bruce had been thus divided, the bloodhound took his course after one of these divisions, neglecting the other two, and then John of Lorn knew that the King must be in that party; so he also made no pursuit after the two other divisions of the Scots, but followed that which the dog pointed out, with all his men.

The King again saw that he was followed by a large body, and being determined to escape from them, if possible, he made all the people who were with him disperse themselves different ways, thinking thus that the enemy must needs lose trace of him. He kept only one man along with him, and that was his own foster-brother, or the son of his nurse. When John of Lorn came to the place where Bruce's companions had dispersed themselves, the bloodhound, after it had snuffed up and down for a little, quitted the footsteps of all the other fugitives, and ran barking upon the track of two men out of the whole number. Then John of Lorn knew that one of these two must needs be King Robert. Accordingly, he commanded five of his men that were speedy of foot to chase after him, and either make him prisoner, or slay him. The Highlanders started off accordingly, and ran so fast, that they gained sight of Robert and his foster-brother. The King

asked his companion what help he could give him, and his foster-brother answered, he was ready to do his best. So these two turned on the five men of John of Lorn, and killed them all. It is to be supposed they were better armed than the others were, as well as stronger and more desperate.

But by this time Bruce was very much fatigued, and yet they dared not sit down to take any rest; for whenever they stopped for an instant, they heard the cry of the blood-hound behind them, and knew by that, that their enemies were coming up fast after them. At length, they came to a wood, through which ran a small river. Then Bruce said to his foster-brother, "Let us wade down this stream for a great way, instead of going straight across, and so this unhappy hound will lose the scent; for if we were once clear of him, I should not be afraid of getting away from the pursuers." Accordingly the King and his attendant walked a great way down the stream, taking care to keep their feet in the water, which could not retain any scent where they had stepped. Then they came ashore on the further side from the enemy, and went deep into the wood before they stopped to rest themselves. In the meanwhile, the hound led John of Lorn straight to the place where the King went into the water, but there the dog began to be puzzled, not knowing where to go next; for you are well aware that the running water could not retain the scent of a man's foot, like that which remains on turf. So John of Lorn seeing the dog was at fault, as it is called, that is, had lost the track of that which he pursued, gave up the chase, and returned to join with Aymer de Valence.

But King Robert's adventures were not yet ended. His foster-brother and he had rested themselves in the wood, but they had got no food, and were become extremely

hungry. They walked on however, in hopes of coming to some habitation. At length, in the midst of the forest, they met with three men who looked like thieves or ruffians They were well armed, and one of them bore a sheep on his back, which it seemed as if they had just stolen. They saluted the King civilly; and he, replying to their salutation, asked them where they were going. The men answered, they were seeking for Robert Bruce, for that they intended to join with him. The King answered, that if they would go with him, he would conduct them where they would find the Scottish King. Then the man who had spoken, changed countenance, and Bruce, who looked sharply at him, began to suspect that the ruffian guessed who he was, and that he and his companions had some design against his person in order to gain the reward which had been offered for his life. So he said to them, "My good friends, as we are not well acquainted with each other, you must go before us, and we will follow near to you."

"You have no occasion to suspect any harm from us," answered the man.

"Neither do I suspect any," said Bruce, "but this is the way in which I choose to travel"

The men did as he commanded, and thus they travelled till they came together to a waste and ruinous cottage, where the men proposed to dress some part of the sheep which their companion was carrying. The King was glad to hear of food; but he insisted that there should be two fires kindled, one for himself and his foster-brother at one end of the house, the other at the other end for their three companions. The men did as he desired. They broiled a quarter of mutton for themselves, and gave another to the King and his attendant. They were obliged to eat it without bread or salt; but as they were very hungry, they were glad to get food in any shape, and partook of it very heartily.

Then so heavy a drowsiness fell on King Robert, that, for all the danger he was in, he could not resist an inclination to sleep. But first, he desired his foster-brother to watch while he slept, for he had great suspicion of their new acquaintances. His foster-brother promised to keep awake, and did his best to keep his word. But the King had not been long asleep ere his foster-brother fell into a deep slumber also, for he had undergone as much fatigue as the King. When the three villains saw the King and his attendant asleep, they made signs to each other, and rising up at once, drew their swords with the purpose to kill them both. But the King slept but lightly, and for as little noise as the traitors made in rising, he was awakened by it, and starting up, drew his sword, and went to meet them. At the same moment he pushed his foster-brother with his foot, to awaken him, and he got on his feet; but ere he got his eyes cleared to see what was about to happen, one of the ruffians that were advancing to slay the King, killed him with a stroke of his sword. The King was now alone, one man against three, and in the greatest danger of his life; but his amazing strength, and the good armour which he wore, freed him once more from this great peril, and he killed the three men, one after another.

He then left the cottage, very sorrowful for the death of his faithful foster-brother, and took his direction towards the place where he had appointed his men to assemble after their dispersion. It was now near night, and the place of meeting being a farm-house, he went boldly into it, where he found the mistress, an old true-hearted Scotswoman, sitting alone. Upon seeing a stranger enter, she asked him who and what he was. The King answered that he was a traveller, who was journeying through the country.

"All travellers," answered the good woman, "are welcome here, for the sake of one."

"And who is that one," said the King, "for whose sake you make all travellers welcome?"

"It is our rightful king, Robert the Bruce," answered the mistress, "who is the lawful lord of this country; and although he is now pursued and hunted after with hounds and horns, I hope to live to see him King over all Scotland."

"Since you love him so well, dame," said the King, "know that you see him before you. I am Robert the Bruce."

XXVI.

BANNOCKBURN.

SCOTT.

[After years of this wandering life the Scots gathered again round Bruce, and little by little he won back the land from the English till only Stirling was left in their hands. Edward the Second, a weak and bad king, resolved to save this castle; and led a great army to its relief. Bruce met it at Bannockburn, on the plain in front of Stirling, and his victory established Scottish freedom.]

BRUCE studied how he might supply, by address and stratagem, what he wanted in numbers and strength. He knew the superiority of the English both in their heavy-armed cavalry, which were much better mounted and armed than that of the Scots, and in their archers, who were better trained than any others in the world. Both these advantages he resolved to provide against. With this purpose, he led his army down into a plain near Stirling, called the Park, near which, and beneath it, the English army must needs pass through a boggy country, broken with

water-courses, while the Scots occupied hard dry ground. He then caused all the ground upon the front of his line of battle, where cavalry were likely to act, to be dug full of holes, about as deep as a man's knee. They were filled with light brushwood, and the turf was laid on the top, so that it appeared a plain field, while in reality it was as full of these pits as a honeycomb is of holes. He also, it is said, caused steel spikes, called calthrops, to be scattered up and down in the plain, where the English cavalry were most likely to advance, trusting in that manner to lame and destroy their horses.

When the Scottish army was drawn up, the line stretched north and south. On the south, it was terminated by the banks of the brook called Bannockburn, which are so rocky that no troops could attack them there. On the left, the Scottish line extended near to the town of Stirling. Bruce reviewed his troops very carefully; all the useless servants, drivers of carts, and such like, of whom there were very many, he ordered to go behind a height, afterwards, in memory of the event, called the Gillies' hill, that is, the Servants' hill. He then spoke to the soldiers, and expressed his determination to gain the victory, or to lose his life on the field of battle. He desired that all those who did not propose to fight to the last should leave the field before the battle began, and that none should remain except those who were determined to take the issue of victory or death, as God should send it.

When the main body of his army was thus placed in order, the King posted Randolph,[1] with a body of horse, near to the church of St. Ninian's, commanding him to use the utmost diligence to prevent any succours from being thrown into Stirling castle. He then despatched James of

[1] *His nephew, Earl of Moray*

Douglas,[2] and Sir Robert Keith, the Mareschal of the Scottish army, in order that they might survey, as nearly as they could, the English force, which was now approaching from Falkirk. They returned with information, that the approach of that vast host was one of the most beautiful and terrible sights which could be seen,—that the whole country seemed covered with men-at-arms on horse and foot,—that the number of standards, banners, and pennons (all flags of different kinds), made so gallant a show, that the bravest and most numerous host in Christendom might be alarmed to see King Edward moving against them.

It was upon the 23rd of June (1314) the King of Scotland heard the news that the English army were approaching Stirling. He drew out his army, therefore, in the order which had been resolved on. After a short time, Bruce, who was looking out anxiously for the enemy, saw a body of English cavalry trying to get into Stirling from the eastward. This was the Lord Clifford, who, with a chosen body of eight hundred horse had been detached to relieve the castle. "See, Randolph," said the King to his nephew, "there is a rose fallen from your chaplet." By this he meant, that Randolph had lost some honour, by suffering the enemy to pass where he had been stationed to hinder them. Randolph made no reply, but rushed against Clifford with little more than half his number. The Scots were on foot. The English turned to charge them with their lances, and Randolph drew up his men in close order to receive the onset. He seemed to be in so much danger, that Douglas asked leave of the King to go and assist him. The King refused him permission. "Let Randolph," he said, "redeem his own fault; I cannot break the order of battle for his sake." Still the danger appeared greater,

[2] *Sir James the founder of the great house of Douglas.*

and the English horse seemed entirely to encompass the small handful of Scottish infantry. "So please you," said Douglas to the King, "my heart will not suffer me to stand idle and see Randolph perish—I must go to his assistance." He rode off accordingly; but long before they had reached the place of combat, they saw the English horses galloping off, many with empty saddles.

"Halt!" said Douglas to his men, "Randolph has gained the day; since we were not soon enough to help him in the battle, do not let us lessen his glory by approaching the field." Now, that was nobly done; especially as Douglas and Randolph were always contending which should rise highest in the good opinion of the King and the nation.

The van of the English army now came in sight, and a number of their bravest knights drew near to see what the Scots were doing. They saw King Robert dressed in his armour, and distinguished by a gold crown, which he wore over his helmet. He was not mounted on his great war-horse, because he did not expect to fight that evening. But he rode on a little pony up and down the ranks of his army, putting his men in order, and carried in his hand a sort of battle-axe made of steel. When the King saw the English horsemen draw near, he advanced a little before his own men, that he might look at them more nearly. There was a knight among the English, called Sir Henry de Bohun, who thought this would be a good opportunity to gain great fame to himself, and put an end to the war, by killing King Robert. The King being poorly mounted, and having no lance, Bohun galloped on him suddenly and furiously, thinking, with his long spear, and his tall powerful horse, easily to bear him down to the ground. King Robert saw him, and permitted him to come very near, then suddenly turned his pony a little to one side, so that

Sir Henry missed him with the lance-point, and was in the act of being carried past him by the career of his horse. But as he passed, King Robert rose up in his stirrups, and struck Sir Henry on the head with his battle-axe so terrible a blow, that it broke to pieces his iron helmet as if it had been a nut-shell, and hurled him from his saddle. He was dead before he reached the ground. This gallant action was blamed by the Scottish leaders, who thought Bruce ought not to have exposed himself to so much danger when the safety of the whole army depended on him. The King only kept looking at his weapon, which was injured by the force of the blow, and said, "I have broken my good battle-axe."

The next morning, being the 24th June, at break of day, the battle began in terrible earnest. The English as they advanced saw the Scots getting into line. The Abbot of Inchaffray walked through their ranks barefooted, and exhorted them to fight for their freedom. They kneeled down as he passed, and prayed to Heaven for victory. King Edward, who saw this, called out, "They kneel down —they are asking forgiveness." "Yes," said a celebrated English baron, called Ingelram de Umphraville, "but they ask it from God, not from us—these men will conquer, or die upon the field."

The English King ordered his men to begin the battle. The archers then bent their bows, and began to shoot so closely together, that the arrows fell like flakes of snow on a Christmas day. They killed many of the Scots, and might, as at Falkirk, and other places, have decided the victory; but Bruce, as I told you before, was prepared for them. He had in readiness a body of men-at-arms, well mounted, who rode at full gallop among the archers, and as they had no weapon save their bows and arrows, which they could not use when they were attacked hand to hand, they

were cut down in great numbers by the Scottish horsemen, and thown into total confusion.

The fine English cavalry then advanced to support their archers, and to attack the Scottish line. But coming over the ground which was dug full of pits, the horses fell into these holes, and the riders lay tumbling about, without any means of defence, and unable to rise from the weight of their armour. The Englishmen began to fall into general disorder; and the Scottish King, bringing up more of his forces, attacked and pressed them still more closely.

On a sudden, while the battle was obstinately maintained on both sides, an event happened which decided the victory. The servants and attendants on the Scottish camp had, as I told you, been sent behind the army to a place afterwards called the Gillies' hill. But when they saw that their masters were likely to gain the day, they rushed from their place of concealment with such weapons as they could get, that they might have their share in the victory and in the spoil. The English, seeing them come suddenly over the hill, mistook this disorderly rabble for a new army coming up to sustain the Scots, and, losing all heart, began to shift every man for himself. Edward himself left the field as fast as he could ride. A valiant knight, Sir Giles de Argentine, much renowned in the wars of Palestine, attended the King till he got him out of the press of the combat. But he would retreat no farther. "It is not my custom," he said, "to fly." With that he took leave of the King, set spurs to his horse, and calling out his war-cry of Argentine! Argentine! he rushed into the thickest of the Scottish ranks, and was killed.

XXVII.

CHAUCER.

BROOKE.

[Bannockburn settled the question of Scotch independence, though the war lingered on into the reign of Edward the Second's successor, his son, Edward the Third. The reign of this King is one of the most memorable in our history. In spite of the troubles of Edward the Second's time, the great measures of Edward the First now did their work: and England, secure in the possession of a firm government, of unhindered justice, and of a national Parliament, sprang suddenly forward into one of the leading powers of the world. It won its first great victories, and it produced its first great singer. Geoffrey Chaucer is the noblest and most beautiful embodiment of his time. He was the son of a London vintner, born in 1340, who in youth became a page to the wife of one of the King's sons, and made a short campaign in France, when Edward was at the height of his glory. Chaucer's warlike career was luckless; he was taken prisoner, ransomed, and returned to court to write verses after the fashion of the French poetry of the time, and, as some suppose, to love as lucklessly as he had fought. When he had reached thirty however his powers began to show themselves more nobly. In the twelve years from 1372 to 1384 he went for the King on some diplomatic missions; and three of these were to Italy. This was the turning-point of his career; contact with Italian poetry spurred Chaucer into himself becoming a great poet.]

At that time the great Italian literature, which inspired then, and still inspires, European literature, had reached full growth, and it opened to Chaucer a new world of art. If he read the *Vita Nuova* and the *Divina Commedia*

of Dante,[1] he knew for the first time the power and range of poetry. He read the Sonnets of Petrarca, and he learnt what is meant by "form" in poetry. He read the tales of Boccaccio, who made Italian prose,[2] and in them he first saw how to tell a story exquisitely. Petrarca and Boccaccio he may even have met, but he never saw Dante, who had died years before at Ravenna in 1321. When he came back from these journeys he was a new man. He threw aside the romantic poetry of France, and laughed at it in his gay and kindly manner in the *Rime of Sir Thopas*, which was afterwards made one of the *Canterbury Tales*. His chief work of this time bears witness to the influence of Italy. It was *Troylus and Creseide*, which is a translation, with many changes and additions, of the *Filostrato* of Boccaccio. The additions (and he nearly doubled the poem) are stamped with his own peculiar tenderness, vividness, and simplicity. His changes from the original are all towards the side of purity, good taste, and piety.

We meet the further influence of Boccaccio in the birth of some of the *Canterbury Tales*, and of Petrarca in the tales themselves. To this time is now referred the tale of the Second Nun, that of the Doctor, the Man of Law, the Clerk, the Prioress, the Squire, the Franklin, Sir Thopas, and the first draft of the Knight's Tale, borrowed with much freedom from the *Tesaide* of Boccaccio. The other poems of this period were the *Parlament of Foules*,[3] the *Compleynt of Mars*, *Anelida*, and *Arcite*,

[1] *Dante was the first great Italian poet. His "Vita Nuova" is a prose account of his early life and love, with canzonets scattered throughout it. His "Divina Commedia" is a poem which tells of his journeying through Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven.* [2] *Boccaccio's collection of tales was called the "Decameron."* [3] *Of birds. They gather and chat "in parliament."*

Boece, and *The Former Age*, the *Lines to Adam Scrivener*, and the *Hous of Fame*. In the passion with which Chaucer describes the ruined love of Troilus and Anelida, some have traced the lingering sorrow of his early love affair. But if this be true, it was now passing away, for in the creation of Pandarus in the *Troilus*, and in the delightful fun of the *Parlament of Foules*, a new Chaucer appears, the humorous poet of the *Canterbury Tales*. In the active business life he led during this period he was likely to grow out of mere sentiment, for he was not only employed on service abroad, but also at home. In 1374 he was Comptroller of the Wool Customs,[4] in 1382 of the Petty Customs, and in 1386 Member of Parliament for Kent.

It is in the next period, from 1384 to 1390, that Chaucer left behind Italian influence as he had left French, and became entirely himself, entirely English. The comparative poverty in which he now lived, and the loss of his offices, for in John of Gaunt's[5] absence he lost Court favour, may have given him more time for study, and the retired life of a poet. At least in the *Legende of Good Women*, the prologue to which was written in 1385, we find him a closer student than ever of books and of nature. His appointment as Clerk of the Works in 1389 brought him again into contact with men. He superintended the repairs and building at the Palace of Westminster, the Tower, and St George's Chapel, Windsor, till July, 1391, when he was superseded, and lived on pensions allotted to him by Richard and by Henry IV, after he had sent that King in 1399 his *Complcint to his Purse*. Before

[4] *The "customs" or export duties on wool were then the most important sources of the King's revenue.* [5] *John of Gaunt, the Duke of Lancaster, had been Chaucer's patron in early life. He now lost power, and left England to seek for a crown in Spain, which he never gained.*

1390, however, he had added to his great work its best tales, those of the Miller, the Reeve, the Cook, the Wife of Bath, the Merchant, the Friar the Nun, Priest, Pardoner, and perhaps the Sompnour. The Prologue was probably written in 1388. In these, in their humour, in their vividness of portraiture, in their ease of narration, and in the variety of their characters, Chaucer shines supreme. A few smaller poems belong to his best time, such as *Truth* and the *Moder of God.* During the last ten years of his life, which may be called the period of his decay, he wrote some small poems, and along with the *Compleynte of Venus*, and a prose treatise on the Astrolabe, four more tales, the Canon's-yeoman's, Manciple's, Monk's and Parsone's. The last was written the year of his death, 1400. Having done this work, he died in a house under the shadow of the Abbey of Westminster. Within the walls of the Abbey Church, the first of the poets who lies there, that "sacred and happy spirit" sleeps.

Born of the tradesman class, Chaucer was in every sense of the word one of our finest gentlemen; tender, graceful in thought, glad of heart, humorous, and satirical without unkindness; sensitive to every change of feeling in himself and others, and therefore full of sympathy; brave in misfortune, even to mirth, and doing well and with careful honesty all he undertook. His first and great delight was in human nature, and he makes us love the noble characters in his poems and feel with kindliness towards the baser and ruder sort. He never sneers, for he had a wide charity, and we can always smile in his pages at the follies and forgive the sins of men. He had a true and chivalrous regard for women, and his wife and he must have been very happy if they fulfilled the ideal he had of marriage. He lived in aristocratic society, and yet he thought him the greatest gentleman who was "most

vertuous alway, privé, and pert (open), and most entendeth aye to do the gentil dedes that he can." He lived frankly among men, and as we have seen, saw many different types of men, and in his own time filled many parts as a man of the world and of business. Yet, with all this active and observant life, he was commonly very quiet and kept much to himself. The Host in the Tales japes at him for his lonely, abstracted air. "Thou lookest as thou wouldest find a hare, And ever on the ground I see thee stare."

Being a good scholar, he read morning and night alone, and he says that after his (office) work he would go home and sit at another book as dumb as a stone, till his look was dazed. While at study, and when he was making of songs and ditties, "nothing else that God had made" had any interest for him. There was but one thing that roused him then, and that too he liked to enjoy alone. It was the beauty of the morning and the fields, the woods, and streams, and flowers, and the singing of the little birds. This made his heart full of revel and solace, and when spring came after winter, he rose with the lark and cried, "Farewell my book and my devotion." He was the first who made the love of nature a distinct element in our poetry. He was the first who, in spending the whole day gazing alone on the daisy, set going that lonely delight in natural scenery which is so special a mark of our later poets. He lived thus a double life, in and out of the world, but never a gloomy one. For he was fond of mirth and good living, and when he grew towards age was portly of waist, "no poppet to embrace." But he kept to the end his elvish countenance,[6] the shy, delicate, half-mischievous face which looked on men from its grey hair and forked beard, and was set off by his dark-coloured dress and hood.

[6] *Elves were small fairy-folk.*

A knife and inkhorn hung on his dress, we see a rosary in his hand, and when he was alone he walked swiftly.

Of his work it is not easy to speak briefly, because of its great variety. Enough has been said of it, with the exception of his most complete creation, the *Canterbury Tales*. It will be seen from the dates given above that they were not written at one time. They are not, and cannot be looked on as a whole. Many were written independently, and then fitted into the framework of the Prologue in 1388. At that time a number more were written, and the rest added at intervals till his death. In fact, the whole thing was done much in the same way as Mr. Tennyson has written his *Idylls of the King*. The manner in which he knitted them together was very simple and likely to please English people. The holiday excursions of the time were the pilgrimages, and the most famous and the pleasantest pilgrimage to go, especially for Londoners, was the three or four days' journey to see the shrine of St. Thomas[7] at Canterbury. Persons of all ranks in life met and travelled together, starting from a London inn. Chaucer seized on this as the frame in which to set his pictures of life. He grouped around the jovial host of the Tabard Inn men and women of every class of society in England, set them on horseback to ride to Canterbury, and made each of them tell a tale.

No one could hit off a character better, and in his Prologue, and in the prologues to the several Tales, the whole of the new, vigorous English society which had grown up since Edward I. is painted with astonishing vividness. "I see all the pilgrims in the Canterbury Tales," says Dryden, "their humours, their features, and their very dress, as distinctly as if I had supped with

[7] *Thomas Becket, who after his death became the most popular of English saints.*

them at the Tabard in Southwark." The Tales themselves take in the whole range of the poetry of the middle ages; the legend of the saint, the romance of the knight, the wonderful fables of the traveller, the coarse tale of common life, the love story, the allegory, the satirical lay, and the apologue. And they are pure tales. He has been said to have had dramatic power, but he has none. He is simply our greatest story-teller in verse. All the best tales are told easily, sincerely, with great grace, and yet with so much homeliness, that a child would understand them. Sometimes his humour is broad, sometimes sly, sometimes gay, sometimes he brings tears into our eyes, and he can make us smile or be sad as he pleases.

He had a very fine ear for the music of verse, and the tale and the verse go together like voice and music. Indeed, so softly flowing and bright are they, that to read them is like listening in a meadow full of sunshine to a clear stream rippling over its bed of pebbles. The English in which they are written is almost the English of our time; and it is literary English. Chaucer made our tongue into a true means of poetry. He did more, he welded together the French and English elements in our language and made them into one English tool for the use of literature, and all our prose writers and poets derive their tongue from the language of the *Canterbury Tales*. They give him honour for this, but still more for that he was the first English artist. Poetry is an art, and the artist in poetry is one who writes for pure pleasure and for nothing else the thing he writes, and who desires to give to others the same fine pleasure by his poems which he had in writing them. The thing he most cares about is that the form in which he puts his thoughts or feelings may be perfectly fitting to the subject, and as beautiful as possible—but for this he cares very greatly; and in this Chaucer stands apart from the other poets

of his time. Gower wrote with a moral object, and nothing can be duller than the form in which he puts his tales. The author of *Piers the Ploughman* wrote with the object of reform in social and ecclesiastical affairs, and his form is uncouth and harsh. Chaucer wrote because he was full of emotion and joy in his own thoughts, and thought that others would weep and be glad with him, and the only time he ever moralizes is in the Tales of the Yeoman and the Manciple, written in his decay. He has, then, the best right to the poet's name. He is our first English artist.

XXVIII.

CRESSY.

MISS YONGE.

[While Chaucer was singing, England was winning a warlike fame such as it had never known. The war with Scotland had brought with it a quarrel with the French kings, who saw in the struggle of England with the Scotch an opportunity for getting hold of Aquitaine, the only English possession left in France. To meet this Edward the Third laid claim to the crown of France itself, in right of his mother, who was the daughter of a French king. So began a war which was to last more than a hundred years. At first Edward had small success; as he trusted in foreign soldiers and foreign princes whom he hired with money; but at last he threw himself on England alone, landed with an English army in Normandy, and marched upon Paris. He was forced however to fall back, and was pursued by the King of France, Philippe of Valois, as far as the Somme, where he was all but cut off. Luckily he found a ford, and was able to get across into the province of Ponthieu, where he encamped at the village of Creci or Cressy.]

EDWARD had encamped at the village of Creci, when, on Friday afternoon, the 25th of August, 1346, he learnt that the French army had crossed by the bridge of Abbeville. "Let us post ourselves here," he said. "We will go no further till we have seen our enemies. I have good reason to wait for them here, for I am on the lawful inheritance of my lady mother."[1] Then giving his men orders to be in readiness for battle on the morrow, he gave a supper in his tent to the earls and knights, where they made good cheer; but he dismissed them early, and repairing to his oratory, knelt before the altar, entreating that if he should give battle the next day he might come off with honour. At midnight he went to rest, but, rising early, he and his son[2] heard mass and communicated, as did most of the troops. Brave as they were, it was an anxious moment, for their numbers were but an eighth of those of the French; and be it remembered that this was only the first of the long series of battles which afterwards established the Englishman's almost overweening confidence of victory.

Whether it was because Edward wished that his son should have the full honour of his first battle, or that he desired to obviate the mischief to England of his death while his children were young, or that he feared Philippe would again balk him of his conflict should the two monarchs both command in person, he placed the first division under the command of the Prince of Wales, assisted by the Earl of Warwick and Sir Godfrey de Harcourt. It consisted of 800 men-at-arms, 2,000 archers, and 1,000 Welshmen; with them were certain new machines,[3] never yet used in battle, though

[1] *Ponthieu had been given at her marriage to his mother, Isabella of France.* [2] *Prince Edward, called the Black Prince, from the colour of his armour.* [3] *Cressy was the first battle where guns and gunpowder were used. They had been used before in sieges.*

in sieges proof had sometimes been made of Friar Bacon's invention.[4] The next division, under the Earl of Northampton, amounted to 800 men-at-arms[5] and 1,200 archers; and the reserve, which the King kept highest up on the hill in the rear, was of the same number. Edward then mounted a small palfrey, and with a white wand in his hand, rode along the ranks, accompanied by his two marshals, the Earl of Warwick and Sir Godfrey de Harcourt, going at a foot's pace, encouraging and entreating his troops so sweetly, and with so cheerful a countenance, that all took heart. By this time it was ten o'clock, and he returned to his own division, bidding his men dine heartily, and drink a glass after, in which matter they willingly obeyed him. They then packed up their cooking apparatus, returned to their places, and all sat down in their order, sheltering themselves as best they might from the showers, with their helmets and bows laid beside them, that they might be in full force and vigour when the enemy should appear.

No such precautions had been taken by Philippe de Valois.[6] He put his trust in the imposing array of names and huge numbers that he had collected. He had with him the King of Bohemia,[7] who, blind as he was, could not endure to miss a battle; his son, Charles of Luxemburg; Jayme, King of Majorca, of the House of Arragon, the Duke of Lorraine; the Count of Flanders; and Sir John of Hainault,[8] Edward's old friend and master in the art of war; 8,000 knights and

[4] *Bacon, a Franciscan friar, first mentions the composition of gunpowder, which he may have invented* [5] *Men-at-arms were knights and their mounted followers, squires, and "lances," as they were called.* [6] *The French king.* [7] *John of Luxemburg, who with his son Charles, a claimant of the Empire, were on the French border at the time of Edward's advance on Paris, and came to its relief.* [8] *Edward had married Philippa, daughter of the Count of Hainault. Her uncle, John, had helped Edward in his wars with the Scots.*

60,000 infantry, a sixth part of whom were Genoese[9] cross-bowmen, reputed the best sailors and the best archers. Early in the morning he heard mass at Abbeville, and set forth at sunrise, under a heavy fall of rain; all the nobles setting out, each man on his own account, without any concerted plan, except that some one advised him to halt the cavalry and let the foot go forward, lest they should be trampled down by the horses. Four nobles then galloped forward to reconnoitre, and returning, with difficulty pushed through the crowds, and told the King how fresh and vigorous the English looked, strongly advising him to wait where he was for the night, and get his troops into better array, instead of attacking while they were wearied and disorganized by their disorderly march.

Philippe had sense enough to consent, and his marshals rode about, shouting, "Halt, banners, in the name of St. Denis!"[10] but no one had any notion of attending. The fiery gentlemen thought their honour concerned in going as near the foe as possible; so the hindmost declared they would not stop till they were even with the front; the front pushed on to be before them, till they came in sight of the dark-green ranks of yeomen, sitting in good order upon the hill of Creci; whereupon they all came to a sudden stand, and fell back, so that those in the rear thought the fight had begun, and pressed forward or hung back, according to the condition of their nerves; while the common people, who choked up the roads, valiantly drew their swords and shouted, "Kill, kill!" and the nobles left behind struggled to force their way through them; so that no one who had not been present could conceive the bad management and disorder of that day.

[9] *From the Riviera, or shore of the Gulf of Genoa, all which Genoa ruled. France had hired them to match the English archers.* [10] *The patron saint of France.*

The King was pushed forward unwillingly, until, at about four o'clock in the afternoon, he came in sight of the English, when his blood was stirred, for he bitterly hated them, and he called out to his marshals, "Send forward the Genoese, and begin the battle!" The unfortunate Genoese had marched eighteen miles in heavy rain, under their armour, and carrying their crossbows; and they told the Constable d'Eu that their strings were limp, and they were in no state to do good service. Out broke the Count d' Alençon in a passion, "This comes of cumbering ourselves with a ribald crew, who always fail in time of need!" And the two Genoese admirals, Doria and Grimaldi, men as noble and as proud as himself, and far more skilful, were forced to do their best to confute the taunt by arraying their men as well as they could, while an August thunderstorm was raging overhead, the blackness increased by a solar eclipse, and the crows and ravens, whose strange instinct scented the battle, screaming and flapping about in the torrents of rain and hail.

The English yeomen meanwhile quietly rose up, each man in his place, so that as they stood their battalions took the form of a harrow, in squares like a chessboard. Each donned his steel cap, and drew his bowstring from the case where it had been kept dry; and at that moment the cloud began to roll off, leaving a clear sky towards the west, so that the sun broke cheerfully out with strong, clear beams, which fell on the backs of the English, but dazzled and blinded the eyes of their adversaries.

The Genoese were by this time in order, and "leapt forward with a fell cry," hoping to frighten their enemies, as no doubt they had often done to unwarlike Italian citizens; but finding the English stood still and paid no attention they hooted again and came forward; then, with a third cry, discharged such of their crossbows as were not too

damp to use. Then, thick as snow, came the arrows from the longbows, piercing heads and arms, and through cuirasses; and mingled with these came large balls of iron, propelled from the hill above with sounds like the retreating thunder of the storm, doing deadly execution, and terrifying men and horses. The Genoese gave back; but behind them were the brilliant and impatient knights, wild to press forwards; and finding the way encumbered, Philippe shouted the barbarous order, "Kill me those rascals, who block our way without reason!" and the unhappy Italians were actually cut down and trampled upon on all sides by the very men in whose cause they were fighting. But when the French came within the flight of those deadly shafts, they brooked them as little as did the Genoese; their horses capered and curveted, and became unmanageable, and the wild Welshmen,[11] rushing down with their knives, mingled themselves with the disordered French, and killed a great number. The old King of Bohemia, hearing the cries around, desired to know where his son Charles was, and was told that he was not at hand, but was probably fighting elsewhere. "Sirs," cried the old man, "do me this favour —to lead me where I may strike one stroke!" Two of his knights thereupon tied the bridles of their horses to his, and rode on either side of him into the fray; and there all three bravely died together: while Charles, who had by no means such a taste for fighting as his father, rode safely out of the battle; "and I do not know which road he took," scornfully observes Froissart.[12]

There were French enough left to draw into some sort of order, with the Counts of Alençon and Flanders; and they made a formidable charge, the King trying constantly to get to where he saw flying the banners of the English cavalry,

[11] *Edward had brought footmen from Wales in his army.*
[12] *A canon of Liège, who wrote the story of these times.*

but there was always a hedge of archers before him. One large body, however, broke through the archers, and had so fierce a conflict with the 800 knights of the first troop, that the second was forced to come to their assistance, and the Earl of Warwick sent Sir Thomas Norwich to the windmill where King Edward stood that whole day without his helmet, to ask him to bring up the reserve. "Is my son dead, or hurt, or to the earth felled?" asked Edward. "No, Sir; but he is full hardly matched; wherefore he hath need of your aid." "Now, Sir Thomas," replied the King, "return to him, and to them that sent you hither, and say to them that they send no more to me as long as my son is alive, for any adventure that falleth, and also tell them that I command them to suffer the boy to win his spurs, for, if God be pleased, I will that this day be his, and the honour thereof, and to them that be about him."

The danger had indeed been great, for young Edward was at one time unhorsed, and struck to the ground; but one of his loving Welsh knights who carried the great dragon standard threw it over him as he lay, and stood upon it till the enemy were forced back, for, as doubtless the eye of the King had discerned from his station at the top of the hill, this impetuous charge was unsupported The numerous knights and men-at-arms of the French army could not struggle up to their comrades, impeded as they were by the Genoese striking right and left for their lives, and by the Welsh and Cornishmen, whose long knives did deadly execution. Some nobles fell into ditches, and were dragged out by their squires, and pages and squires were wandering about looking for their masters at the bottom of the hill; while on the slope the English chivalry[13] had repulsed the dangerous charge of the two Counts, and were cutting down the best knights of France. Only sixty

[13] *Knights.*

knights remained around King Philippe, and his standard-bearer was killed before his eyes; a hot conflict took place for the possession of the precious Oriflamme,[14] but it was ended by a gallant Frenchman, who leapt from his horse, ripped it from the shaft with his sword, wrapped it round his body, and rode off. Philippe's horse was killed under him by an arrow, and Sir John of Hainault remounted him, saying, "Sir, retreat while you have the opportunity; do not expose yourself so simply: if you have lost this battle you will win another time!" and laying hold of his bridle, he dragged him off the field in the dusk of the summer evening. On they galloped, only four other nobles with them, and the sounds of defeat and slaughter ringing in their ears, till darkness closed in upon them, and they came to the Castle of Broye, where the gates were closed and the drawbridge raised. The governor came out on the battlements, and demanded who called at such an hour. "Open, open, Governor," cried Philippe, "it is the fortune of France."

[14] *The standard of France, kept at the abbey of St. Denis.*

END OF PART I.