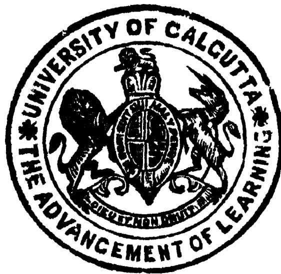
SELECT READINGS

FROM

ENGLISH HISTORY

PART I



Published by the

UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA

1919

Price Nine Annas.

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY
OU_172857
UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY

Select Readings

from

English History

SELECT READINGS

FROM

ENGLISH HISTORY

PART I

Love thou thy land, with love far-brought
From out the storied Past

Tennyson

PUBLISHED BY THE
UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA
1919

All rights reserved

PRINTED BY ATULCHANDRA BHATTACHARYYA
AT THE CALCUTTA UNIVERSITY PRESS, SENATE HOUSE, CALCUTTA

CONTENTS

PAGE.

I. The Landing of Augustine 1
Dean Stanley

II. Caedmon 17
Bede

III. Alfred's Childhood and Education 19
Asser

IV. Alfred the Great ... 22
Charles Dickens

V. England under Canute 26
Charles Dickens

VI. The Feudal System and the Norman Conquest 28
Sir Walter Scott

VII. Death of William the Conqueror ... 36
Charles Dickens

VIII. William II 39
Charles Dickens

IX. Henry II and the Constitutions of Clarendon 42
Southey's Book of the Church

X. John and the Charter 47
Hallam

XI. Amalgamation of Races 50
Macaulay

XII. The Coming of the Friars 56
Southey's Book of the Church

XIII. Edward the Black Prince 58
Dean Stanley

XIV. The Siege of Calais 73
Charles Dickens

THE LANDING OF AUGUSTINE

There are five great landings in English history, each of vast importance—the landing of Julius Cæsar, which first revealed us to the civilized world and the civilized world to us, the landing of Hengist and Horsa, which gave us our English forefathers and our English characters; the landing of Augustine, which gave us our English Christianity, the landing of William the Conqueror, which gave us our Norman aristocracy, the landing of William the Third, which gave us our free Constitution

It is a great advantage to consider the circumstances of this memorable event in our local history *viz.*, the landing of Augustine, because it takes us immediately into the consideration of events which are far removed from us both by space and time—events, too, of universal interest, which lie at the beginning of the history, not only of this country, but of all the countries of Europe—the invasion of the Northern tribes into the Roman Empire, and their conversion to Christianity

We cannot understand who Augustine was, or why he came, without understanding something of the whole state of Europe at that time It was, we must remember, hardly more than a hundred years since the Roman Empire had been destroyed, and every country was just settling itself after the invasion of the wild barbarians, who had burst in upon the civilized world, and trampled down the proud fabric which had so long sheltered the arts of peace and the security of law.

One of these countries was our own The fierce Saxon tribes, by whomsoever led, were to the Romans in Britain what the Goths had been in Italy, what the Vandals had been in Africa, what the Franks had been in France, and under them England had again become a savage nation, cut off from the rest of the world almost as much as it had been before the landing of Julius Cæsar. In this great convulsion it was natural that the civilization and religion of the old world should keep the firmest hold on the country and the city which so long had been its chief seat. That country, as we all know, was Italy, and that city was Rome. And it is to Rome that we must now transport ourselves, if we wish to know how and from whence it was that Augustine came.

In the general crash of all the civil institutions of the Empire, when the last of the Cæsars had been put down, when the Roman armies were no longer able to maintain their hold on the world, it was natural that the Christian clergy of Rome, with the Bishop at their head, should have been invested with a new and unusual importance They retained the only sparks of religious or of civilized life which the wild German tribes had not destroyed, and they accordingly remained still erect amidst the ruins of almost all besides

It is on Gregory the Great that we are to fix our attention. At the time we are first to meet him, he was not yet Pope. He was still a monk in the great monastery of St. Andrew, which he had himself founded, and which still exists, rising immediately behind the vast walls of the Colosseum, which we may still see, and which Gregory must have seen every day that he looked from his convent windows.

He was remarkable amongst his contemporaries for his benevolence and tenderness of heart. Many proofs of it are given in the stories which are told about him The long marble table is still shown at Rome where he used to feed twelve beggars every day. There is a legend that on one occasion a thirteenth appeared among them, an unbidden guest—an angel whom he had thus entertained unawares. There is also a true story, which tells the same lesson—that he was so much grieved on hearing of the death of a poor man, who, in some great scarcity in Rome, had been starved to death, that he inflicted on himself the severest punishment, as if he had been responsible for it. He also showed his active charity in one of those seasons which give opportunity to all faithful pastors, and all good men, for showing what they are really made of—during one of the great pestilences which ravaged Rome immediately before his elevation to the pontificate

Like most remarkable men, he took a deep interest in children. He instructed the choristers of his convent himself in those famous chants which bear his name. The book from which he taught them, the couch on which he reclined during the lesson, even the rod with which he kept the boys in order, were long preserved at Rome; and in memory of this part of his life, a children's festival was held on his day as late as the seventeenth century

I may seem to have detained you a long time in describing these general features of Gregory's character. But they are necessary to illustrate the well-known story which follows, and which was preserved, not, as it would seem, at Rome, but amongst the grateful descendants of those who owed their conversion to the incident recorded.

There was one evil of the time, from which we are now happily free, which especially touched his generous heart—the vast slave-trade which then went on through all parts of Europe. It was not only as it once was in the British empire, from the remote wilds of Africa that children were carried off and sold as slaves, but from every country in Europe The wicked traffic was chiefly carried on by Jews and Samaritans , and it afterwards was one especial object of Gregory's legislation to check so vast an evil. He was, in fact, to that age what Wilberforce and Clarkson have been to ours. And it may be mentioned, as a proof, both of his enlightened goodness and of his interest in this particular cause, that he even allowed and urged the sale of sacred vessels, and of the property of the Church, for the purpose of redeeming captives.

With this feeling in his mind he one day went with the usual crowd that thronged to the market-place at Rome, when they heard, as they did on this occasion, that new cargoes of merchandise had been imported from foreign parts It was possibly in that very market-place, where the statue of his favourite Trajan was looking down upon him from the summit of his lofty pillar. To and fro before him, amongst the bales of merchandise passed the gangs of slaves, torn from their several homes, to be sold amongst the great families of the nobles and gentry of Italy —a sight such as may still be seen (happily nowhere else) in the remote East, or in the southern states of North America.

These gangs were doubtless from various parts . there were the swarthy hues of Africa; there were the dark-haired and dark-eyed inhabitants of Greece and Sicily ;

amongst these one group arrested the attention of Gregory beyond all others. It was a group of three boys, distinguished from the rest by their fair complexion and white flesh, the beautiful expression of their countenances, and their light flaxen hair, which, by the side of the dark captives of the south, seemed to him almost of dazzling brightness, and which, by its long curls, showed that they were of noble origin.

Nothing gives us a stronger notion of the total separation of the northern and southern races of Europe at that time than the emotion which these peculiarities—to us so familiar—excited. He stood and looked at them, his fondness for children of itself would have led him to pity them, that they should be sold for slaves; struck on another tender chord in his heart: and he asked from what part of the world they had been brought The slave merchant, probably a Jew, answered, "From Britain, and there all the inhabitants have this bright complexion."

It would almost seem as if this was the first time that Gregory had ever heard of Britain. It was, indeed, to Rome nearly what New Zealand is now to England, and one can imagine that fifty years ago, even here, there may have been many, even of the educated classes, who had a very dim conception of where New Zealand was, or what were its inhabitants. The first question which he asked about this strange country was what we might have expected. The same deep feeling of compassion that he had already shown for the fate of the good Trajan, now made him anxious to know whether these beautiful children—so innocent, so interesting—were Pagans or

Christians. "They are Pagans," was the reply The good Gregory heaved a deep sigh from the bottom of his heart, and broke out into a loud lamentation expressed with a mixture of playfulness, which partly was in accordance with the custom of the time, partly, perhaps, was suggested by the thought that it was children of whom he was speaking. "Alas! more is the pity, that faces so full of light and brightness should be in the hands of the Prince of Darkness, that such grace of outward appearance should accompany minds without the grace of God within!"

He then went on to ask what was the name of their nation, and was told that they were called "Angles" or "English." It is not without a thrill of interest that we hear the proud name which now is heard with respect and awe from the rising to the setting sun, thus uttered for the first time in the metropolis of the world—thus awaking for the first time a response in a Christian heart "Well said," replied Gregory, still following out his play on the words—"rightly are they called Angles, for they have the face of angels, and they ought to be fellow-heirs of angels in heaven"

Once again he asked, "And who is the king of that province?" "Ella," was the reply Every one who has ever heard of Gregory has heard of his Gregorian chants, and of his interest in sacred music. The name of Ella reminded him of the Hebrew words of praise which he had introduced into the Roman service, and he answered, "Allelujah! the praise of God their Creator shall be sung in those parts."

So ended this dialogue—doubly interesting because its very strangeness shows us the character of the man and

the character of his age. This mixture of the playful and the serious—this curious distortion of words from their original meaning—was to him and his times the natural mode of expressing their own feeling and of instructing others. But it was no passing emotion which the sight of the three Yorkshire boys had awakened in the mind of Gregory. He went from the market-place to the Pope, and obtained from him at once permission to go and fulfil the design of his heart, and convert the English nation to the Christian faith.

He was so much beloved in Rome that great opposition (it was felt) would be made to his going, and therefore he started from his convent with a small band of his companions in the strictest secrecy But it was one of the many cases that we see in human life, where even the best men are prevented from accomplishing the objects they have most at heart He had advanced three days along the great northern road, which leads through the Flaminian gate from Rome to the Alps, when they halted as usual to rest at noon They were lying down in a meadow, and Gregory was reading, suddenly a locust leapt upon his book, and sat motionless on the page. In the same spirit that had dictated his playful speeches to the three children he began to draw morals from the name and act of the locust. "Rightly is it called *Locusta*," he said, "because it seems to say to us, '*Loco Sta*',—that is, 'Stay in your place.' I see that we shall not be able to finish our journey. But rise, load the mules, and let us get on as far as we can."

It was whilst they were in the act of discussing this incident that there galloped to the spot messengers, on

jaded horses bathed in sweat, who had ridden after him at full speed from the Pope, to command his instant return. A furious mob had attacked the Pope in St. Peter's Church, and demanded the instant recall of Gregory. To Rome he returned; and it is this interruption, humanly speaking, which prevented us from having Gregory the Great for the first Archbishop of Canterbury and founder of the English Church.

Years rolled away from the time of the conversation in the market-place before Gregory could do anything for the fulfilment of his wish. But he never forgot it and when he was at last elected Pope he employed an agent in France to buy English Christian youths of seventeen or eighteen years of age, sold as slaves, to be brought up in monasteries But before this plan had led to any result he received intelligence which determined him to adopt a more direct course What this intelligence was we shall see as we proceed. Whatever it might be, he turned once more to his old convent on the Cælian Hill, and from its walls sent forth the Prior, Augustine, with forty monks, as missionaries to England. In one of the chapels of that convent there is still a picture of their departure.

I will not detain you with his journey through France; it is chiefly curious as showing how very remote England seemed to be. He and his companions were so terrified by the rumours they heard that they sent him back to Rome to beg that they might be excused. Gregory would hear of no retreat from dangers which he had himself been prepared to face. At last they came on, and landed at Ebbe's Fleet, in the Isle of Thanet.

Let us look for a moment on the scene of this important event as it now is and as it was then You all remember the high ground where the white chalk cliffs of Ramsgate suddenly end in Pegwell Bay. Look from that high ground over the level flat which lies between these cliffs and the point where they begin again in St Margaret's cliffs, beyond Walmer Even as it is, you see why it must always have invited a landing from the continent of Europe. The wide opening between the two steep cliffs must always have afforded the easiest approach to any invaders or any settlers. But it was still more so at the time of which we are now speaking

Here it was that, according to the story preserved in the Saxon Chronicle, Hengist and Horsa had sailed in with their three ships and the band of warriors who conquered Vortigern And here now Augustine came with his monks, his choristers, and the interpreters they had brought with them from France

The rock was long preserved on which he set foot, and which was supposed to have received the impression of his footmark In later times it became an object of pilgrimage, and a little chapel was built over it There they landed "in the ends," "in the corner of the world," as it was then thought, and waited secure in their island retreat till they heard how the announcement of their arrival was received by Ethelbert, King of Kent

To Ethelbert we must now turn He was, it was believed, great-grandson of Eric, son of Hengist, surnamed "the Ash," and father of the dynasty of the "Ashings," or "sons of the Ashtree," the name by which the kings of Kent were known. He had, besides, acquired

a kind of imperial authority over the other Saxon kings as far as the Humber. To consolidate his power, he had married Bertha, a French princess, daughter of the King of Paris It was on this marriage that all the subsequent fate of England turned.

Ethelbert was, like all the Saxons, a heathen , but Bertha, like all the rest of the French royal family from Clovis downwards, was a Christian She had her Christian chaplain with her, Luidhard, a French bishop ; and a little chapel outside the town, which had once been used as a place of British Christian worship, was given up to her use.

To her it would be no new thought that possibly she might be the means of converting her husband Her own great ancestor, Clovis, had become a Christian through the influence of his wife Clotilda, and many other instances had occurred in like manner elsewhere. It is no new story, it is the same that has often been enacted in humbler spheres—of a careless or unbelieving husband converted by a believing wife. But it is a striking sight to see planted in the very beginning of our history, with the most important consequences to the whole world, the same fact which every one must have especially witnessed in the domestic history of families, high and low, throughout the land.

It is probable that Ethelbert had heard enough from Bertha to dispose him favourably towards the new religion ; and Gregory's letters show that it was the tidings of this predisposition which had induced him to send Augustine. But Ethelbert's conduct on hearing that the strangers were actually arrived was still hesitating. He

would not suffer them to come to Canterbury, they were to remain in the Isle of Thanet, with the Stour flowing between himself and them; and he also stipulated that on no account should they hold their first interview under a roof—it must be in the open air, for fear of the charms and spells which he feared they might exercise over him. It is exactly the savage's notion of religion, that it exercises influence, not by moral and spiritual, but by magical means This was the first feeling, this it was that caused the meeting to be held, not at Canterbury, but in the Isle of Thanet, in the wide, open space—then dotted with woods which have long since vanished

The meeting must have been remarkable. The Saxon king, "The Son of the Ash-tree," with his wild soldiers round, seated on the bare ground on one side, on the other side, with a huge silver cross borne before him (crucifixes were not yet introduced), and beside it a large picture of Christ painted and gilded, after the fashion of those times, on an upright board, came up from the shore Augustine and his companions, chanting, as they advanced, a solemn Litany for themselves and for those to whom they came He, as we are told, was a man of almost gigantic stature, head and shoulders taller than any one else, with him were Lawrence, who afterwards succeeded him as Archbishop of Canterbury, and Peter, who became the first Abbot of St. Augustine's. They and their companions, amounting altogether to forty, sat down at the king's command, and the interview began

Neither, we must remember, could understand the other's language. Augustine could not understand a word of Anglo-Saxon; and Ethelbert, we may be tolerably sure,

could not speak a word of Latin. But the priests whom Augustine had brought from France, as knowing both German and Latin, now stepped forward as interpreters; and thus the dialogue which followed was carried on, much as all communications are carried on in the East—Augustine first delivering his message, which the dragoman, as they would say in the East, explained to the king.

The king heard it all attentively, and then gave this most characteristic answer, bearing upon it a stamp of truth which it is impossible to doubt "Your words are fair, and your promises, but because they are new and doubtful, I cannot give my assent to them, and leave the customs which I have so long observed, with the whole Anglo-Saxon race But because you have come hither as strangers from a long distance, and as I seem to myself to have seen clearly, that what you yourselves believed to be true and good, you wish to impart to us, we do not wish to molest you; nay, rather we are anxious to receive you hospitably, and to give you all that is needed for your support, nor do we hinder you from joining all whom you can to the faith of your religion."

Such an answer, simple as it was, really seems to contain the seeds of all that is excellent in the English character—exactly what a king should have said on such an occasion—exactly what, under the influence of Christianity, has grown up into all our best institutions. There is the natural dislike to change, which Englishmen still retain; there is the willingness at the same time to listen favourably to anything which comes recommended by the energy and self-devotion of those who urge it;

there is, lastly, the spirit of moderation and toleration, and the desire to see fair play, which is one of our best gifts, and which, I hope, we shall never lose. We may, indeed, well be thankful not only that we had an Augustine to convert us, but that we had an Ethelbert for our king.

Ethelbert was not satisfied with establishing places of worship outside the city Augustine was now formally consecrated as the first Archbishop of Canterbury, and Ethelbert determined to give him a dwelling-place and a house of prayer within the city also Buildings of this kind were rare in Canterbury, and so the king retired to Reculver, built there a new palace out of the ruins of the old Roman fortress, and gave up his own palace and an old British or Roman church in its neighbourhood, to be the seat of the new archbishop and the foundation of the new cathedral

It was believed that Augustine expired on May 26, 605, his patron and benefactor, Gregory the Great, having died on the 12th of March of the previous year, and he was interred, by the roadside, in the ground now occupied by the Kent and Canterbury Hospital The abbey which he had founded was not yet finished, but he had just lived to see its foundation. Ethelbert came from Reculver to Canterbury, a few months before Augustine's death, to witness the ceremony, and the monks were settled there under Peter, the first companion of Augustine, as their head Peter did not long survive his master. He was lost, it is said, in a storm off the coast of France, two years afterwards

Bertha and her chaplain also died about the same time, and were buried beside Augustine. There now remained

of those who had first met in the Isle of Thanet ten years before only Ethelbert himself and Lawrence, who had been consecrated Archbishop by Augustine himself before his death—an unusual and almost unprecedented step, but one which it was thought the unsettled state of the newly converted country demanded Once more Ethelbert and Lawrence met, in the year 613, eight years after Augustine's death, for the consecration of the abbey church, on the site of which there rose in after times the noble structure whose ruins still remain, preserving in the fragments of its huge western tower, even to our own time, the name of Ethelbert

Three years longer Ethelbert reigned He lived, as has been already said, no longer at Canterbury, but in the new palace which he had built for himself within the strong Roman fortress of Reculver, at the north-western end of the estuary of the Isle of Thanet, though in a different manner.

These are all the direct traces which Augustine and Ethelbert have left amongst us. Viewed in this light they will become so many finger-posts, pointing your thoughts, along various roads, to times and countries far away—always useful and pleasant in this busy world in which we live. But in that busy world itself they have left traces also The mission of Augustine is one of the most striking instances in all history of the vast results which may flow from a very small beginning—of the immense effects produced by a single thought in the heart of a single man, carried out consistently, deliberately, and fearlessly. Nothing in itself could seem more trivial than the meeting of Gregory with the three Yorkshire slaves in the market-place

at Rome, yet this roused a feeling in his mind which he never lost, and through all the obstacles which were thrown first in his own way and then in the way of Augustine, his highest desire concerning it was more than realized And this was even the more remarkable when we remember who and what his instruments were You may have observed that I have said little of Augustine himself, and that for two reasons first, because so little is known of him ; secondly, because I must confess that what little is told of him leaves an unfavourable impression behind. We cannot doubt that he was an active, self-denying man—his coming here through so many dangers of sea and land proves it—and it would be ungrateful and ungenerous not to acknowledge how much we owe to him , but still almost every personal trait which is recorded of him shows us that he was not a man of any great elevation of character—that he was often thinking of himself or of his order when we should have wished him to be thinking of the great cause he had in hand. We see this in his drawing back from his journey in France ; we see it in the additional power which he claimed from Gregory over his own companions ; we see it in the warnings sent to him by Gregory, that he was not to be puffed up by the wonders he had wrought in Britain ; we see it in the haughty severity with which he treated the remnant of British Christians in Wales, not rising when they approached, and uttering that malediction against them which sanctioned, if it did not instigate, their massacre by the Saxons ; we see it in the legends which grew up after his death.

I mention all this, not to disparage our great benefactor and first archbishop, but partly because we ought to have

our eyes open to the truth even about our best friends; partly to show what I have said before, from what small beginnings and through what weak instruments Gregory accomplished his mighty work. It would have been a mighty work even if it had been no more than Gregory and Augustine themselves imagined

Let any one sit on the hill of the little church of St Martin and look on the view which is there spread before his eyes. Immediately below are the towers of the great abbey of St. Augustine, where Christian learning and civilization first struck root in Britain, and within which now, after a lapse of many centuries, a new institution has arisen, intended to carry far and wide to countries of which Gregory and Augustine never heard the blessings which they gave to us. Carry your view on, and there rises high above all the magnificent pile of our cathedral, equal in splendour and state to any the noblest temple or church that Augustine could have seen in ancient Rome, rising on the very ground which derives its consecration from him. And still more than the grandeur of the outward buildings that rose from the little church of Augustine and the little palace of Ethelbert have been the institutions of all kinds, of which these were the earliest cradle.

II

CAEDMON, THE FIRST ENGLISH POET

There was in the Abbess Hilda's monastery [at Whitby] a certain brother who was wont to make pious and religious verses, so that whatever was interpreted to him out of Scripture, he soon after put the same into poetical expressions of much sweetness in English, which was his native language. One evening, instead of joining in the round of mirth after supper-time, he went to the stable where he had to look after the horses, and as he there composed himself to slumber, a person appeared to him in his dream, and saluting him by name said, "Cædmon, sing some song to me" He answered, "I cannot sing, that was the reason why I left the entertainment and retired to this place, because I could not sing". The other replied, "However, you shall sing" "What shall I sing?" he asked. "Sing the beginning of things created," said the other He presently began to sing verses to the praise of God, which he had never heard In the morning he acquainted the steward with the gift he had received, and was conducted to the abbess, by whom he was ordered, in the presence of many learned men, to tell his dream and repeat the verses, that they might all give their judgment what it was, and whence his verse proceeded. They all concluded that heavenly grace had been conferred on him by our Lord. They expounded him a passage in

holy writ, ordering him, if he could, to put the same into verse. Having undertaken it he went away, and returning the next morning, gave it to them, composed in most excellent verse; whereupon the abbess instructed him to quit the secular habit, and take upon him the monastic life.

III

ASSER ON ALFRED'S CHILDHOOD AND EDUCATION

Alfred was loved by his father and mother, and even by all the people, above all his brothers, and was educated altogether at the court of the king. As he advanced through all the years of infancy and youth, his form appeared more comely than that of his brothers; in look, in speech, and in manners he was more graceful than they His noble nature implanted in him from his cradle a love of wisdom above all things, but, with shame be it spoken, by the unworthy neglect of his parents and nurses, he remained illiterate even till he was twelve years old or more, but he listened with serious attention to the Saxon poems which he often heard recited, and easily retained them in his docile memory He was a zealous practiser of hunting in all its branches, and hunted with great assiduity and success; for, skill and good fortune in this art, as in all others, are among the gifts of God, as we also have often witnessed

On a certain day, therefore, his mother[1] was showing him and his brothers a Saxon book of poetry, which she

[1] The story is impossible because, Alfred's mother, Osburh, was dead long before Alfred was twelve years of age, and his brothers, at that time of his life, were already kings and fighting men But some such story is possible, that is to say, the strong desire to possess a beautiful book, adorned with coloured illuminations—then a most rare and costly object—may very well have fired a child's imagination and first inspired him with the love of learning which afterwards so greatly distinguished

held in her hand, and said, 'Whichever of you shall the soonest learn this volume shall have it for his own' Stimulated by these words, or rather by the Divine inspiration, and allured by the beautifully illuminated letter at the beginning of the volume, he spoke before all his brothers, who, though his seniors in age, were not so in grace, and answered, 'Will you really give that book to one of us, that is to say, to him who can first understand and repeat it to you?' At this his mother smiled with satisfaction, and confirmed what she had before said Upon which the boy took the book out of her hand, and went to his master to read it, and in due time brought it to his mother and recited it

After this he learned the daily course, that is, the celebration of the Hours, and afterwards certain psalms, and several prayers, contained in a certain book which he kept day and night in his bosom, as we ourselves have seen, and carried about with him to assist his prayers, amid all the bustle and business of this present life But, sad to say! he could not gratify his most ardent wish to learn the liberal arts, because, as he said, there were no good readers at that time in all the kingdom of the West Saxons.

This he confessed, with many lamentations and sighs, to have been one of his greatest difficulties and impediments

him It is not a common story, it does not belong to any other king, prince, or country, it is not a piece of folk-lore, on the other hand, it is of no importance whatever, except in indicating, by this fanciful legend, the early leaning of Alfred towards learning and letters We may find also in the story a tradition of Osburh's love for learning, and her desire that her children should be educated

Sir Walter Besant

in this life, namely that when he was young and had the capacity for learning, he could not find teachers; but, when he was more advanced in life, he was harassed by so many diseases unknown to all the physicians of this island, as well as by internal and external anxieties of sovereignty, and by continual invasions of the pagans, and had his teachers and writers also so much disturbed, that there was no time for reading. But yet among the impediments of this present life, from infancy up to the present time, and as I believe, even until his death, he continued to feel the same insatiable desire for knowledge

---

IV

ALFRED THE GREAT

HIS CHARACTER AND ACHIEVEMENTS

As great and good in peace, as he was great and good in war, King Alfred never rested from his labours to improve his people He loved to talk with clever men, and with travellers from foreign countries and to write down what they told him, for his people to read He had studied Latin after learning to read English, and now another of his labours was to translate Latin books into the English-Saxon tongue, that his people might be interested, and improved by their contents He made just laws, that they might live more happily and freely; he turned away all partial judges, that no wrong might be done them, he was so careful of their property, and punished robbers so severely, that it was a common thing to say that under the great King Alfred, garlands of golden chains and jewels might have hung across the streets, and no man would have touched one. He founded schools; he patiently heard causes himself in his court of justice; the great desires of his heart were, to do right to all his subjects, and to leave England better, wiser, happier in all ways than he found it. His industry in these efforts was quite astonishing. Every day he divided into certain portions, and in each portion devoted himself to a certain

pursuit. That he might divide his time exactly, he had wax torches or candles made, which were all of the same size, were notched across at regular distances, and were always kept burning. Thus, as the candles burnt down, he divided the day into notches, almost as accurately as we now divide it into hours upon the clock. But, when the candles were first invented, it was found that the wind and draughts of air, blowing into the palace through the doors and windows, and through the chinks in the walls, caused them to gutter and burn unequally. To prevent this, the king had them put into cases formed of wood and white horn. And these were the first lanthorns ever made in England.

All this time, he was afflicted with a terrible unknown disease, which caused him violent and frequent pain that nothing could relieve. He bore it, as he had borne all the troubles of his life, like a brave good man, until he was fifty-three years old, and then, having reigned thirty years, he died He died in the year nine hundred and one, but, long ago as that is, his fame, and the love and gratitude with which his subjects regarded him, are freshly remembered to the present hour.

When England became one kingdom, ruled over by one Saxon king, the Saxons had been settled in the country more than four hundred and fifty years. Great changes had taken place in its customs during that time. The Saxons were still greedy eaters and great drinkers, and their feasts were often of a noisy and drunken kind; but many new comforts and even elegancies had become known, and were fast increasing. Hangings

for the walls of rooms, where, in these modern days, we paste up paper, are known to have been sometimes made of silk, ornamented with birds and flowers in needlework. Tables and chairs were curiously carved in different woods; were sometimes decorated with gold and silver, sometimes even made of those precious metals. Knives and spoons were used at table; golden ornaments were worn—with silk and cloth, and golden tissues and embroideries; dishes were made of gold and silver, brass and bone There were varieties of drinking-horns, bedsteads, musical instruments. A harp was passed round, at the feast, like the drinking-bowl, from guest to guest; and each one usually sang or played when his turn came. The weapons of the Saxons were stoutly made, and among them was a terrible iron hammer that gave deadly blows, and was long remembered. The Saxons themselves were a handsome people. The men were proud of their long fair hair, parted on the forehead, their ample beards, their fresh complexions, and clear eyes The beauty of the Saxon women filled all England with a new delight and grace

I have more to tell of the Saxons yet, but I stop to say this now, because, under the Great Alfred, all the best points of the English-Saxon character were first encouraged, and in him first shown. It has been the greatest character among the nations of the earth. Wherever the descendants of the Saxon race have gone, have sailed, or otherwise made their way, even to the remotest regions of the world, they have been patient, persevering, never to be broken in spirit, never to be turned aside from enterprises on which they have

resolved In Europe, Asia. Africa, America, the whole world over, in the desert, in the forest, on the sea, scorched by a burning sun, or frozen by ice that never melts, the Saxon blood remains unchanged Wheresoever that race goes, there law and industry, and safety for life and property, and all the great results of steady perseverance, are certain to arise

I pause to think, with admiration of the noble king who, in his single person, possessed all the Saxon virtues, whom misfortune could not subdue, whom prosperity could not spoil, whose perseverance nothing could shake, who was hopeful in defeat, and generous in success, who loved justice, freedom, truth, and knowledge, who, in his care to instruct his people, probably did more to preserve the beautiful old Saxon language, than I can imagine, without whom, the English tongue in which I tell his story might have wanted half its meaning.

V

ENGLAND UNDER CANUTE THE DANE

Canute reigned eighteen years. He was a merciless king at first. After he had clasped the hands of the Saxon chiefs, in token of the sincerity with which he swore to be just and good to them in return for their acknowledging him, he denounced and slew many of them, as well as many relations of the late King.

Successful and triumphant, assisted by the valour of the English in his foreign wars, and with little strife to trouble him at home, Canute had a prosperous reign, and made many improvements. He was a poet and a musician. He grew sorry, as he grew older, for the blood he had shed at first, and went to Rome in a pilgrim's dress, by way of washing it out He gave a great deal of money to foreigners on his journey ; but he took it from the English before he started. On the whole, however, he certainly became a far better man when he had no opposition to contend with, and was as great a King as England had known for some time.

The old writers of history relate how that Canute was one day disgusted with his courtiers for their flattery, and how he caused his chair to be set on the sea-shore, and feigned to command the tide as it came up not to wet the edge of his robe, for the land was his ; how the tide came up, of course, without regarding him ; and how he then turned to his flatterers, and rebuked them, saying, what

was the might of any earthly king, to the might of the Creator, who could say unto the sea, "Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther". We may learn from this, I think, that a little sense will go a long way in a king; and that courtiers are not easily cured of flattery, nor kings of a liking for it. If the courtiers of Canute had not known, long before, that the king was fond of flattery, they would have known better than to offer it in such large doses And if they had not known that he was vain of this speech (anything but a wonderful speech it seems to me, if a good child had made it), they would not have been at such great pains to repeat it I fancy I see them all on the sea-shore together, the King's chair sinking in the sand; the King in a mighty good humour with his own wisdom, and the courtiers pretending to be quite stunned by it!

It is not the sea alone that is bidden to go "thus far, and no farther" The great command goes forth to all the kings upon the earth, and went to Canute in the year one thousand and thirty-five, and stretched him dead upon his bed.

VI

THE FEUDAL SYSTEM AND THE NORMAN CONQUEST

The conduct of Edward the Confessor, King of England, in the story of Macbeth, was very generous and noble. He sent a large army and his General, Siward, to assist in dethroning the tyrant Macbeth, and placing Malcolm, the son of the murdered King Duncan, upon the throne; and with the assistance of Macduff, they fortunately succeeded But King Edward never thought of taking any part of Scotland to himself in the confusion occasioned by the invasion, for he was a good man, and was not ambitious or covetous of what did not belong to him. It had been well both for England and Scotland that there had been more such good and moderate kings, as it would have prevented many great quarrels, long wars, and terrible bloodshed

But good King Edward the Confessor did not leave any children to succeed him on the throne He was succeeded by a king called Harold, who was the last monarch of the Saxon race that ever reigned in England. The Saxons, you recollect, had conquered the Britons, and now there came a new enemy to attack the Saxons. These were the Normans, a people who came from France but were not originally Frenchmen. Their forefathers were a colony of those Northern pirates, who plundered all

the sea-coasts which promised them any booty. They were frequently called Northmen or Normans, as they came from Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and the other Northern regions. A large body of them landed on the north part of France, and compelled the king of that country to yield up to them the possession of a large territory, or province, called Neustria, the name of which was changed to Normandy, when it became the property of these Northmen, or Normans This province was governed by the Norman chief, who was called a duke, from a Latin word signifying a general He exercised all the powers of a king within his dominions of Normandy, but, in consideration of his being possessed of a part of the territories of France, he acknowledged the king of that country for his sovereign, and became what was called his vassal

This connexion of a king as *sovereign*, with his princes and great men as *vassals*, must be attended to and understood, in order that you may comprehend the history which follows. A great king, or sovereign prince, gave large provinces, or grants of land, to his dukes, earls, and noblemen, and each of these possessed nearly as much power within his own district, as the king did in the rest of his dominions. But then the vassal, whether duke, earl, or lord, or whatever he was, was obliged to come with a certain number of men to assist the sovereign, when he was engaged in war, and in time of peace, he was bound to attend on his court when summoned, and do homage to him—that is, acknowledge that he was his master and liege lord. In like manner, the vassals of the crown, as they were called, divided the lands which the

king had given them into estates, which they bestowed on knights and gentlemen, whom they thought fitted to follow them in war, and to attend them in peace, for they, too, held courts, and administered justice, each in his own province. Then the knights and gentlemen, who had these estates from the great nobles, distributed the property among an inferior class of proprietors, some of whom cultivated the land themselves, and others by means of husbandmen and peasants, who were treated as a sort of slaves, being bought and sold like brute beasts, along with the farms which they cultivated.

Thus, when a great king, like that of France or England, went to war, he summoned all his crown vassals to attend him, with the number of armed men corresponding to his Fief, as it was called, that is, the territory which had been granted to each of them. The prince, duke, or earl, in order to obey the summons, called upon all the gentlemen to whom he had given estates, to attend his standard with their followers in arms The gentlemen, in their turn, called on the franklins, a lower order of gentry, and upon the peasants, and thus the whole force of the kingdom was assembled in one array. This system of holding lands for military service, that is for fighting for the sovereign when called upon, was called the FEUDAL SYSTEM. It was general throughout all Europe for a great many ages.

But as many of these great crown-vassals, as, for example, the Dukes of Normandy, became extremely powerful, they were in the habit of making peace and war, without the knowledge or consent of the King of France, their sovereign. In the same manner,

the vassals of those great dukes and princes frequently made war on each other, for war was the business of every one, while the poor bondsman, who cultivated the ground, was subjected to the greatest hardships, and plundered and ill-treated by whichever side had the better. The nobles and gentlemen fought on horseback, arrayed in armour of steel, richly ornamented with gold and silver, and were called knights or squires. They used long lances, with which they rode fiercely against each other, and heavy swords, or clubs or maces, to fight hand to hand, when the lance was broken Inferior persons fought on foot, and were armed with bows and arrows, which, according to their form, were called long-bows, or cross-bows, and served to kill men at a distance, instead of guns and cannon, which were not then invented The poor husbandmen were obliged to come to the field of battle with such arms as they had; and it was no uncommon thing to see a few of these knights and squires ride over and put to flight many hundreds of them; for the gentry were clothed in complete armour, so that they could receive little hurt, and the poor peasants had scarce clothes sufficient to cover them. You may see coats of the ancient armour preserved in the Tower of London and elsewhere, as matters of curiosity.

It was not a very happy time this, when there was scarcely any law, but the strong took every thing from the weak at their pleasure, for, as almost all the inhabitants of the country were obliged to be soldiers, it naturally followed that they were engaged in continual fighting.

The great crown-vassals, in particular, made constant war upon one another, and sometimes upon the sovereign himself, though to do so was to incur the forfeiture of their fiefs, or the territories which he had bestowed upon them and which he was enabled by law to recall when they became his enemies But they took the opportunity, when they were tolerably certain that their prince would not have strength sufficient to punish them In short, no one could maintain his right longer than he had the power of defending it; and this induced the more poor and helpless to throw themselves under the protection of the brave and powerful—acknowledge themselves their vassals and subjects, and do homage to them, in order that they might obtain their safeguard and patronage.

While things were in this state, William, the Duke of Normandy, and the leader of that valiant people whose ancestors had conquered that province, began, upon the death of good King Edward the Confessor, to consider the time as favourable for an attempt to conquer the wealthy kingdom of England. He pretended King Edward had named him his heir, but his surest reliance was upon a strong army of his brave Normans, to whom were joined many knights and squires from distant countries, who hoped, by assisting this Duke William in his proposed conquest, to obtain from him good English estates, under the regulations which I have described

The Duke of Normandy landed [on the 28th of September], at Pevensey in Sussex, in the year one thousand and sixty-six, after the birth of our blessed Saviour. He had an army of sixty thousand chosen men for accomplishing his bold enterprise. Many gallant

knights, who were not his subjects, joined him, in the hope of obtaining fame in arms, and estates, if his enterprise should prosper. Harold, who had succeeded Edward the Confessor on the throne of England, had been just engaged in repelling an attack upon England by the Norwegians, and was now called upon to oppose this new and more formidable invasion He was, therefore, taken at considerable disadvantage.

The armies of England and Normandy engaged in a desperate battle near Hastings, and the victory was long obstinately contested. The Normans had a great advantage, from having amongst them large bands of archers, who used the long-bow, and greatly annoyed the English, who had but few bowmen to oppose them, and only short darts called javelins, which they threw from their hands and which could do little hurt at a distance. Yet the victory remained doubtful, though the battle had lasted from nine in the morning until the close of the day, when an arrow pierced through King Harold's head, and he fell dead on the spot. The English then retreated from the field, and Duke William used his advantage with so much skill and dexterity, that he made himself master of all England, and reigned there under the title of William the Conqueror. He divided great part of the rich country of England among his Norman followers, who held lands of him for military service, according to the rules of the feudal system, of which I gave you some account. The Anglo-Saxons, you may well suppose, were angry at this, and attempted several times to rise against King William, and drive him and his soldiers back to Normandy. But they were always

defeated, and so King William became more severe towards these Anglo-Saxons, and took away their lands, and their high rank and appointments, until he left scarce any of them in possession of great estates, or offices of rank, but put his Normans above them, as masters, in every situation

Thus the Saxons who had conquered the British, as you have before read, were in their turn conquered by the Normans, deprived of their property, and reduced to be the servants of those proud foreigners To this day, though several of the ancient nobility of England claim to be descended from the Normans, there is scarcely a nobleman, and very few of the gentry, who can show that they are descended of the Saxon blood, William the Conqueror took so much care to deprive the conquered people of all power and importance.

It must have been a sad state of matters in England, when the Normans were turning the Saxons out of their estates and habitations, and degrading them from being freemen into slaves. But good came out of it in the end, for these Normans were not only one of the bravest people that ever lived, but they were possessed of more learning and skill in the arts than the Saxons. They brought with them the art of building large and beautiful castles and churches composed of stone, whereas the Saxons had only miserable houses made of wood. The Normans introduced the use of the long-bow also, which became so general, that the English were accounted the best archers in the world, and gained many battles by their superiority in that military art. Besides these advantages, the Normans lived in a more civilized manner than the

Saxons, and observed among each other the rules of civility and good-breeding, of which the Saxons were ignorant. The Norman barons were also great friends to national liberty, and would not allow their kings to do any thing contrary to their privileges, but resisted them whenever they attempted any thing beyond the power which was given to them by law. Schools were set up in several places by the Norman princes, and learning was encouraged. Large towns were founded in different places of the kingdom, and received favour from the Norman kings, who desired to have the assistance of the townsmen, in case of any dispute with their nobility.

Thus the Norman Conquest, though a most unhappy and disastrous event at the time it took place, rendered England, in the end, a more wise, more civilised, and more powerful country than it had been before ; and you will find many such cases in history, my dear child, in which it has pleased the providence of God to bring great good out of what seems, at first sight, to be unmixed evil.

VII

DEATH OF WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR

William the Conqueror was engaged in a dispute with the King of France about some territory. While he stayed at Rouen, negociating with that King, he kept his bed and took medicines, being advised by his physicians to do so, on account of having grown to unwieldy size. Word being brought to him that the King of France made light of this and joked about it, he swore in a great rage that he should rue his jests. He assembled his army, marched into the disputed territory, burnt—his old way!—the vines, the crops, and fruit, and set the town of Mantes on fire. But, in an evil hour; for, as he rode over the hot ruins, his horse, setting his hoofs upon some burning embers, started, threw him forward against the pommel of the saddle, and gave him a mortal hurt. For six weeks he lay dying in a monastery near Rouen, and then made his will, giving England to William, Normandy to Robert, and five thousand pounds to Henry. And now, his violent deeds lay heavy on his mind. He ordered money to be given to many English churches and monasteries, and—which was much better repentance—released his prisoners of state, some of whom had been confined in his dungeons twenty years.

It was a September morning, and the sun was rising, when the King was awakened from slumber by the sound of a church bell. "What bell is that?" he faintly asked. They told him it was the bell of the chapel of Saint

Mary "I commend my soul," said he "to Mary!" and died.

Think of his name, the Conqueror, and then consider how he lay in death! The moment he was dead, his physicians, priests, and nobles, not knowing what contest for the throne might now take place, or what might happen in it, hastened away, each man for himself and his own property; the mercenary servants of the court began to rob and plunder, the body of the King, in the indecent strife, was rolled from the bed, and lay, alone, for hours, upon the ground. O Conqueror, of whom so many great names are proud now, of whom so many great names thought nothing then, it were better to have conquered one true heart, than England!

By and by, the priests came creeping in with prayers and candles; and a good knight, named Herluin, undertook (which no one else would do) to convey the body to Caen, in Normandy, in order that it might be buried in St. Stephen's Church there, which the Conqueror had founded. But fire, of which he had made such bad use in his life, seemed to follow him of itself in death. A great conflagration broke out in the town when the body was placed in the church; and those present running out to extinguish the flames, it was once again left alone.

It was not even buried in peace. It was about to be let down, in its Royal robes, into a tomb near the high altar, in presence of a great concourse of people, when a loud voice in the crowd cried out, "This ground is mine! Upon it, stood my father's house. This King despoiled me of both ground and house to build this church. In the great name of God, I here forbid his body to be

covered with the earth that is my right!" The priests and bishops present, knowing the speaker's right, and knowing that the King had often denied him justice, paid him down sixty shillings for the grave. Even then, the corpse was not at rest. The tomb was too small.

Where were the Conqueror's three sons, that they were not at their father's burial? Robert was lounging among minstrels, dancers, and gamesters, in France or Germany. Henry was carrying his five thousand pounds safely away in a convenient chest he had got made. William the Red was hurrying to England, to lay hands upon the Royal treasure and the crown.

VIII

WILLIAM THE SECOND, CALLED RUFUS.

The Red King was false of heart, selfish, and covetous He had a worthy minister in his favourite, Ralph, nicknamed—for almost every famous person had a nickname in those rough days—Flambard, or the Firebrand Once the King being ill, became penitent, and made Anselm, a foreign priest and a good man, Archbishop of Canterbury. But he no sooner got well again, than he repented of his repentance, and persisted in wrongfully keeping to himself some of the wealth belonging to the archbishopric. This led to violent disputes, which were aggravated by there being in Rome at that time two rival popes; each of whom declared he was the only real original infallible Pope, who could not make a mistake. At last, Anselm, knowing the Red King's character, and not feeling himself safe in England, asked leave to return abroad. The Red King gladly gave it; for he knew that as soon as Anselm was gone, he could begin to store up all the Canterbury money again, for his own use.

By such means, and by taxing and oppressing the English people in every possible way, the Red King became very rich. When he wanted money for any purpose, he raised it by some means or other, and cared nothing for the injustice he did, or the misery he caused. Having the opportunity of buying from Robert the whole

duchy of Normandy for five years he taxed the English people more than ever, and made the very convents sell their plate and valuables to supply him with the means to make the purchase.

You will wonder how it was that Robert came to sell his dominions. It happened thus. It had long been the custom for many English people to make journeys to Jerusalem, which were called pilgrimages, in order that they might pray beside the tomb of Jesus Christ there Jerusalem belonging to the Turks, and the Turks hating Christianity, these Christian travellers were often insulted and ill-used. The Pilgrims bore it patiently for some time; but at length a remarkable man, of great earnestness and eloquence, called Peter the Hermit, began to preach in various places against the Turks, and to declare that it was the duty of good Christians to drive away those unbelievers from the tomb, and to take possession of it, and protect it. An excitement such as the world had never known before was created. Thousands and thousands of men of all ranks and conditions departed for Jerusalem to make war against the Turks. The war is called in history the first Crusade; and every Crusader wore a cross marked on his right shoulder.

All the Crusaders were not zealous Christians. Among them were vast numbers of the restless, idle, and adventurous spirits of the time. Some became Crusaders for the love of change; some, in the hope of plunder, some, because they had nothing to do at home; some, because they did what the Priest told them; some, because they liked to see foreign countries; some, because they were fond of knocking men about, and would as soon knock a

Turk about as a Christain. Robert of Normandy may have been influenced by all these motives ; and by a kind desire, besides, to save the Christian Pilgrims from bad treatment in future. He wanted to raise a number of armed men, and to go to the Crusade. He could not do so without money. He had no money , and he sold his dominions to his brother, the Red King, for five years. With the large sum he thus obtained, he fitted out his Crusaders gallantly, and went away to Jerusalem in martial state. The Red King, who made money out of everything, stayed at home, busily squeezing more money out of Normans and English

---

IX

HENRY II AND THE CONSTITUTIONS OF CLARENDON

With many weaknesses, and some vices, Henry II was an able Prince He found his kingdom in a state of frightful anarchy. During his predecessor's turbulent reign, castles had been built in all parts of the land, each being the stronghold of some petty tyrant, who having a band of ruffians in his service, exercised the most grievous oppression as far as his power extended, and inflicted torments upon all who fell into his hands, for the purpose of extorting money. This multiplied tyranny, which rendered the state of England worse than it had been during the ravages of the Danes, was put down with a strong hand ; and the King, having thus deserved the blessings of the people, applied himself with equal determination to suppress the abuses of the ecclesiastical power.

The most crying of these abuses was the exemption from all secular jurisdiction which the clergy had established for themselves. This was an evil, which had imperceptibly arisen. The higher clergy at first interfered in disputes for the Christian purpose of reconciling the parties ; gradually they became judges instead of mediators and arbitrators, and in this, too, there was an evident propriety, because in those rude ages, no other persons were so well qualified for the judicial office ; because it

might be presumed, that they would temper justice with mercy. Under the Saxon kings, the Bishop sat with the sheriff in the County Court; and the Conqueror, when he separated their jurisdictions, did not foresee the consequences which resulted. The Ecclesiastical court followed the Canon law, parts of which had been forged for the purposes of withdrawing the dignified clergy from the ordinary tribunals, and placing them under the Pope's immediate authority, that is to say, his protection. By these laws, no clergyman might be condemned to death, stripes were the severest punishment that might be inflicted. Every one who had received the tonsure came under the privilege of the Canons; in that age, the number of those who were ordained, and had no benefice, was very great, and these persons, existing in idleness and poverty, stood in need of their privilege often enough to prove that such immunities were incompatible with the general good

While Henry was pursuing the great object of securing the public peace by vigorous administration of justice, the judges represented to him the evil consequences of the immunity which the clergy claimed and enjoyed. Well aware how difficult it would be to correct this abuse, and reduce the ecclesiastical power within those bounds to which the conqueror and his sons had confined it, Henry thought that the surest mode of facilitating this object would be to select for the primacy, a person in whom he could confide. He chose, therefore,, the Chancellor Thomas a Becket, the most confidential, as well as the ablest, of his servants, and the most intimate of his friends; a man who had hitherto resembled Wolsey in the

favour which he enjoyed, and in the boundless magnificence of his life; but his character was compounded of stronger elements, and his mind of a higher class.

Becket on one day was ordained Priest, and consecrated Archbishop on the next. From that hour he devoted himself to the cause of the Church. The costliest splendour was still displayed in his apparel; beneath his canonical dress he wore the Benedictine habit; under that, sackcloth, and within were the daring spirit, the fiery temper, and the haughty heart. Every part of his conduct now indicated the aspiring saint; his food was of the coarsest kind; bitter herbs were boiled in water to render his drink nauseous, he flogged himself, he washed the feet of the poor; he visited the sick; and the large sum which his predecessor had annually disbursed in alms was doubled by his munificent charity. His determination to oppose the King was intimated by his sending back the seals of office, and desiring that he would provide himself with another Chancellor, for he could hardly suffice, he said, to the duties of one office, far less of two. Upon this the King called upon him to surrender also the archdeaconry of his own see, an office much more incompatible with his new dignity than the Chancellorship; it was the richest benefice in England, under a bishopric, and Becket withheld his resignation till it was forced from him. He must have acted undoubtedly upon some imagined right: covetousness could have no place in a mind like his.

Undeceived, when too late, in the character of his former minister and friend, Henry, in pursuing his plans of salutary reform, had to encounter opposition where he

had reckoned upon assistance. Plain reason, however, and evident justice, and public opinion, were on his side. Henry summoned the Bishops to attend him. He complained to them of the corruption of their courts, and of the practice of commuting all punishments for money, whereby, he said, they levied in a year more money from the people than he did. He observed, that a clerical offender, instead of being screened from punishment by his sacred character, ought to be more severely punished because he had abused that character. And he required that in future ecclesiastical persons accused of heinous crimes should be delivered into the hands of the Bishops, and if by him found guilty, be degraded, and then transferred to the civil power for punishment.

The Prelates would have assented to this considerate and equitable proposal, which saved the honour of the church while it vindicated the rights of the law. But Becket conferred with them apart, and in deference to him they returned for answer, that no clergyman ought to suffer death, or limb, for any crime whatsoever; nor to be judged in a secular court. The only concession they made was to admit that a clergyman, who had been degraded, became amenable to the common law for any offence committed after his degradation. Henry had inherited the irritable temper of the Norman kings Provoked at such a reply, he demanded of them whether they would obey the ancient customs of the realm?

Three months afterwards the Great Council was assembled at Clarendon. It was then ordered that such of the assembly as knew the customs best, should put them in writing. a list of the elders was made ou to

whom this task was assigned, and at Becket's motion the business was prorogued till the morrow.

The customs which were now reduced to writing were called the Constitutions of Clarendon.

X

JOHN AND THE CHARTER

In the reign of John, all the rapacious exactions usual to Norman Kings were not only redoubled, but mingled with other outrages of tyranny still more intolerable These too were to be endured at the hands of a prince utterly contemptible for his folly and cowardice One is surprised at the forbearance displayed by the barons, till they took up arms at length in that confederacy, which ended in establishing the Great Charter of Liberties As this was the first effort towards a legal government, so is it beyond comparison the most important event in our history, except that Revolution without which its benefits would rapidly have been annihilated. The constitution of England has indeed no single date from which its duration is to be reckoned. The important changes which time has wrought in the order of society, during six hundred years subsequent to the Great Charter, have undoubtedly lessened its direct application to our present circumstances. But it is still the key-stone of English liberty. All that has since been obtained is little more than as confirmation or commentary , and if every subsequent law were to be swept away, there would still remain the bold features that distinguish a free from a despotic monarchy. It has been lately the fashion to depreciate the value of Magna Charta, as if it had sprung

from the private ambition of a few selfish barons, and redressed only some feudal abuses. It is indeed of little importance by what motives those who obtained it were guided. The real characters of men most distinguished in the transactions of that time are not easily determined at present. Yet if we bring these ungrateful suspicions to the test, they prove destitute of all reasonable foundation. An equal distribution of political rights to all classes of freemen forms the peculiar beauty of the charter. In this just solicitude for the people, and in the moderation which encroached upon no essential prerogative of the monarchy, we may perceive a liberality and patriotism very unlike the selfishness which is sometimes rashly imputed to those ancient barons And, as far as we are guided by historical testimony, two great men, the pillars of our church and state, may be considered as entitled beyond the rest to the glory of this monument , Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury, and William, Earl of Pembroke. To their temperate zeal for a legal government, England was indebted during that critical period for the two greatest blessings that patriotic statesmen could confer ; the establishment of civil liberty upon an immovable basis, and the preservation of national independence under the ancient line of sovereigns, which rasher men were about to exchange for the dominion of France.

By the Magna Charta of John, the waste committed by guardians in chivalry was restrained, the disparagement in matrimony of female wards fordidden, and widows were secured from compulsory marriage. These regulations, extending to the sub-vassals of the crown,

redressed the worst grievances of every military tenant in England. The liberties of the city of London and of all towns and boroughs were declared inviolable. The freedom of commerce was guaranteed to alien merchants. The court of Common Pleas, instead of following the King's person, was fixed at Westminster. The tyranny exercised in the neighbourhood of royal forests met with some check, which was further enforced by the Charter of Forests under Henry III.

But the essential clauses of Magna Charta are those which protect the personal liberty and property of all freemen, by giving security from arbitrary imprisonment and arbitrary spoliation. "No freeman shall be taken or imprisoned, or be disseised of his freehold, or liberties, or free customs, or be outlawed, or exiled, or in any way harmed, but by lawful judgment of his peers, or by the law of the land. We will sell to no man, we will not deny, or delay to any man, justice or right," so run these clauses.

From this era a new soul was infused into the people of England. Her liberties became a tangible possession, and those indefinite aspirations for the laws of Edward the Confessor were changed into a steady regard for the Great Charter. Pass but from the second Henry to the third, and judge whether the victorious struggle had not excited an energy of public spirit to which the nation was before a stranger. The strong man, in the sublime language of Milton, was aroused from sleep, and shook his invincible locks.

XI

AMALGAMATION OF RACES

During the century and a half which followed the Conquest, there is, to speak strictly, no English history. The French Kings of England rose, indeed, to an eminence which was the wonder and dread of all neighbouring nations. They conquered Ireland They received the homage of Scotland. By their valour, by their policy, by their fortunate matrimonial alliances, they became far more powerful on the Continent than their liege lords the Kings of France. Asia, as well as Europe, was dazzled by the power and glory of our tyrants. Arabian chroniclers recorded with unwilling admiration the fall of Acre, the defence of Joppa, and the victorious march to Ascalon , and Arabian mothers long awed their infants to silence with the name of the lion-hearted Plantagenet. At one time it seemed that the line of Hugh Capet was about to end as the Merovingian and Carlovingian lines had ended, and that a single great monarchy would spread from the Orkneys to the Pyrenees So strong an association is established in most minds between the greatness of a sovereign and the greatness of the nation which he rules, that almost every historian of England has expatiated with a sentiment of exultation on the power and splendour of her foreign masters, and had lamented the decay of that power and splendour as a calamity to our country. This is, in truth, as absurd as it would be in a Haytian negro of our time to dwell with national pride on the greatness

of Lewis the Fourteenth, and to speak of Blenheim and Ramilies with patriotic regret and shame. The Conqueror and his decendants to the fourth generation were not Englishmen most of them were born in France they spent the greater part of their lives in France · their ordinary speech was French almost every high office in their gift was filled by a Frenchman every acquisition which they made on the Continent estranged them more and more from the population of our island One of the ablest among them indeed attempted to win the hearts of his English subjects by espousing an English Princess. But, by many of his barons, this marriage was regarded as a marriage between a white planter and a quadroon girl would now be regarded in Virginia In history he is known by the honourable surname of Beauclerc, but, in his own time, his own countrymen called him by a Saxon nickname, in contemptuous allusion to his Saxon connection

Had the Plantagenets, as at one time seemed likely, succeeded in uniting all France under their government, it is probable that England would never have had an independent existence. Her princes, her lords, her prelates, would have been men differing in race and language from the artisans and the tillers of the earth. The revenues of her great proprietors would have been spent in festivities and diversions on the banks of the Seine. The noble language of Milton and Burke would have remained a rustic dialect, without a literature, a fixed grammar, or a fixed orthography and would have been contemptuously abandoned to the use of boors. No man of English extraction would have risen to eminence, except by becoming in speech and habits a Frenchman.

England owes her escape from such calamities to an event which her historians have generally represented as disastrous. Her interest was so directly opposed to the interest of her rulers that she had no hope but in their errors and misfortunes. The talents and even the virtues of her first six French Kings were a curse to her. The follies and vices of the seventh were her salvation. Had John inherited the great qualities of his father, of Henry Beauclerc, or of the Conqueror, nay, had he even possessed the martial courage of Stephen or of Richard, and had the King of France at the same time been as incapable as all the other successors of Hugh Capet had been, the House of Plantagenet must have risen to unrivalled ascendency in Europe. But, just at this conjuncture, France, for the first time since the death of Charlemagne, was governed by a prince of great firmness and ability On the other hand England, which, since the battle of Hastings, had been ruled generally by wise statesmen, always by brave soldiers, fell under the dominion of a trifler and a coward. From that moment her prospects brightened. John was driven from Normandy. The Norman nobles were compelled to make their election between the island and the continent. Shut up by the sea with the people whom they had hitherto oppressed and despised, they gradually came to regard England as their country, and the English as their countrymen. The two races, so long hostile, soon found that they had common interests and common enemies. Both were alike aggrieved by the tyranny of a bad king. Both were alike indignant at the favour shown by the court to the natives of Poitou and Aquitaine. The greatgrandsons of those who had fought under William and the greatgrandsons of those who

had fought under Harold began to draw near to each other in friendship; and the first pledge of their reconciliation was the Great Charter, won by their united exertions, and framed for their common benefit.

Here commences the history of the English nation. The history of the preceding events is the history of wrongs inflicted and sustained by various tribes, which indeed all dwelt on English ground, but which regarded each other with aversion such as has scarcely ever existed between communities separated by physical barriers. For even the mutual animosity of countries at war with each other is languid when compared with the animosity of nations which, morally separated, are yet locally intermingled. In no country has the enmity of race been carried farther than in England. In no country has that enmity been more completely effaced. The stages of the process by which the hostile elements were melted down into one homogeneous mass are not accurately known to us. But it is certain that, when John became King, the distinction between Saxons and Normans was strongly marked, and that before the end of the reign of his grandson it had almost disappeared. In the time of Richard the First, the ordinary imprecation of a Norman gentleman was, "May I become an Englishman!" His ordinary form of indignant denial was "Do you take me for an Englishman?" The descendant of such a gentleman a hundred years later was proud of the English name.

The sources of the noblest rivers which spread fertility over continents, and bear richly laden fleets to the sea, are to be sought in wild and barren mountain tracts, incorrectly laid down in maps, and rarely explored by travellers. To

such a tract the history of our country during the thirteenth century may not unaptly be compared. Sterile and obscure as is that portion of our annals, it is there that we must seek for the origin of our freedom, our prosperity, and our glory. Then it was that the great English people was formed, that the national character began to exhibit those peculiarities which it has ever since retained, and that our fathers became emphatically islanders, islanders not merely in geographical position, but in politics, their feelings, and their manners. Then first appeared with distinctness that constitution which has ever since, through all changes, preserved its identity; that constitution of which all the other free constitutions in the world are copies, and which in spite of some defects, deserves to be regarded as the best under which any great society has ever yet existed during many ages. Then it was that the House of Commons, the archetype of all the representative assemblies which now meet, either in the old or in the new world, held its first sittings Then it was that the common law rose to the dignity of a science, and rapidly became a not unworthy rival of the imperial jurisprudence. Then it was that the courage of those sailors who manned the rude barks of the Cinque Ports first made the flag of England terrible on the seas. Then it was that the most ancient colleges which still exist at both the great national seats of learning were founded. Then was formed that language, less musical indeed than the languages of the south, but in force, in richness, in aptitude for all the highest purposes of the poet, the philosopher, and the orator, inferior to the tongue of Greece alone. Then too appeared the first faint dawn of that noble literature,

the most splendid and the most durable of the many glories of England.

Early in the fourteenth century the amalgamation of the races was all but complete; and it was soon made manifest, by signs not to be mistaken, that a people inferior to none existing in the world had been formed by the mixture of three branches of the great Teutonic family with each other, and with the aboriginal Britons. There was, indeed, scarcely any thing in common between the England to which John had been chased by Phillip Augustus and the England from which the armies of Edward the Third went forth to conquer France.

XII

THE COMING OF THE FRIARS

In the 13th Century when the Papal Church was seriously endangered, and a religious revolution might perhaps have been effected, which would have produced more evil than good, because Europe was not ripe for it, a strong spirit of enthusiasm was called forth in its defence. The person by whom this signal service was rendered to the Papacy was the son of a rich merchant at Assissi he was called by his acquaintances Francesco, because of his familiar knowledge of the French tongue, which was at that time a rare accomplishment for an Italian ; and Hercules is not better known in classical fable, than he became in Romish mythology, by the name of St. Francis.

Having infected a few kindred spirits with his first enthusiasm, he obtained the Pope's consent to institute an order of Friars Minorite ; so, in his humility, he called them ; they are better known by the name of Franciscans, after their founder.

The Franciscans were to go into the streets and highways to exhort the people. The Monks were justly reproached for luxury, and had become invidious for their wealth ; the Friars were bound to the severest rule of life ; they went barefoot, and renounced, not only for themselves individually, but collectively also, all possessions whatever, trusting to daily charity for their daily bread.

The rival order of St. Dominic was instituted nearly at the same time, for the same purpose, and upon the same principle.

The tide of popular opinion was effectually turned by their exertions.

As itinerant preachers they called forth devotional feelings, which would otherwise never have been excited, and performed some of that duty among the poor dwellers on the outskirts of English towns which the clergy who served in the churches within the towns in those ages very generally neglected.

The influence which these orders thus obtained was, for a time, prodigious. But in process of time their influence steadily declined.

XIII

EDWARD THE BLACK PRINCE

Crescy and Poitiers

Every one who has endeavoured to study history must be struck by the advantage which those enjoy who live within the neighbourhood of great historical monuments. To have seen the place where a great event happened—to have seen the picture, the statue, the tomb of an illustrious man, is the next thing to being present at the event in person—to seeing the scene with our own eyes

In this respect few spots in England are more highly favoured than Canterbury. It is not too much to say that if any one were to go through the various spots of interest in or around our great cathedral, and ask, what happened here?—who was the man whose tomb we see?—why was he buried here?—what effect did his life or his death have on the world?—a real knowledge of the history of England would be obtained, such as the mere reading of books or hearing of lectures would utterly fail to supply.

If any one asks why Canterbury is what it is—why from this small town the first subject in this great kingdom takes his title; why we have any cathedral at all—the answer is to be found in that great event, the most important that has ever occurred in English history—the conversion of Ethelbert, King of Kent, by the first missionary, Augustine. And if you would understand this,

it will lead you to make out for yourselves the history of the Saxon kings—who they were, whence they came ; and who Augustine was, why he came , and what was the city of Rome from whence he was sent forth.

Ask who it was who first laid out the monastery, and who it was that laid the foundations of the cathedral as it now stands, and you will find that it was Lanfranc, the great Archbishop whom William the Conqueror brought over with him from Normandy, and who thus re-established the old church with his Norman workmen Then look at the venerable tower on the south side of the cathedral, and ask who lies buried within, and from whom it takes its name and you will find yourself with Anselm, the wise counsellor of William Rufus and Henry the First—Anselm, the man who, perhaps, of all who ever filled the See of Canterbury, is the most known by his life and writings throughout the world. And then we come to that celebrated event, the most remarkable that has happened at Canterbury since the arrival of Augustine, and of which the effect may be traced not in one part only, but almost through every stone in the cathedral, though it took place only on one small spot—the murder of Thomas a Becket. Then the broken effigy of Hubert Walter brings before us the camp of the Crusaders at Acre, where he was appointed Archbishop by Richard the First. Next look at that simple tomb in St. Michael's Chapel, half in and half out of the church, and you will be brought to the time of King John ; for it is the grave of Stephen Langton who, more than any one man, won for us the Magna Carta. Then look back at the wooden statue that lies in the corner. That is the grave of Archbishop Peckham,

in the reign of King Edward the First, and close beside that spot King Edward the First was married. And now we come to the time at which the subject of my lecture begins, the reign of King Edward the Third. And so we might pass on to Archbishop Sudbury, who lost his head in the reign of Richard the Second ; to Henry the Fourth, whe lies there himself ; to Chichele, who takes us on to Henry the Fifth and Henry the Sixth ; to Morton, who reminds us of Henry the Seventh and Sir Thomas More ; to Warham, the friend of Erasmus, predecessor of Archbishop Cranmer ; and then to the subsequent troubles —of which the cathedral still bears the marks—in the Reformation and the Civil Wars

On some future occasion perhaps, I may be permitted to speak of the more important of these, as opportunity may occur But for the present let us leave the primates of Canterbury, and turn to our especial subject. Let us place ourselves in imagination by the tomb of the most illustrious layman who rests amongst us, Edward Plantagenet, Prince of Wales, commonly called the Black Prince. Let us ask whose likeness is it that we there see stretched before us ?—why was he buried in this place, amongst the archbishops and sacred shrines of former times ?—what can we learn from his life or his death ?

A few words must first be given to his birth and childhood. He was born on the 15th of June, 1330, at the old Palace of Woodstock, near Oxford, from which he was some times called Prince Edward of Woodstock. He was, you will remember, the eldest son of King Edward the Third and Queen Philippa—a point always to be remembered in his history, because, like Alexander the Great

and a few other eminent instances, he is one of those men in whom the peculiar qualities both of his father and his mother were equally exemplified. Every one knows the story of the siege of Calais—of the sternness of King Edward and the gentleness of Queen Philippa—and it is the union of these qualities in their son which gave him the exact place which he occupies in the succession of our English princes and in the history of Europe.

We always like to know where a famous man was educated. And here we know the place, and also see the reason why it was chosen. Any of you who have been at Oxford will remember the long line of buildings which overlook the beautiful curve of High Street, the buildings of "Queen's College," the College of the Queen. At the time of which I speak that college was the greatest—two others only existed in Oxford It had but just been founded by the chaplain of Queen Philippa, and took its name from her. There it was that, according to tradition, the Prince of Wales, her son, as in the next generation Henry the Fifth, was brought up. If we look at the events which followed, he could hardly have been twelve years old when he went. But there were then no schools in England, and their place was almost entirely supplied by the universities. Queen's College is much altered in every way since the little Prince went there, but they still keep an engraving of the vaulted room which he is said to have occupied, and though most of the old customs which prevailed in the college, and which made it a very peculiar place even then, have long since disappeared, some which are mentioned by the founder, and which, therefore, must have been in use when the Prince was there, still continue.

You may still hear the students summoned to dinner, as he was, by the sound of a trumpet, and in the hall you may still see, as he saw, the Fellows sitting all on one side of the table, with the Head of the college in the centre, in imitation of the "Last Supper," as it is commonly represented in pictures The very names of the Head and the twelve Fellows (the number first appointed by the founder), who were presiding over the college when the Prince was there are known to us

He must have seen what has long since vanished away—the thirteen beggars, deaf, dumb, maimed, or blind, daily brought into the hall to receive their dole of bread, beer, potage, and fish. He must have seen the seventy poor scholars, instituted after the example of the seventy disciples, and learning from their two chaplains to chant the service He must have heard the mill within or hard by the college walls grinding the Fellow's bread He must have seen the porter of the college going round the rooms betimes in the morning to shave the beards and wash the heads of the Fellows.

In these and many other curious particulars we can tell exactly what the customs and appearance of the college was when the Prince was there. It is more difficult to answer another question which we always wish to know about famous men—Who were his companions? One youth, however, there was at that time in Oxford, and at Queen's College, whom we shall all recognize as an old acquaintance—John Wycliffe, the first English Reformer, and the first translator of the Bible into English

He was a poor boy, in a threadbare coat, and devoted to study, and the Prince probably never exchanged looks

or words with him But it is almost certain that he must have seen him; and it is interesting to remember that once at least in their lives the great soldier of the age had crossed the path of the great Reformer. Each thought and cared little for the other; their characters and pursuits and sympathies were as different as were their stations in life. Let us be thankful if we have learned to understand them both, and seen what was good in each, far better than they did themselves.

We now pass to the next events of his life, those which have really made him almost as famous in war as Wycliffe has been in peace—the two great battles of Crescy and of Poitiers. I will not now go into the origin of the war, of which these two battles formed the turning-points It is enough, for us to remember that it was undertaken by Edward the Third to gain the crown of France, through a pretended claim—for it was no more than a pretended claim—through his mother

And now, first, for Crescy. I shall not undertake to describe the whole fight, but will call your attention briefly to the question which every one ought to ask himself if he wishes to understand anything about any battle whatever. First, where was it fought? secondly, why was it fought? thirdly, how was it won? and fourthly, what was the result of it? And to this I must add, in the present instance, what part was taken in it by the Prince, whom we left as a little boy at Oxford, but who was now following his father as a young knight in his first great campaign?

The first of those questions involves the second also If we make out where a battle was fought, this usually tells

us why it was fought; and this is one of the many proofs of the use of learning geography together with history. Each helps us to understand the other.

Crescy is a little village between Abbeville and Calais, and not far from the scene of what was, perhaps, a still greater victory—that of Agincourt. Edward had made an incursion into Normandy, and was retreating towards Flanders—or Belgium, as we now call it—when he was overtaken by the French King Philip, who, with an immense army, had determined to cut him off entirely and so put an end to the war.

It was Saturday, August 28, 1346, and it was at four in the afternoon that the battle commenced. It always helps us better to imagine any remarkable event when we know at what time of the day or night it took place; and on this occasion it is of great importance, because it helps us at once to answer the third question we asked—How was the battle won?

It was four in the afternoon, and the French army advanced from the south-east, after a hard day's march, to overtake the retiring enemy Every one, from the King down to the peasants on the road, crying, "Kill! kill" were in a state of the greatest excitement, drawing their swords, and thinking that they were sure of their prey. What the French King chiefly relied upon, besides his great numbers, was the troop of fifteen thousand cross-bowmen from Genoa, in Italy. These were made to stand in front; when, just as the engagement was about to take place, one of those extraordinary incidents occurred which often turn the fate of battles, as they do of human life in general.

A tremendous storm gathered from the west, and broke in thunder and rain and hail on the field of battle. The sun was darkened, and the horror was increased by the hoarse cries of crows and ravens which fluttered before the storm, and struck terror into the hearts of the Italian bowmen, who were unaccustomed to these northern tempests. And when at last the sky had cleared, and they prepared their crossbows to shoot, the strings had been so wet by the rain that they could not draw them.

By this time the evening sun streamed out in full splendour over the black clouds of the western sky—right in their faces, and at the same moment the English archers, who had kept their bows in cases during the storm and so had their strings dry, let fly their arrows so fast and thick that those who were present could only compare it to snow or sleet. Through and through the heads and necks and hands of the Genoese bowmen the arrows pierced. Unable to stand it, they turned and fled, and from that moment the panic and confusion was so great that the day was lost.

But though the storm and the sun and the archers had their part, we must not forget the Prince. He was, we must remember, only sixteen, and yet he commanded the whole English army. It is said that the reason of this was that the King of France had been so bent on destroying the English forces that he had hoisted the sacred banner of France—the great scarlet flag, embroidered with golden lilies, called the Oriflamme—as a sign that no quarter would be given; and that when King Edward saw this, and saw the hazard to which he should expose, not only the army but the whole kingdom, if he were to fall in

battle, he determined to leave it to his son. Certain it is that, for whatever reason, he remained on a little hill on the outskirts of the field, and the young Prince, who had been knighted a month before, went forward with his companions-in-arms into the very thick of the fray; and when his father saw that the victory was virtually gained, he forbore to interfere. "Let him *win his spurs*," he said, in words which have since become a proverb, "and *let the day be his*."

The Prince was in very great danger at one moment. He was wounded and thrown to the ground, and only saved by one of the knights near him, who carried the great banner of Wales, throwing the banner over the boy as he lay on the ground, and standing upon it till he had driven back the assailants. The assailants were driven back, and far through the long summer evening, and deep into the summer night, the battle raged It was not till all was dark that the Prince and his companions halted from their pursuit, and then huge fires and torches were lit up, that the King might see where they were. And then took place the touching interview between the father and the son. The King, embracing the boy in front of the whole army, by the red light of the blazing fires, and saying, "Sweet son, God give you good perseverance, you are my true son—right loyally have you acquitted yourself this day, and worthy are you of a crown" And the young Prince, after the reverential manner of these times, "bowed to the ground, and gave all due honour to the King his father." The next day the King walked over the field of carnage with the Prince, and said, "What think you of a battle—is it an agreeable game?"

The general result of the battle was the deliverance of the English army from a most imminent danger, and subsequently the conquest of Calais, which the King immediately besieged and won, and which remained in the possession of the English from that day till the reign of Queen Mary. From that time the Prince became the darling of the English and the terror of the French; and whether from this terror, or from the black armour which he wore on that day, or from the black banners and the black devices which he used in tournaments, and which contrasted with the fairness of his complexion, he was called by them "Le Prince Noir" (the Black Prince), and from them the name has passed to us, so that all his other sounding titles by which the old poems call him—"Prince of Wales, Duke of Aquitaine"—are lost in the one memorable name which he won for himself in his first fight at Crescy.

And now we pass over ten years, and find him on the field of Poitiers. Again we must ask what brought him there, and why the battle was fought? He was this time alone, his father, though the war had rolled on since the battle of Crescy, was in England. But in other respects the beginning of the fight was very like that of Crescy. Gascony belonged to him by right, and from this he made a descent into the neighbouring provinces, and was on his return home when the King of France—John, the son of Philip—pursued him as his father had pursued Edward the Third; and overtook him suddenly on the high upland fields which extend for many miles south of the city of Poitiers.

It is the third great battle which has been fought in that neighbourhood—the first was that in which Clovis

defeated the Goths ; the second was that in which Charles Martel drove back the Saracens, and saved Europe from Mohammedanism ; the third was this, the most brilliant of English victories over the French.

The spot, which is about six miles south of Poitiers, is still known by the name of The Battle-field. Its features are very slightly marked—two ridges of rising ground, parted by a gentle hollow , behind the highest of these two ridges is a large tract of copse and underwood, and leading up to it from the hollow is a somewhat steep lane, there shut in by woods and vines on each side It was on this ridge that the Prince had taken up his position, and it was solely by the good use which he made of this position that the victory was won. The French army was arranged on the other side of the hollow in three great divisions, of which the King's was the hindmost ; the farmhouse which marks the spot where this division was posted is visible from the walls of Poitiers

It was on Monday, September 19, 1356, 9 A.M., that the battle began All the Sunday had been taken up by fruitless endeavours of Cardinal Talleyrand—a namesake of the famous minister of Napoleon—to save the bloodshed, by bringing the King and Prince to terms—a fact to be noticed for two reasons first, because it shows the sincere and Christian desire which animated the clergy of those times, in the midst of all their faults, to promote peace and goodwill amongst the savage men with whom they lived, and secondly, because it shows, on this occasion, the confidence of victory which had possessed the French King.

The Prince offered to give up all the castles and prisoners he had taken, and to swear not to fight in France again for seven years. But the King would hear of nothing but his absolute surrender of himself and his army on the spot. The Cardinal laboured till the very last moment, and then rode back to Poitiers, having equally offended both parties. The story of the battle, if we remember the position of the armies, is told in a moment. The Prince remained firm in his position; the French, filled with their usual chivalrous ardour, charged up the lane. The English archers, whom the Prince had stationed behind the hedges on each side, let fly their showers of arrows, as at Crescy: in an instant the lane was choked with the dead, and the first check of such headstrong confidence was fatal.

The Prince in his turn charged. A general panic seized the whole French army, the first and second divisions fled in the wildest confusion, the third alone, where King John stood, made a gallant resistance, the King was taken prisoner, and by noon the whole was over. Up to the city gates of Poitiers the French army fled and fell, and you still see the convent in the city, and the ruined abbey near the field, where their dead bodies were buried.

It is a wonderful day. The Prince who had gained the battle was still only twenty-six—that is a year younger than Napoleon at the beginning of his campaigns—and the characteristic result of the battle which distinguished it from among all others was the number, not of the slain but of the prisoners—one Englishman often taking four or five Frenchmen. Perhaps, however, the best known part of the

whole is the scene when the King first met the Prince in the evening, which cannot be better described than by old Froissart.

"The day of the battle, at night, the Prince gave a supper in his lodgings to the French King and to most of the great lords that were prisoners. The Prince caused the King and his son to sit at one table, and other lords, knights, and squires at the others; and the Prince always served the King very humbly, and would not sit at the King's table, although he requested him. He said he was not qualified to sit at the table with so great a prince as the King was. Then he said to the King, 'Sir, for God's sake make no bad cheer, though your will was not accomplished this day. For Sir, the King, my father, will certainly bestow on you as much honour and friendship as he can, and will agree with you so reasonably that you shall ever after be friends; and Sir, I think you ought to rejoice, though the battle be not as you will, for you have this day gained the high honour of prowess, and have surpassed all others on your side in valour. Sir, I say not this in raillery for all our party, who saw every man's deeds, agree in this, and give you the palm and chaplet.' Therewith the Frenchmen whispered among themselves that the Prince had spoken nobly, and that most probably he would prove a great hero, if God preserved his life, to persevere in such good fortune."

It was after this great battle that we first hear of the Prince's connection with Canterbury. On April 16, 1357, the Prince with the French King landed at Sandwich; there they stayed two days, and on the nineteenth entered Canterbury. Simon of Islip, who is buried in

the nave of the cathedral, chiefly known as the founder of Canterbury Hall, at Oxford, which is now part of Christ Church, but of which the Black Prince's fellow-student Wycliffe became afterwards Master, was now Archbishop, and he no doubt would be there to greet them.

The French King, if we may suppose that the same course was adopted here as when they reached London, rode on a magnificent cream-coloured charger, the Prince on a little black pony at his side They came into the cathedral and made their offerings at the shrine of Thomas a Becket, and no doubt the king was shown all the relics and memorials which the monks had to exhibit. Tradition says, but without any probability of truth, that the old room above St. Anselm's Chapel was used as King John's prison. He may possibly have seen it, but he is hardly likely to have lived there. At any rate they were only here for a day, and then again advanced on their road to London

One other tradition we may perhaps connect with this visit Behind the hospital at Harbledown is an old well, still called "the Black Prince's well" If this is the only time that he passed through Canterbury—and it is the only time that we hear of—then we may suppose that in the steep road underneath the hospital he halted, as we know that all pilgrims did, to see Becket's shoe, which was kept in the hospital, and that he may have gone down on the other side of the hill to wash, as others did, in the water of the spring, and we may well suppose that such an occasion would never be forgotten, and that his name would live long afterwards in the memory of the old almsmen.

The remembrance of his visit to Canterbury lingered in his mind, and, in 1363, when he married his cousin Joan, he left a memorial of his marriage in the beautiful chapel still to be seen in the crypt of the cathedral, where two priests were to pray for his soul, first in his lifetime, and also, according to the practice of those times, after his death. You can still trace the situation of the two altars where the priests stood, and on the groined vaultings you can see his arms, and the arms of his father, and in connection with the joyful event in thankfulness for which he founded the chapel, what seems to be the face of his beautiful wife, commonly known as the Fair Maid of Kent, and for the permission to found this chantry he left to the Chapter of Canterbury an estate which still belongs to them, the manor of "Fawkes Hall." Who and what Fawke may have been is altogether unknown, but he would have little thought of the strange and universal celebrity his house would acquire in the form in which we are now so familiar with it in the gardens, the bridge, and the railway station of *Vauxhall*.

And now we have to go again over ten years, and we find the prince engaged in a war in Spain, helping Don Pedro, King of Spain, against his brotner. But this would take us too far away. I will only say that here also he won a most brilliant victory, the battle of Nejara, in 1367: and it is interesting to remember that the first great commander of the English armies had a Peninsular war to fight as well as the last, and the flower of the English chivalry led his troops through the Pass of Roncesvalles,

"Where Charlemagne and all his peerage fell,"

in the days of the old romances.

XIV

THE SIEGE OF CALAIS

Five days after the great battle of Crescy, the King laid siege to Calais. This siege—ever afterwards memorable—lasted nearly a year. In order to starve the inhabitants out, King Edward built so many wooden houses for the lodgings of his troops, that it is said their quarters looked like a second Calais suddenly sprung up around the first. Early in the siege, the governor of the town drove out what he called the useless mouths, to the number of seventeen hundred persons, men and women, young and old. King Edward allowed them to pass through his lines, and even fed them, and dismissed them with money, but, later in the siege, he was not so merciful—five hundred more, who were afterwards driven out, dying of starvation and misery. The garrison were so hard-pressed at last, that they sent a letter to King Philip, telling him that they had eaten all the horses, all the dogs, and all the rats and mice that could be found in the place; and, that if he did not relieve them, they must either surrender to the English, or eat one another to give them relief; but they were so hemmed in by the English power, that he could not succeed, and was fain to leave the place. Upon this they hoisted the English flag and surrendered to King Edward. "Tell your General," said he to the humble messengers who came out of the town, "that I require to have sent here, six of the most distinguished citizens, bare-legged, and in their shirts, with ropes about their necks; and let those six men bring with them the keys of the castle and the town."

When the Governor of Calais related this to the people in the Market-place, there was great weeping and distress; in the midst of which, one worthy citizen, named Eustace de Saint Pierre, rose up and said, that if the six men required were not sacrificed, the whole population would be; therefore, he offered himself as the first. Encouraged by this bright example, five other worthy citizens rose up one after another, and offered themselves to save the rest. The Governor, who was too badly wounded to be able to walk, mounted a poor old horse that had not been eaten, and conducted these good men to the gate, while all the people cried and moaned.

Edward received them wrathfully, and ordered the heads of the whole six to be struck off. Sir Walter Manny pleaded for them, but in vain. However, the good Queen fell upon her knees, and besought the king to give them up to her. The King replied, "I wish you had been somewhere else; but I cannot refuse you" So she had them properly dressed, made a feast for them, and sent them back with a handsome present, to the great rejoicing of the whole camp. I hope the people of Calais loved the daughter to whom she gave birth soon afterwards, for her gentle mother's sake.

Now, came that terrible disease, the Plague, into Europe, hurrying from the heart of China; and killed the wretched people—especially the poor—in such enormous numbers, that one-half of the inhabitants of England are related to have died of it ' It killed the cattle, in great numbers, too; and so few working men remained alive that there were not enough left to till the ground