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All the volumes are written by resident members of the University of Oxford, actively engaged in teaching in the Final School of Modern History, and the authors trust that their experience in working together, and their knowledge of the methods of instruction in it, may be made useful to a larger public by means of this series of manuals.

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# THE MAKING OF THE ENGLISH NATION

(55 B.C.—I 135 A.D.).

## CHAPTER I.

### CELTIC AND ROMAN BRITAIN.

Our earliest knowledge of the island now called Great Britain reaches back to a shadowy past, of which there are no historical records. But from geo-<sup>Britain before</sup>logy and archaeology we can learn a few <sup>the Celts.</sup> scattered facts about the condition of the country in the infancy of the human race. It seems agreed that the first inhabitants of the land were a species of stunted savages, to whom the name of "Palaeolithic<sup>1</sup> men" has been given, because they lived in huts or caves hollowed out of the soil, had no implements save rude tools of stone, and were quite ignorant of the use of metals. It would also appear that Britain was not at that remote date an island, but was joined on to the mainland of Europe. Presently, owing to changes in the surface of the earth, the English Channel came to be formed, and we find traces that the first dwellers must have been succeeded by another body of savages, equally ignorant of the metals, but obtaining their food by slightly better stone instruments. These, to distinguish them from the first, are known to geologists as the "Neolithic men".<sup>2</sup> Racially both these two barbarous tribes were perhaps Iberians, akin to the Basques still to be found in the Pyrenees.

At some period quite unfixed (for we have no dates)

<sup>1</sup> From *παλαιός* ancient, and *λίθος* stone.

- From *νίος* new, and *λίθος* stone.

a fresh incursion into the island took place. The newcomers were Celts, and in blood belonged to the group of races called Aryan, which includes, among others, the Teutonic, Italian, Greek, Slavonic, and many of the Persian and Indian peoples.

The Celts seem to have passed into their new home in two great waves, corresponding to the two main divisions in which they ultimately occupied the land. Of these, the first to arrive were the Goidelic Celts, who overran the modern England and Scotland, as well as the adjoining island of Ireland (Erin). In the process of occupation they exterminated the former inhabitants, though there is fragmentary evidence that in some districts there was a fusion with the Iberian settlers. From the Goidelic Celts have sprung the Irish, the Highlanders, and the Southern Welsh of the Wales of to-day; and the Erse, Gaelic, and Manx languages are mainly Goidelic in structure. Subsequently

to the Goidels came the second group—the Brythons or Brythonic Celts,—but there are no means for settling the interval between the two inroads. Just as the Goidels had driven back and displaced the earliest inhabitants, so now in turn in central and southern Britain they had to give way to the new tribe. The Brythons were akin to the Celtic Gauls, living north of the Loire, and there are good reasons for believing that at a still later date there was a third wave of immigration from the Continent, consisting of Belgian Celts, who, however, were in race identical with the Brythons. In this way Great Britain came to be inhabited by a Celtic population, which in Scotland, Southern Wales, Devonshire, and Cornwall was Goidelic, while the remainder was Brythonic, with a sprinkling of Belgians in the eastern and south-eastern counties.

The Celts generally, though savages, had reached a higher point of development than the barbarous Iberians. Fair-haired and tall, with flashing eyes, they contrasted remarkably with the stunted, dark race they had conquered. In religion they were pagans,

**Customs of the Celts.**

worshipping a number of gods, to whom they were wont to sacrifice with horrid rites, even offering human beings at their altars. Their priests were a caste called the Druids, whose influence over the people was unbounded; they retained it, like the "medicine-man" of savage tribes to-day, by acting as conjurors and wizards. The Druids were the teachers of the young, and they seem to have believed in the immortality of the soul.

Politically the Celts were organized in tribes, and under the leadership of their kings or chiefs they made incessant war on each other, riding to battle in chariots and clad in bronze armour. **Celtic tribes in Britain.**

But, like the heroes in Homer, they always left their chariots to engage on foot. It is still possible to make out the main tribes in the island who formed the network of states of which Great Britain was composed. In the south the Cantii occupied the modern Kent, the Trinobantes the land north of the Thames, the Icenii Norfolk and Suffolk, and the Catuvellauni the district west of the Trinobantes. All these tribes were largely Belgic. Other powerful groups were the Damnonii in Cornwall and Devon, which is often called Damnonia, the Coritani in Derbyshire and Lincoln, the Brigantes in Yorkshire, and the Ordovices and Silures respectively in North and South Wales. The Celts seem to have been quite incapable of union, while their mutual jealousies and intestine wars really rendered them an easy prey to any would-be conqueror.

Their social customs indicate that in many respects they were still but little removed from the stage of savagery. The habit which most struck Roman explorers was the practice of dyeing their skins a bright blue with woad, and the northern tribes retaining this custom longest came to be known as the Picti (painted men). But as time passed some elements of civilization were introduced. From their armour and weapons they must have been acquainted with the metals, and we even find the use of a gold coinage current among the states in the south. The Celts had **Gradual civilization of the Celts.**

no towns, but lived for the most part in detached huts planted in the great clearings and uplands, and here they tilled the fields and bred great herds of cattle. Their fortifications were very simple, merely a high earthwork surrounded by a palisade of felled trees. But that they were capable of erecting more solid structures is proved by the colossal stone monuments at Stonehenge, which are probably Brythonic, and may have been due to the Druids. There was also some trade with the outside world. Devonshire and Cornwall produced tin, which was brought to the south-east corner of the island and thence transported into Gaul. It was formerly supposed that the Phoenicians had bartered directly with Dannonia for the metals to be found there, but this seems very doubtful.

Such, then, were the island and its inhabitants at the date at which it passes into history proper. Its earliest name would appear to have been *Albion* **The name of the island.** (which is not a Celtic word, and may therefore go back to the era before the Celts), but at this stage it was called *Britannia*, which must be connected with the Brythons or Britons.

In the memorable year 55 B.C. the Celts in Britain first came into contact with the Romans, when Julius Cæsar, **Julius Cæsar in Britain.** who had already conquered Gaul, made his famous expedition across the Channel. His object was partly to secure himself against the Celts succouring their kin in Gaul, partly to gain the island for Roman rule, and partly to explore the unknown regions beyond the seas. He landed near Deal, but as the season was far advanced withdrew without accomplishing much. Next year (54 B.C.) he returned, and after winning over some of the tribes defeated the most powerful of the Celtic kings—Cassivelaunus, the chief of the Trinobantes. Once more Cæsar withdrew, never to return, and but little was done for nearly a century to make the country an integral part of the Roman state. Yet his invasion is a landmark; the trade of south-east Britain greatly increased, and now that Gaul was under

Roman rule the Celts were brought into closer connection with the civilization of the west. In spite of Cassivelaunus' defeat the Trinobantes recovered their supremacy, and under Cunobelinus—Shakespeare's Cymbeline—dominated the south, having their head-quarters at Camulodunum, the modern Colchester.

In 43 A.D., after the Roman empire had been established for half a century, a fresh effort was made to reduce the island, and from this date the Roman occupation strictly speaking commences. **Renewed Roman invasion.** Aulus Plautius during the reign of the emperor Claudius landed with an army, allied himself with the Regni and Iceni and conquered the land between the Wash and Southampton. His success was such that the emperor himself paid a short visit to his new dominions. In 47 Plautius was succeeded by Ostorius Scapula, who continued the work of annexation. The most stubborn resistance came from the Ordovices and Silures in Wales, and to retain his hold on these restless tribes Scapula established two military stations at Deva (Chester) and Isca Silurum (Caerleon, on the Usk), connecting them by a third fortress at Uriconium (Wroxeter). During his tenure of power the British king Caractacus was captured and sent to Rome.

In 58 Suetonius Paullinus followed as governor. His first efforts were aimed at securing the island of Mona (Anglesey), a sacred home of the Druids, but while he was engaged in the war there, the Iceni, under their queen Boudicca (Boadicea), maddened by the tyranny of the new rulers, rose in revolt and slaughtered every Roman that could be found. Paullinus took an equally bloody revenge; Boadicea was driven to suicide, and 80,000 Britons are said to have perished.

Much had now been done to plant the Roman government on the island, but its conquest was reserved for the great general and statesman Julius Agricola, whose life by Tacitus throws much light on **Agricola's conquests and rule.** this obscure period.

Agricola was in command from 78 to 89 A.D. During



that time he brought the task handed on to him by his predecessors to a successful conclusion. His first campaigns enabled him to reach the Cheviots, and to guard against the inroads of the northern tribes he constructed a line of forts from the Sol way Firth to the Tyne, and posted a legion at York. Pushing on from this basis he next reduced the Lowlands of Scotland, and ran a second line of forts from the mouth of the Clyde to the mouth of the Forth. Agricola's desire was to secure the whole island. Accordingly he plunged still further north among the wild Caledonian tribes, whom he defeated at the *Graupian Mount*. But his recall in 89 by Domitian, jealous of his successes, prevented the attainment of this great object. None the less, his steady advance and his wise measures of organization had laid the basis of the future Roman province.

On Agricola's withdrawal the north recovered its independence, but only for a short time. In 119 the emperor Hadrian came to Britain, and to protect the south turned Agricola's line of forts **Britain after Agricola.** into a solid stone wall across the Cheviots from sea to sea, many traces of which still exist; and shortly afterwards the further boundary at the still narrower isthmus between the Firths of Clyde and Forth was recovered by Antoninus Pius (Hadrian's successor), who converted the second line of forts into an earthwork protected by a ditch. These were necessary precautions against the frequent inroads from the lawless tribes in Northern Scotland (chief of whom were the fierce Picts), and gradually the chain of defence running from the Clyde to the Forth became the limit to Roman sway. Attempts were occasionally made to extend the imperial power into the wild region beyond, notably by the emperor Severus in 208 (he died at York three years later), but they were not persisted in, and so failed. Geographically as well as practically the province of Britain was terminated by the natural boundary formed by the two Firths.

**Our information** as to **the Roman rule** in the conquered part of the island is very slight, but still a few details

can be pieced together. For administrative purposes Britain as a province. Britain was considered a 'diocese', governed by a vice-prefect or vicar, who was responsible to the Prefect of Gaul. The diocese was itself subdivided into five provinces, the names of which, viz. *First and Second Britain, Maxima Caisariensis, Flavia Ccesariensis*, and *Vakntia*, are known, but with the exception of Valentia (which lay between the two great walls in the north) their respective boundaries are quite uncertain. Britain, however, was never Romanized as Gaul and Spain were, and this may be explained by the predominance of the military element in its organization over the civil. The later date at which the conquest was begun, the difficulty encountered in subduing the people, the ceaseless efforts required to hold it against the inroads of the barbarians—Picts and Scots in the north, Saxons from the sea in the east,—together with the cold of the climate and the absence of real material wealth, combined to make Britain in Roman eyes merely an important military outpost. It has been well called the Algeria of the empire. In themselves the military arrangements were very elaborate, and came under the direction of three important officials:—1. The Count of the Saxon Shore (*comes littoris Saxonici*), in command of the troops from the Isle of Wight to the Wash, whose duty was to guard the coast from Saxon inroads. 2. The Duke of the Two Britains (*Dux Britanniarum*), at the head of the legions posted at Caerleon, Deva, and Eboracum (York). 3. The Count of Britain (*comes Britannia'*), who, though a civil official, was occupied with supervising the whole system of defence.

Slight as were the results when compared with those effected in Gaul, the Roman occupation left a deep mark on the country. Under the strong hand of the government, backed by the legions, much was done to help the Celts in passing from the tribal state of society. The Romans, while imparting many elements of their own admirable law, stamped

Results of  
the Roman  
occupation.

out the internecine wars which had previously rent the various states. They were always great engineers, and by constructing great roads running through the length and breadth of the land, they opened it up and made inter-communication possible. The material resources of the soil were greatly improved; marshes were drained and forests cleared; the copper and tin mines were worked, and scientific improvements introduced into agriculture. The ubiquitous Roman trader pushed his way everywhere, and for a semi-barbarous people there is no more potent civilizing force than commerce. The British auxiliaries, raised to serve in the armies of the empire, brought back a knowledge of western civilization, which acted as a leaven on their countrymen. These results are especially to be seen in the towns built by the Romans. At Eboracum (York), Lindum (Lincoln), Camulodunum (Colchester), Londinium (London), Venta Belgarum (Winchester), Glevum (Gloucester), Aquae Sulis (Bath), and many other cities, the Roman influence was concentrated. These became important municipalities, where the lesson of self-government was learnt; and from the numerous public buildings, such as theatres, baths, temples, together with the villas of private individuals, it is clear that many Romans and Romanized Celts must have settled down at these centres. The conquerors, however, did not succeed in imposing the Latin tongue on the people generally. It was, of course, spoken in the *municipia*, and must have been the official means of communication, but as the Celt was not a lover of towns, dwelling rather in the open country, it never replaced the universal use of Welsh. From the fact that on the withdrawal of the Romans the Celtic speech at once became dominant, it is plain how slightly Latin had influenced the mass of the inhabitants. Cornwall and Devonshire remained Celtic throughout, and northern Britain was hardly touched by the new civilization.

It must not be forgotten that the first introduction of Christianity was due to the Roman occupation. At some date, not yet fixed, the Celts abandoned their polytheism

for the faith of the Gospel. As to its influences and extent, little can be said. We hear of British martyrs, such as S. Alban (304); and S. Patrick, who converted Ireland, probably came from Valentia; while in Pelagius the Celtic church produced the author of a famous heresy. But the important point to note is that the British were Christians, since the next great invasion, that of the Teutons, consisted of wild heathens.

It is not surprising to find Britain occasionally playing a striking part in the affairs of Western Europe. Carausius (287), Constantius (296), and his greater British Caesars. son Constantine (306), who was to be ruler of the whole Roman world, figure in the later history of the empire as wearing the purple in Britain, and were at different times at the head of its provinces.

By the end of the fourth century the condition of the Roman empire, slowly tottering to its fall under the deadly attacks of the barbarian tribes, made it increasingly apparent that it would be impossible to hold the island much longer. At last, in 407, the usurper, Constantine III., withdrew his troops to lead them to conquer Gaul; and in 410, with the final abandonment of the province by the feeble emperor Honorius, the Roman occupation, after lasting for three centuries and a half, finally came to an end. The

**End of the Roman occupation.** Celts, now left to themselves, were earnestly recommended to guard their territories; but this was poor comfort to a people exposed to the tide of invasion sweeping in from the north, where the Picts and Scots (an Irish tribe not yet settled in the modern Scotland) were ravaging the frontier, and from the east, where swarms of Saxon pirates were scouring every inlet in their barks. The worst point lay in the fact that the Romans had kept the system of defence entirely in their own hands. The Celts, accustomed to rely on the sharp sword of the legionary, were little prepared to resist their merciless foes. Some kind of unity seems to have been preserved for a time under a nominal head, called the "Gwledig", who may have been a continuation of the

Roman official, the Duke of the Two Britains; but the Celts were quite incapable of any real union or combined effort, and the old suicidal wars broke out when the strong arm of the Roman was removed. The sad condition of the island may be inferred from their piteous appeal for aid to Aetius, which was eloquently termed "The groans of the Britons" [446]. Thus disunited and pressed on all sides, it is surprising to find what a good defence they ultimately made. It proves the innate bravery of the Celts, and how much might have been done had their undisciplined valour been properly organized.

## CHAPTER II

### THE COMING OF THE ANGLO-SAXONS.

The attacks on Britain from the sea, like the inroads of the Picts and Scots, had begun as early as 364 A.D., long before the Romans left the island; and **The attacks** it seems possible that, despite the efforts of **on Britain.** the Count of the Saxon Shore and the legions, a small settlement of Saxons had been made in the south-east during the fourth century. But it was not until Britain was left to itself, that the piratical incursions of the barbarians became a systematic attempt at conquest and settlement along the whole coast. Early in the fifth century, it appeared doubtful whether Britain would not fall a victim to the wild Celtic tribes of Scotland and Ireland; but the renewed and persistent onset from the sea finally turned the balance in favour of **The Teutons.** their Teutonic rivals. For the invaders of the east and south parts of the island, though like the Picts and Scots belonging to the great Aryan races, were members of a different branch of it—the Teutonic, to which also belonged the Franks and Visigoths and Burgundians, who at the same time conquered and settled down in France and Spain. They spoke a language of their

own—Low German, which is intimately connected with modern or High German. The invading hosts were furnished by a variety of tribes, but three main constituent elements can be distinguished, viz.: *Saxons* from Friesland, and the lands lying round the mouths of the Weser and Elbe and the districts east of those rivers; *Angles* from Schleswig and Holstein; and *Jutes* from Jutland (northern Denmark). It is particularly noticeable that all these peoples lay far outside the Roman empire, so that, unlike the hordes of Franks and Goths and Burgundians, who about the same time were breaking up the Roman state, they had practically not been touched by western civilization. The Teutonic tribes on the Continent, now pouring into France, Italy, and Spain, had for more than a century been hovering on the Roman frontier; they had fought in the Roman armies, and were saturated with respect for Roman law and institutions; when they finally turned their arms against their former masters it was to gain a settlement, not to work destruction.

The Angles and Saxons, on the other hand, were pure barbarians, knowing nothing of the majesty of an ordered government; they lived to plunder and destroy everything alien to their own rude institutions.

Tradition has it that the Jutes were the first to secure a firm footing in Britain. Where there are no authentic records the exact date cannot be fixed; **The Jutes in Kent.** but for lack of a better the customary landmark 449 A.D. may be accepted. As might be expected, the coming of the Jutes is wrapped in a cloud of legend. According to the story, the Britons in the South-East, hard pressed by their foes, had recourse to the hackneyed device of inviting one section of the invaders to aid them in resisting the rest. Hengist and Horsa (as the chiefs of the Jutes were named) in this way landed at Ebbsfleet, and took up their quarters in Thanet. The usual sequel followed. A quarrel broke out between the Britons and their Teutonic mercenaries, and the Jutes, to avenge their wrongs, at once dashed across the narrow strait on to the mainland. They

defeated the Celtic king Vortigern in a series of battles, and speedily pushed their way up to the Medway.

Whatever may be the truth of the legend, the fact remains that by 473 Kent had passed from Celtic to Jutish rule. Further advance was then stopped by the Celto-Roman fortress of Anderida (Pevensey), and more effectually by the great forest of the *Andredsweald*, a vast belt of dense woodland 120 miles long by 30 wide.

At the same time that Kent had been torn from the Celts, a detachment of Saxons (about 471) had landed at Selsey and slowly fought their way eastwards, until in 491 Anderida was stormed and the inhabitants put to the sword. To distinguish them from other tribes of Saxons, these settlers came to be known as South Saxons, and the district occupied by them as Sussex. Meanwhile the East Saxons had been finding a home in Essex, and probably during the same period a fringe of Anglian settlements had been steadily deposited along the coast from the Wash to the Forth. Another body of Angles had been seizing the land lying between Essex and the Wash, out of which two separate war-bands formed the two settlements of Norfolk and Suffolk (North Folk and South Folk). Thus by the end of the fifth century the Celts had been driven from the south-eastern part of the island.

Early in the next century a still more important conquest followed in the south. In 519 a second detachment of Jutes had appropriated the Isle of Wight, and uniting with a kindred tribe called the Gewissas, sailed up the Solent and fastened on Hampshire. The invaders ultimately coalesced into the tribe of the West Saxons, and gave the general name of Wessex to the territory they had won. Though destined in the long run to be the dominant race in the island, their advance at first was slow. In 520 they were severely defeated at Mount Badon (the site of which is uncertain), and tradition ascribes their rout to the famous Celtic hero, King Arthur, round whose

**Saxons in  
Sussex and  
Essex.**

**The Angles.**

**The West  
Saxons in  
Hampshire.**

**Tradition  
of Arthur.**

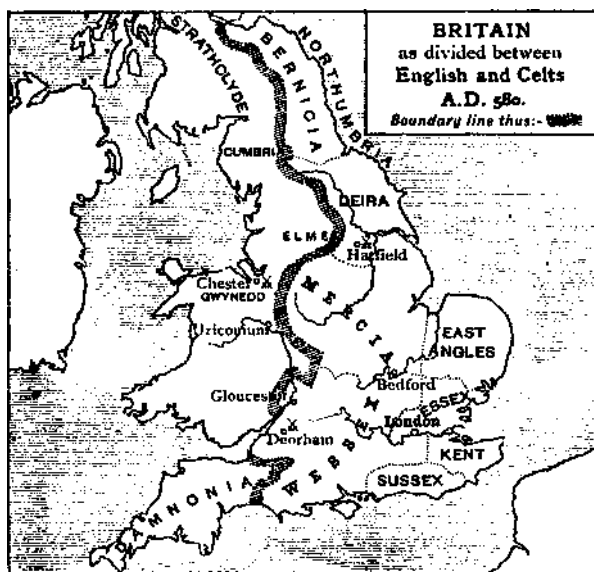
person and court a whole cycle of romance and song has collected. There may have been at this time a powerful British king, who united the Britons against their common foe; but as the legends of his achievements are found lingering in many parts of the country, even as far north as Edinburgh, it is impossible to say definitely who or what he was. The battle at Mount Badon checked the **Advance of the West Saxons** for thirty years. At last, however, they were strong enough once more to strike out eastwards. After storming Sorbiodunum (Old Sarum) they cut their way into the Thames valley, crossed the river at Wallingford, and marched down its banks, only to find London already taken by another Saxon tribe (Middle Saxons, whence Middlesex). Foiled in this direction, the West Saxons, in 571, under their king Ceawlin, pushed north again, seized Bedford, whence they struck off to the west, passed over the Cotswolds, and inflicted a **Victory at Deorham**. The fruits of this victory were the Roman cities of Aquae Sulis (Bath) and Glevum (Gloucester). They had now gained the fertile Severn valley, and by running a wedge of conquered land down to the sea, had cut off the Damnonian Welsh in Devon and Cornwall from their kindred in the north. The sack of Uriconium followed shortly, but in an attempt to capture the important town of Chester (by which another section of the **Defeat at Fethanleah**. Celts would have been penned into Wales), Ceawlin was routed at Fethanleah.<sup>1</sup> Once more his triumphant advance was checked, and he had to fall back. A part of his tribe (called the *Hwiccas*) even split off from the main body and allied with the victorious Welsh. For the present the West Saxon territory was bounded by the mouth of the Severn.

During this onset in the west the other settlers had not been idle. The Teutons had been slowly forcing **Rise of Mercia**. their way into the heart of the island. The East Anglians had pushed inland as far as the Fen-country, while other tribes of Angles occupied

<sup>1</sup> A place of uncertain site, perhaps Faddiley, in Cheshire.

the upper waters of the Trent. In this central district a powerful state was being gradually knit together. From the fact that along their whole frontier the new settlers were now coterminous with the Celts, this aggregate, composed of various tribes, acquired the name of Mercia, or the territory occupied by the "marchmen".

Still further north the Anglian fringe had grown into



the kingdom of Deira, lying between the Tees and the Humber, with York as its head-quarters. In 547 another Anglian body, under their ruler Ida, had carved out the principality of Bernicia (the centre of which was the rocky stronghold of Bamborough), stretching from the Tees to the Forth. These two districts were subsequently amalgamated into the realm of *Northumbria* (North-Humber-land); and it is important to note two points with regard to it: (1) that

the kingdom so formed included a tract of land which is now part of Scotland, and (2) that the Teutonic invaders (like the Romans) failed to extend their power over the tribes beyond the Forth. At this stage further acquisition was prevented by the great obstacle which is formed by the range of mountains running from the head-waters of the Clyde right down to the Peak in Derbyshire, which acts like a solid backbone to the northern part of England.

Thus by about the end of the sixth century the best half of Britain had changed hands. This transference of the land from Celtic to Teutonic hands had been effected by a real conquest, the Britons being either massacred, enslaved, or driven out to the west. "The Welsh", says the chronicler vividly, "fled like fire." Hence the Teutonic settlement in England materially differed from the similar inroads on the Continent, of races such as the Franks in Gaul, or the Lombards in Italy, who allowed the conquered inhabitants to remain in their holdings, while imposing on them an acknowledgment of their inferior position. But in Britain, too, a gradual alteration in this respect slowly crept in. With the wars of the sixth century the stage of real extermination comes to an end, and the subsequent advance from various causes was characterized by less ferocity.

The Welsh. The Welsh, however (to use the generic name applied by the Teutons to the various Celtic tribes), were still powerful. In the west, *Damnonia* (Somerset, Devon, and Cornwall) was still intact, and north of the Bristol Channel a solid phalanx of Celtic territory stretched as far as the Clyde. The common danger seems to have united this area into a federation, and though probably not wholly governed by one ruler, it became known as the land of the *Kymry* (or comrades).

In the conquered territory the Teutonic invaders proceeded rapidly to settle down. They had brought with them from the Continent the rudiments of a political structure, which speedily crystallized into a firm organization as they became fixed

**The institutions of the Teutons.**

in their new homes. Socially, the old-English tribes consisted of two classes—the *Eorlas* or nobles, with hereditary privileges due to their birth, and the *Ceorls*, or simple freemen. Below these (but without any real place in society) were the slaves, many of whom were British; though (as we infer from Tacitus) slavery was a recognized institution long before the period of immigration. The leaders of the tribes were called *Ealdortmn*, round whom clustered a special band of comrades called *Gesiths*. These fought for the chief to whom they had attached themselves, and were rewarded for their services by sharing in his food and spoil. The bond between the two was particularly close: in war they were the leader's body-guard, in peace his servants and comrades. As *Beowulf* expresses it in the great English epic, they became his "board-fellows, and hearth-fellows".

In occupying the land, each family or group of families, united by the ties of kinship, settled in a separate clearing, which grew into the township, and thus formed the lowest unit in the body politic. The township At the head of each such village was the *tun-reeve*, who presided at the meeting of the villagers—the *tun-moot*,—where the minor matters of the township, the cultivation of the land, the pasturing of cattle, and so on, were arranged. The names of these townships dotted over the country indicate the double way in which they grew up. When we find a place whose name ends in -ingham or -ington, such as Paddington or Buckingham, we may be fairly sure that the township originated in a settlement of a family of freemen, *e.g.* the Buckings or the Paddings. But where we have the name of a mata, not of a family, followed by the suffix -ton or -ham, as in the cases of Clapham or Alfreton (*i.e.* *Clapa's-ham* or *Alfred's-ton*), it seems probable that the later township started from a nucleus composed of the dependants of one of the great chiefs, and was the township of Clapa's or Alfred's people.

Thus from the first there existed in England two kinds of villages: (1) the free family settlements, (2) those

more or less dependent on a powerful lord. It must also be noted that the subsequent parish is simply the township regarded as an ecclesiastical area.

Above the township came the *hundred*, composed of groups of townships (originally perhaps a hundred families

**The Hundred.** linked together for purposes of justice and war, and thence the name passing on to the territory so occupied). The hundred had a monthly meeting—the *hundred-moot*, presided over by the *hundreds-ealdor*,—where justice was administered, and disputes that could not be decided in the *tun-moot* settled.

**The folk-moot.** Highest of all was *the folk-moot*, or assembly of the whole folk or tribe, which was the final court of justice, and arranged the action of the folk for the year. The folk-moot was attended by the free-men in arms, and met every six months. From the beginning we can detect the presence of an inner council of chiefs, who mapped out the business to be laid before the folk-moot, and this later grew into the *witan*, or council of wise men.

An important result of the conquest seems to have been that a single ruler, with the title of king, replaced

**Rise of kings.** the ealdormen as leader of the folk, a change which was no doubt due to the

pre-eminent merit shown by one of the great chiefs in organizing the war. The name of king (*cyning*) signifies the man of the kinship or race, but his office was not hereditary. On his death a successor (chosen for the most part from his family) was elected by the wise men to take his place, and the choice was then submitted to the folk-moot for the approval of the tribe. The ad-

**The government.** ministration generally was carried on by the *ealdormen*, and by officials called *reeves*, who represented the king and collected the payments due to him.

The land itself was distributed mainly in three ways:

**The land.** (i) portions occupied by the various villages, which held and cultivated it in common; (2) areas either granted to or seized by the chiefs, which

was tilled by their dependants; (3) the *Folk-land*, or surplus left over after the first two allotments had been made. This was considered to belong to the whole folk, though grants could be carved out of it by the king with the consent of his wise men. It was from such grants that the king's *thegns*, or *gesiths*, became powerful landowners alongside of the old nobility of birth.

Out of this rudimentary structure English political institutions have grown to what they are to-day. The vexed question as to how far that develop-  
ment has been affected by other than Teu-  
tonic elements cannot be settled definitely.

The relations  
of the invaders  
to the Welsh.

During the first era of conquest there was little fusion with the Welsh, and the best authorities, arguing from the facts that Anglo-Saxon is a pure Teutonic tongue, and that the Christianity of the Welsh totally disappeared in the land occupied by the invaders, together with the tradition as to the nature of the invasion, are agreed that English institutions are Teutonic and not Celtic in origin. This does not, of course, mean that there is not an infusion of Celtic blood in the race. Even from the first there must have been a certain amount of intercourse between the two peoples. The women of the Celts were no doubt largely spared, and there is ample evidence of the presence of Celtic slaves. Later on the Celtic element became larger. As the Teutons pushed westwards they were fewer in numbers, and their treatment of the conquered was no longer a matter of fire and sword as it had been at Anderida. But even then the admixture of blood was not of such a nature as to be anything like an absorption of the Teuton by the Celt.

With the end of the sixth century and the permanent occupation of the land by the Angles and Saxons the first stage in the "Making of England" has  
been accomplished. Much still remained  
to be done before the possibility of the  
name of Britain being replaced by that of England became even likely. But the next stage is marked by a momentous change. At the time of their landing

End of the  
first stages of  
the conquest.

Angles, Saxons, and Jutes were brutal heathens, worshipping a number of gods, of whom Thor and Woden were the chief. Before the next century had quite run its course, the Teutonic states were abandoning their paganism, and by adopting Christianity had become an integral part in the united Christendom of the west.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE CONVERSION OF ENGLAND, 596-681,

The history of the conversion of England is so inextricably bound up with the political development of the various kingdoms, that to separate them is out of the question. And yet it is advisable, as far as possible, to keep the two movements distinct.

Though the Welsh were Christians, the feelings between Celt and Teuton rendered any attempt at conversion within the island almost impossible. Hence, if there was to be any prospect of success, the initiative must be taken outside Britain. Luckily at this time a strong and wise pope, Gregory the Great, was in power at Rome, and in 596 he determined to signalize his pontificate by a vigorous missionary enterprise among the heathen.

**The origin of Teutonic Christianity.** The motives for this act are told in one of the most famous of all stories. Many years before, so the tale runs, passing through the market-place of Rome, Gregory, then merely a deacon, was struck by the faces of some boy-slaves exposed for sale. *In* answer to his questions he was informed they were "Angles". "Not Angles but Angels," he corrected, looking at their fair hair and complexion, so strange to the Italian. On being further assured that they came from Deira, and that their king's name was *Ælla*, Gregory, with a memorable play on words, replied: "They shall be saved from the wrath of God (*de ira*), and alleluia shall be sung in the land of *Ælla*."

Gregory was not able to carry out the promise in his own person, but he sent Augustine at the head of a small band of devoted followers to start the work. [596.]

Just as Kent had been the first scene of Teutonic conquest, so it was now the first part of Teutonic England to hear the Gospel. Its king, Ethelbert, had married Bertha, a daughter of one of the Frankish sovereigns, who was herself a Christian, so that it is not surprising to find that Augustine received a fair hearing. His success was rapid and complete. In a short time the king and thousands of his people accepted the new faith. Augustine after a visit to the Continent came back as archbishop, and fixed his church at Canterbury, which thus became, and has continued ever since, the head-see of the English Church. The new bishop was not content with preaching alone. He organized the new converts, and established dependent bishoprics at Rochester and London. This was in conformity with Gregory's gigantic scheme, which already had mapped out England into two divisions, with metropolitan centres at Canterbury and York, and twelve bishoprics ranged under each. Finding also that the Welsh clergy differed from him in points of ritual, Augustine met them in conference at a place called "Augustine's Oak" (now Aust) on the Severn, but the meeting was a failure. The Celtic church disliked dealing with the hated conqueror, even when converted, and refused to admit Augustine's supremacy. The conversion of Northumbria followed later as a direct result of Augustine's Kentish mission; but this necessitates a glance at the political history.

In 616 Ethelbert of Kent, the most powerful king of his day, died, but before his death there already existed in Britain three strong kingdoms—Wessex, Mercia, and Northumbria,—round which clustered the smaller principalities in varying combinations. This arrangement of states has given rise to the expression *Hept-arc/iy*, which implies that England was at this stage divided into seven distinct realms. The phrase is very misleading. Strictly speaking there were

eight or nine kingdoms; but in reality only three, to which the remainder were subordinate. The future development of the country practically turned on the possibility of extension at the expense of the Celt. Mercia, Wessex, and Northumbria were the only powers directly coterminous with the Welsh, and it became clear that in the long run the smaller states must succumb to one of these three, which were bound sooner or later to grow in size. The only question was whether any single member of the triad would succeed in becoming sufficiently strong to dominate its two rivals.

Northumbria was the first to make a bid for the supremacy. Its king, Ethelfrith, in 593, found himself hemmed in by a great Celtic League, stretching from the Severn to the Clyde. The danger was most pressing in the north, and so he struck his first blow in that direction. At Daegsastan (probably Dawstone, near Jedburgh) he defeated his foes and stemmed the tide of invasion. Next, turning to the south-west, he penetrated in a series of campaigns to the heart of the Welsh confederation, and by 613 had wrested from it the town of Chester. The possession of Chester brought him to the sea, and cut in half the Welsh territory. The Kymry of North Wales—Gwynedd, as it was called—were for the future separated from their kindred in Cumbria and Strathclyde (the lands lying between the Ribble and the Clyde). Ethelfrith's inroad was in fact a deadly blow to the Celtic League, and, coupled with the similar strategic advance of the West Saxons in the south, sealed the fate of the British.

The Northumbrian king, however, was confronted by a rival—Eadwine,—and in the struggle that ensued Ethelfrith was defeated and killed at the river Idle. But the new ruler was equally vigorous in prosecuting a policy of war. From Chester he seized the Isle of Man, and in the north planted the city of Edinburgh (Eadwine's burgh) to bridle the Picts and Scots. Such was his power that he compelled Mercia, East Anglia, and Wessex to acknow-

**Northumbria  
under Ethel-  
frith.**

**Eadwine king  
of Northum-  
bria.**

ledge his overlordship, and in 633 allied himself in marriage with the daughter of the Christian king of Kent.

His wife was accompanied to her new home in the north by a fervent missionary, Paulinus, bent on carrying Augustine's mission beyond the Humber. Mission of Paulinus.

The acceptance of the new faith preached by the ardent Paulinus was at first doubtful; but its success was elisured when the king, after taking the advice of his council, allowed himself to be baptized, and when Coifi, the chief priest of Woden, forsook his paganism and urged his followers to throw down the heathen idols.

The old Teutonic religion, however, was not to disappear without a champion. In the centre of England a

a fierce warrior, Penda, had organized the Mercian kingdom, until it reached from the Severn to the fens of Lincoln, and he now Career of Penda of Mercia.

engaged in a truceless war with the Teutonic peoples that had welcomed Christianity. "He persecuted", we are told, "them that believed in Christ wherever he found them"; yet probably his onslaughts were as much due to political ambition and fear of Northumbrian supremacy as to hatred of the Christian religion.

For years Penda was the terror of England. After defeating the West Saxons he joined with the Welsh king Cadwallon, and overthrew Eadwine at Hatfield in Yorkshire. Despite his efforts Christianity continued to spread. In Wessex a zealous monk, Birinus, had met

with great success; and another preacher, by name Felix, was working in East Anglia. Oswald and the Scottish Mission.

The new king of Northumbria also, Oswald, who before coming to the throne had spent years of retirement in Scotland, in his distress appealed for aid to the Celto-Scottish church of Iona (established by S. Columba), and in response a band of Scottish missionaries, headed by S. Aidan, spread over the north, aiming especially at converting the masses of the people rather than the kings and chiefs alone. The Scottish church was essentially a monastic body, and the unparalleled success of its labours among the Northumbrians and

elsewhere was largely due to the fact that wherever the new preachers visited they planted monasteries, to complete the work begun by oral teaching.

Penda's victorious career continued for a time unbroken. In 642 he defeated Oswald at Maserfield, and **Overthrow of Penda.** in the battle the Northumbrian king perished. His double realm, torn by dissension, split up into two kingdoms, Deira and Bernicia; but a few years later another great Northumbrian arose, Oswald's brother, Oswiu by name, who succeeded in joining once more the whole land under his sway. In 655 Oswiu met Penda at the river Winwaed, and after a furious fray the powerful Mercian was slain and his army routed.

There now remained no obstacle to the conversion of Mercia itself, and under the inspiring leadership of **Conversion of Mercia.** a Northumbrian missionary, S. Chad, the obstinate stronghold of the old faith slowly accepted Christianity.

All England now, save Sussex, had thrown off paganism, and some attempts had already been made to convert **Sussex and Wilfrid.** that last stronghold of the ancient faith, but without much being done until (to anticipate events a little) the coming, in 681, of Wilfrid, who had been forced to leave his see at York. Wilfrid's efforts were crowned with success. By the end of the seventh century Sussex like the other kingdoms had its bishopric, at Selsey.

The purely missionary work of conversion was now over, but there remained the arduous task of organizing **Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury.** the material at hand; and luckily at this moment the see of Canterbury was filled by a man well qualified to carry out the work. This was Theodore, a monk of Tarsus, who had become archbishop in 668, and whose untiring energy, splendid practical abilities, and strong, self-reliant, not to say autocratic, character proved especially valuable at the critical stage now reached. The archbishop's first object **was to weld** the whole church into a homogeneous body. By the synods of Whitby (664) and Hertford (673) he

prevailed on **the** various dioceses to acknowledge the authority of Rome, and to abandon the various points in which the Celtic church differed from the Roman. Theodore next proceeded to assert the supremacy of Canterbury over the church thus united, and in doing so was brought into conflict with another great leader, Wilfrid, the bishop of York, famous for his piety and zeal, but impetuous and masterful. After a sharp struggle Wilfrid had to give way to Theodore, backed by Rome, and, as has been related, retired to missionary work in Sussex. This controversy, painful in itself, had the merit of settling once and for all the primacy of Canterbury over the infant church. **His organizations of the church.** The last years of Theodore's archbishopric were spent in persistent organization, and in arranging the necessary if wearisome details of the ecclesiastical constitution. He subdivided many of the huge dioceses, thus making them easier to rule; he pressed on the building of monasteries and created a number of parishes; and he introduced a mass of important observances in ritual, as well as the disciplinary system of penances. Nor did he neglect education. His head-quarters at Canterbury became a famous school, and the example was widely followed elsewhere, notably at Whitby and Jarrow, which made Northumbria the intellectual centre of England. Hence if to S. Augustine belongs the glory of being the first missionary, to Theodore belongs the fame of having founded the English church.

Under such vigorous guidance the church grew fast and flourished, and its healthy life may be inferred from its becoming a centre for fresh missionary enterprise abroad. Wilfrid after converting Sussex crossed the Channel and preached to the Frisians; S. Boniface worked in Germany and founded the see of Mainz—the German Canterbury,—with such success that he has been called the Apostle of the Germans; Willibrord carried on Wilfrid's task and **created** the see of Utrecht. Nor were there wanting at home many famous men, such as S. Cuthbert of Lindis-

**English missions on the Continent.**

fame, Benedict Biscop of Wearmouth, and Ealdhelm of Malmesbury.

The conversion of England had a marked influence on the political development of the country. As we have seen, the actual process occupied about a hundred years, but the new movement came just at a critical stage, when the Anglo-Saxon power was expanding and was capable of being profoundly influenced. It must always be remembered that England owes her religion to two distinct sources—the Roman mission of S. Augustine, and the Scotch mission of S. Aidan and S. Chad. Where both worked with such single-heartedness for a common end, it is idle to attempt to apportion the credit. It was natural but deplorable that there should arise within the church itself a struggle as to which element should ultimately predominate. That the Roman element prevailed over the Celtic was probably for the general benefit of the nation, for in order that England might be kept in touch with European thought, it was important that Rome should prevail, and her final supremacy was due to the resolute policy of Theodore.

The most remarkable feature in the church when organized was its close harmony with the state. The ecclesiastical structure was, in fact, knitted into the political. The bishops sat with the ealdormen in the shire-moot where justice was administered; they took their seats in the witan along with the other wise men, and shared in the making of laws; and the payment of tithes was ordained by the kings. In this way the leaders of the church became the state advisers of the crown, and directly influenced the national policy. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that this union of the spiritual with the secular power was fruitful in results. The bishops were men of peace; the religion which they taught prized virtues little recognized by the fierce Teuton—humility, self-restraint, charity. Insensibly the character of the Angle and Saxon was profoundly modified, and it

**Place of the church in the constitution.**

**Results of the conversion on the English.**

is especially noticeable that after England became Christian the treatment of the conquered Welsh was much more humane. Similarly the relation of the various states to each other was altered for the better, though it was long before the idea took root, that men belonging to the same church should abstain from cruel and unnecessary internecine wars.

In legislation, too, the influence of the clergy was beneficially exerted in softening the harsh features of the Anglo-Saxon laws; the moral view was substituted for the customary, and by adding the idea of sin to that of crime, the binding obligation of the law was appreciably strengthened. And further, by taking cognizance of offences not punishable by law, but which could be checked by the clergy, such as unchastity or insobriety, or oppression of the poor, or covetousness, the church acted as a social agency, purifying society, and so rendering it more stable. But it was above all in the powerful impetus given to the drift towards unity that the most salutary results of the conversion may be seen. In itself the church was essentially a national body, not recognizing in strict theory Angles, Saxons, and Jutes, but merely Christians who believed in a common creed. Long before there was any political unity the clergy acknowledged the existence of an undivided English nation, as may be seen from the title of Baeda's book, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. This was more than a mere ecclesiastical fiction; for in the church councils, where bishops and priests met from all parts to deliberate as delegates of a single Christian people, a great stride was taken towards realizing the idea.

The church, in short, was a living centre of potent civilizing forces. Architecture, music, literature, painting, metal work—the arts and crafts,—were encouraged in the monasteries, and it was under the church's guidance that Baeda of Jarrow, "the Venerable Bede", wrote his history, and Caedmon, the first Christian poet, started the literature of England.

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE STRIFE OF THE THREE KINGDOMS, 670-835.

The fall of Penda once more left Northumbria in undisputed possession of the supremacy, and the claims of the northern kings may be inferred from Oswiu and Northumbrian supremacy. Oswiu's title: "Emperor of all Britain", "*Imperator totius Britannia*". Oswiu, however, was never as powerful as his predecessors had been, since in 659 Wulfhere, the ruler of Mercia, asserted the independence of his state from Northumbrian suzerainty. In fact, the likelihood (which at one time seemed almost a certainty) that the North would succeed in conquering the rest of England was already passing away. The power of Northumbria had in reality been broken by the desperate struggle with Penda, and the subsequent kings never recovered the lost ground. On the slightest provocation the two principalities of Deira and Bernicia were ready to fly asunder.

In 670 Oswiu was succeeded by Ecgrith, whose reign was a gallant attempt to extend his power by crushing the shattered Celtic League. The British were driven from Lancashire, Westmoreland, and Cumberland; the Picts were repulsed, and Wulfhere was defeated in Mercia (675). It looked as if the glories of Eadwine were to be revived; but in 685 a combined army of Picts and Scots destroyed the Northumbrian forces at Nectansmere in Fife, and Ecgrith fell on the field of battle.

For the next twenty years there was peace in the kingdom under Aldfrith, whose rule is coincident with the era of Northumbrian literary greatness. But the sands of the supremacy were fast running out. Eadbert was the last great ruler who governed an undivided Northumbria. He captured Alcluyd (near Dumbarton), the capital of the Welsh kingdom of Strathclyde, and his power may be

seen in the friendship and alliance he made with Pippin in Gaul. On Eadbert's death his realm split up finally into its two component parts, the former kingdoms of Bernicia and Deira, and in them confusion soon was supreme, king succeeding king with bewildering rapidity. So that when very shortly the Danish invasion began, they and fell an easy prey to the new immigrants. In this way Northumbria slipped out of the race for the overlordship of England.

Of the two other competitors, Wessex started with the advantage of having a population mainly composed of people belonging to the same tribe, whereas Mercia was an unwieldy aggregate of various Anglian clans, only capable of united effort when ably led. During the seventh century Wessex had been advancing its borders at the expense of the Welsh with great steadiness. After Ceawlin's death, its boundary to the west for some time had been the river Axe. But in 650, the ruler of the day, Cenwealh, by victories at Bradford-on-Avon (652) and The Pens (658), wrested Somerset from the Celts. The West Saxons even pushed as far as Exeter, but, unable completely to oust the Welsh, were obliged to share the town with them.

Thirty years later, in 685, Ceadwalla brought the Jutish Isle of Wight under his sway. Ceadwalla was followed by a very able king—Ine,—who carried on ceaseless war with the Welsh. Ine is noticeable as a skilful organizer of his dominions, and he was the first Saxon king who attempted a codification of the laws of his people. After building Taunton to act as a barrier on the west, he turned his arms eastwards and reduced Sussex, so that henceforward it became a part of the West Saxon kingdom. A great victory at Wanborough checked for a time the growing efforts of Mercia to extend in the south. But Wessex was not yet quite ready to play the part of a leading power. Ine's scheme of consolidating the West Saxon territory was frustrated by internal rebellion, and in 726, weary of the struggle, he suddenly abdicated and retired into **monastic life** at

Rome. Nothing could more aptly illustrate the hold that both Christianity and Rome exercised on the minds of Englishmen, than this voluntary surrender of his powers by the greatest king of his day. Ine's policy of slow annexation was carried a step further by Cuthred, who in 754 won the fight of Burford over the Mercian king Ethelbald, so that once more the West Saxons were established beyond the Thames. So far Wessex had advanced fast, but just as before, so now there came a check; it was to be the last.

Mercia had been growing even more rapidly than her rival. Under Ethelbald (731), who assumed the title of *Rex Britannia*—probably a reminiscence of the British office of *Gwledig*<sup>^</sup> itself based on the Roman *Dux Britanniamm*,—it had become prosperous and united. Ethelbald compelled the once supreme Northumbria to acknowledge the suzerainty of Mercia, and his successor Offa made a determined effort to create in the centre of England the nucleus of a strong monarchy. Equally great as a warrior and a statesman, Offa, whose reign lasted from

**Rise of Mercia under Ethelbald.**

757 to 796 was the leading figure of his day, and must always rank as one of the most striking kings in early English history. By 775 he had reduced Kent and Essex to the position of principalities dependent on the Mercian crown, and in 779 he defeated the West Saxons at Bensington, driving them back into Wessex and pushing his own frontiers up to the Thames. But it is significant of the strength Wessex had acquired, that Offa never succeeded in crushing her as he had crushed Essex and Kent. Mercia's chief troubles came from the Welsh in the modern Wales, who lay along the whole of her western boundary. After a series of campaigns Offa built the town of Shrewsbury on the Severn to keep them in check, and finally constructed his famous wall—known as Offa's Dyke—from the Dee to the Wye, by which inroads were effectively stopped.

**Supremacy of Mercia under Offa.**

Mercia may now be said to be supreme, and the corn-

manding position of the king can be seen in the close friendship and alliance he maintained with the emperor Charles the Great (Charlemagne) on the Continent, Offa in short had done everything that one man could do to build up a lasting state, but his work was doomed to fail. The appearance of strength was greater than the reality. The Mercian supremacy was not based on any solid internal cohesion.

Causes of  
decline of  
Mercia.

Its ill-cemented group of races, its great length of frontier exposing it to attacks from north, south, and west, its series of forests, fens, and rivers cutting up the country, were serious obstacles to any durable unity; and a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand, much less assert dominion over its neighbours. So long as there was at the helm a strong arm, a resolute will, a fertile brain—the qualities combined in Offa,—whose policy of war united the unruly Angles, Mercia could pose before the world as a power; but even then the spectacle was delusive. As once in Northumbria so now in Mercia, the death of the masterful king removed the one force capable of harmonizing the jarring elements that lay below the surface, and a period of wild confusion ensued. Moreover, at this point Wessex stepped in, to take advantage of the anarchy, and secured the ground that had been lost. The West Saxon ruler who led his people to victory was Ecgbert, to whom in 802 the crown had lapsed. For

Ecgbert of  
Wessex.

thirteen years previously he had been residing abroad at the court of Charles, owing to a quarrel, for the throne, but on the death of his rival—Beorhtric by name—he returned, having learned no doubt from his intercourse with the emperor and his court many secrets in the art of government, and perhaps having acquired from his enforced exile still more precious qualities of character.

Ecgbert's reign is chiefly remarkable for two achievements—first, the complete subjugation of the Welsh of Cornwall in the south-west, which was only accomplished after many years' hard fighting by a great victory at Hengestdun in 836—and

Final supremacy of  
Wessex under  
Ecgbert.

secondly, the acknowledgment by the rest of England of the West Saxon supremacy. This was brought about after the Mercian resistance had been crushed at Eliandun (825) by a famous meeting at Uore in Derbyshire, where Northumbria, East Anglia, and Mercia made their submission. The rounding off of Ecgbert's dominions was completed by the final incorporation of Kent, Sussex, and Essex into the kingdom of Wessex. Thus at his death the West Saxon king was practically king of all England. He ruled directly over Wessex, the centre of his power, while the former kingdoms of Kent, Sussex, and Essex seem to have been incorporated with it, though it is thought by some that they continued to be administered by deputies appointed by the West Saxon, sovereign under his immediate supervision. Mercia, Northumberland, and East Anglia (with the exception of the years 828-830, when Ecgbert ruled Mercia himself) retained their own kings on condition that they acknowledged the West Saxon monarch as overlord.

As regards the Celts, Ecgbert's direct control in the west was still bounded by the Tamar; but the Damnonian  
**The Celts.** Welsh in Cornwall, as well as the tribes in modern Wales, had accepted his suzerainty. We hear nothing of the Strathclyde Kymry, so that it must remain uncertain whether they were included in the submission of their southern kin. But it must be remembered that the suzerainty over Northumbria implied the rule of Ecgbert as far north as Edinburgh, and there is no evidence of Strathclyde resisting his far-reaching sway.

An important stage in the "making of England" has now been reached. The year 828 is a landmark pointing  
**Unity of England.** to the great fact that Wessex had become and was to be the dominant power in the island. And there seems to have been a dim recognition of the unity so gained and the new era that is opening, because in the Anglo-Saxon chronicle Ecgbert is called the eighth and last of the "Bretwaldas", the other seven according to the same authority being /Ella the South

Saxon, Ceawlin the West Saxon, Ethelbert of Kent, Raedwald of East Anglia, and Eadwine, Oswald, and Oswiu of Northumbria, though strictly Wulfhere and Offa should have been added to the list.

What this title precisely means has been much disputed: strictly the word signifies "the wide ruler", and it is clear that it conveys an acknowledgment of supremacy wielded by one kingdom over the others, but beyond this it is difficult to go. It is remarkable that kings such as Ethelbald and Offa are omitted from the list, while such shadowy figures as Ælla and Rsedwald are included. Originally the "Bretwalda" may have been merely a continuation of the British *Gwledig* (which, as we have seen, was probably a reminiscence of a Roman office), and this hypothesis is confirmed by Bede's speaking of an "imperium" or "ducatu" possessed by the early kings, which is an obvious reference to the "Bretwalda". The primary sense may then have been lost in the lapse of centuries and revived under Egbert with a deeper meaning. In Egbert's case, however, the use of the word draws a distinction between his rule and that of his successors. Though Wessex had become supreme, the supremacy was still mainly merely an overlordship, and not the direct government of a single monarch over an undivided kingdom. Egbert generally calls himself "King of the West Saxons", and only rarely "rex Anglorum" "King of Englishmen". We must not, therefore, yet look upon England as properly united. Nearly two hundred years of ceaseless struggle must elapse before this is strictly true. Under Alfred and Athelstan a great advance is made, but it is not till Edgar that there exists a unified England under a single ruler.

How was it, it may be asked, that Wessex, unlike Mercia and Northumbria, succeeded in making permanent her dominion over the island? The answer is not easy, because the causes are so obscure. Something no doubt must be allowed for inherent superior qualities in the West Saxon race, as

**Causes of  
Wessex's  
success.**

evinced in their more perfect cohesion and their more advanced political institutions; something also must be allowed for the fact that Wessex, by developing more slowly and therefore more surely, reached maturity last of the three great kingdoms, and came to the front when Mercia and Northumbria were crumbling to ruins. But this carries us only a little way; it will explain the rise but not the continuance of her power.

Briefly, three other causes may be adduced: (i) For the next century and a half, the most critical period in English history, the West Saxon kings were singularly **Ability of the kings.** able men. Both as statesmen and as warriors they exhibit striking moral and intellectual qualities—a keen appreciation of the goal to be reached, dogged perseverance, decisive judgment, and a wise sympathy with the needs of their time. (2) These kings **Alliance with the church.** threw themselves unreservedly on the church, and drew closer its alliance with the crown in order to help them in their task. The church in itself acted as a powerful stimulus to unity, but the great end could never have been gained had the clergy not been backed up in their efforts by the state. In return for such warm support, the church, desirous of a strong national government as the best means for promoting the spiritual welfare of the people, used its influence throughout the **The Danish invasions.** country to strengthen the West Saxon line. (3) Even then Wessex might have failed had there not come strong pressure from without, viz. the protracted invasion of the Norsemen and Danes. Nothing unifies a people so thoroughly as the presence of a common foe, threatening to sweep away the national existence altogether. In the hour of need England looked for some leader who had the power and the will to save, and she found that leader in the West Saxon kings. It is perhaps not the least glory of Ecgbert's successors that they fully accepted the responsibility thrust upon them. The history of the next hundred years will show how nobly and unflinchingly they interpreted their task, and also how they reaped their reward.

## CHAPTER V.

## THE REIGN OF ALFRED, 871-901.

The all-absorbing struggle with the Danes had begun as far back as 787, when a small body of pirates in three ships had swept down on Wareham in Dorset, harried it, and then disappeared with their plunder. In 793 and 794 Jarrow and Wearmouth were ravaged, and now that a beginning had been made, the incursions were repeated with greater frequency until scarcely any part of England escaped the marauders' visits. The invasion  
of Northmen.

Though this invasion is known as the Danish invasion, those who manned the attacking squadrons were not drawn entirely from Denmark. The causes which produced this migration towards the West were much the same as those which had brought about the conquest of England in the fifth and sixth centuries, and were now operating on most of the countries in the northern seas. Under the pressure of a superabundant population, and prevented from settling on the northern coasts of Germany by the remorseless vigour of Charles the Emperor, Norwegians, Jutes, and Swedes poured forth in hordes to sate their passion for plunder, and to carve out a new home in the rich countries of the West, under the guidance of leaders who were not kings, but warriors chosen to act as captains by reason of their superior skill or courage. These daring seamen were known as the *Vikings*, so called because they sallied forth from the creeks or *wicks* where their fastnesses lay. In almost every respect—their social life, their political institutions, their nautical prowess, their savage delight in the joy of battle, and their fierce if gloomy paganism—these Northmen closely resembled their forerunners the Angles, Saxons and Jutes of three hundred years before.

In the century now opening they are to be found every-

where, plundering and burning. Danish bands sailed **The Northmen** up the Seine and the Loire and ravaged the **in Europe.** rich lands of the Franks from Friesland to Bordeaux; *Fingaels*<sup>1</sup> from Norway steered north and swooped down on Scotland and the east coast of Ireland; *Dubhgaels*<sup>1</sup> from Denmark a little later found their way to the south-west of the same island, where, by the middle of the ninth century, they had firmly planted themselves at Waterford, Cork, limerick and Dublin. The English called these Vikings of Ireland the *Ostmen*.

In England they confined themselves at first, just as the Angles had done, to plundering raids, finding a rich **In England.** booty in the wealth stored away in the monasteries. Meeting with little resistance, and growing bolder every year, they ceased to be mere pirates, and aimed seriously at conquering the land by ousting both Celt and Teuton. The danger had already become threatening as early as the reign of Ecgbert, who in his campaign against the Cornish found them aided by a large body of Danes. The crushing victory of Hengestdun checked their efforts in the south for a time; but no sooner was Ecgbert dead than the struggle broke out afresh.

The reign of the next West Saxon king, Ethelwulf, was mainly occupied with attempting to keep the Danes out **Ecgbert's** of his dominions. He defeated them **successors.** repeatedly, notably at two sharp encounters on the river Parret, and at Ockley in Surrey; but despite all his efforts fresh swarms poured in at all points of the coast. In 851 the Chronicle sadly remarks that the Danes were strong enough to winter in Thanet, and both Canterbury and London suffered from the raids of a great host sweeping up the Thames and Medway. With the exception of Wessex, England was not ready for a prolonged struggle. The Angles and Saxons, by long settlement on the land, had ceased to be seamen, and the only available

<sup>1</sup> *Fingaæl* and *Dubhgaæl* mean the "white" and the "black strangers" respectively), in the Erse tongue.

military force was the "fyrd", consisting of peasants, not easily massed at a dozen different places. The speed with which the Northmen scoured the country was very baffling; landing from their ships they would seize horses, sack a town, and be off to sea again before the ealdorman of the district could collect his troops.

Ethelwulf died in 858, having failed to dislodge the enemy from Wessex, and in the next twelve years the crown was worn by four of his sons in succession. <sup>Ethelred Land</sup> When Ethelred I. came to the throne in 866 <sup>the Danes.</sup>

it was clear that a crisis was approaching. Northumbria, cowed by repeated onslaughts, had already submitted, and the fierce king of the Danes, Ivar the Boneless, in 866 made a great effort to reduce the rest of England. Landing in East Anglia, his mighty host struck terror through the land by murdering in cold blood the king Edmund, whose death at the hands of Pagans caused him to be regarded as a saint, and over whose tomb there subsequently rose the monastery of Bury St. Edmund's. Ivar formed a settlement in Essex and then marched on Northumberland; and in 868 the ruins of Peterborough, Crowland, Streonshalh (Whitby), Ripon, and Melrose marked how disastrous was his advent. But when he began to devastate Mercia, Wessex came to its aid and peace was made. This was only temporary: two years later the Danes turned on Wessex, the one kingdom that had hitherto held its own. The year 871 is one of the critical epochs in English history, for on the fete of Wessex hung the fortunes of all England. No less than six desperate battles were fought in it, <sup>Battles of 871.</sup> and well might it be said by Asser, Alfred's biographer, that "the Danes were fighting for victory, the English for life, their loved ones, and their country". By tracing the course of the armies on the map it is easy to see how the existence of Wessex was at stake. Early in the spring Ethelred was defeated at Englefield, in Berkshire; at Reading, and again at Ashdown, near Reading, the Danes were defeated. But they were by no means crushed. They made up for their losses by routing the West Saxons

successively at Basing and Merton (in Surrey). At this last fight Ethelred was mortally wounded, and the crown devolved on his youngest brother Alfred, who, as second in command—*secundarius regis*—had already done yeoman's service in his country's cause.

Alfred thus commenced his momentous reign with a legacy of war, and before the year was out gave proof of his stern determination, by fighting an in-king, 871. decisive battle at Wilton, whereupon the Danes, tired, no doubt, by such stubborn resistance, consented to patch up a truce. It was a mere lull in the storm, and both sides made use of the respite to gird themselves up for more strenuous efforts. The Danes completed their settlements in Mercia and Northumbria, thus carefully preserving communication with the sea; Alfred on the other hand showed a general's appreciation of the task before him by building a few ships, with which in 875 he defeated some reinforcements on their way to East Anglia. This nucleus of vessels later grew into a fairly efficient fleet.

In 876 the Danish king Guthrum reopened hostilities. Again peace was made, but the shifty Northmen next year dashed down on Exeter, where they were Renewed war, 876. blockaded by Alfred, and another treaty was agreed to. But once free the Danes treacherously broke their word and swarmed into Wessex. Alfred, taken by surprise, was driven to take refuge in the little island of Athelney among the fens of Somerset. It seemed as if the cause of Wessex was lost; but the Danes little knew the man they had to deal with. After a few weeks he sallied forth, collected his levies, and in a great and final victory at Ethandun (Edington? in Wiltshire) crushed the invaders.

The result of this battle was the famous Treaty of Wedmore, by which Guthrum acceded Christianity, and Treaty of Wedmore. consented to divide England between Alfred and himself. The division is best described in the words of the Chronicle: "Up on the Thames, and then up on the Lea, and along the Lea unto its



source, then right to Bedford, then up on the Ouse unto\* Watling Street". In other words Alfred retained Wessex, Sussex, Kent, and the western half of Mercia, while the remainder, save Bernicia (which remained under an English ruler), passed over to the Danes. From the fact that henceforth this territory was subject to the Danish and not the English law, it received the name of the "*Dane-lagh*".

The main political events of the rest of Alfred's reign can be told very shortly\* The Danes had been taught a **The end of Alfred's reign.** lesson, and kept their promise very fairly, though desultory fighting still went on in which the West Saxons had the advantage. "In the year 886", says the Chronicle, "Alfred repaired London", meaning, no doubt, that he fortified it, and so closed the waterway into Wessex. Peace continued until 893, when there was fresh fighting lasting until 897. The most serious of these petty wars was that with Hasting (in 897), the irrepressible leader of the Danes. But two decisive victories at Buttington and Bridgenorth finally drove him from England, and from 897 to Alfred's death in 901 there was peace. It is noticeable that, when necessary, Alfred carried on his operations both by sea and land. The fleet, begun in 871, aided not a little in the ultimate success of the West Saxons.

Interesting as Alfred's reign is from the military aspect as being the turning point in the history of England, the **Greatness of Alfred.** real importance of the period from 871 to 901 lies in other directions. Much of the fascination which a student of these years is sure to feel is due to the great central figure of the king, with whose actions the development of Wessex is so closely bound up. Alfred has been well called the greatest of our kings, perhaps the greatest of all kings. Doubtless there have been many rulers who in one branch or another of affairs have shown more remarkable talents or made more dazzling conquests; but there are few, if any, who have exhibited so unique a combination of intellectual gifts with so flawless yet lovable a character. As warrior,

statesman, scholar, saint, he stands out pre-eminent. And after all it is no exaggeration to say that he was greater for what he was than for what he did. The records of his time point unmistakably to his high moral qualities. His dauntless courage, never shaken in adversity, never elated in success, his earnest enthusiasm, his strict integrity, his lofty aims, and his unaffected piety—in a word that simplicity which the Greek historian Thucydides declares to be the essential characteristic of true nobility—won for him the love and devotion of all his countrymen. He seems to have deliberately recognized that he was called to be the saviour of his country, and when England was safe he was content to put up the sword and turn all his energies to the work of reform. Round his name there has collected a vast mass of legends—a very sure testimony to his real greatness—but though difficult it is still possible, without adopting for true all that posterity would ascribe to him, to sketch the outlines of his reconstruction of the state.

His sound judgment and moderation were never better shown than in the Treaty of Wedmore. When he took but half of England as his kingdom, it looked as if he were much worse off than his grandfather Ecgbert, who had been ruler of the whole island. But Alfred was not the man to sacrifice the reality of power to the shadow. He saw that it would be much easier to weld into a compact unity a comparatively small dominion, in which a truly national spirit might take root, than to struggle with an unwieldy aggregate of discordant tribes. He even went further. After the treaty of 878 Merca was handed over, as a dependent principality, to an ealdorman Ethelred, to whom he married his daughter Ethelfiaed; and his own hands were thus left free to govern Wessex.

His reforms may be classed under various heads. (1) Following Ine's example he codified the laws and infused into them a strong ecclesiastical element, taking care, however, that the authority of the king should rest on a secure basis.

(2) He consolidated and developed the fabric of the constitution. What his actual measures were has been much disputed. Later writers attributed to him the credit of creating many of our most striking institutions, such as the jury, the machinery of the shire, and an elaborate system of *frith-borh* (peace-surety), by which the people were divided into groups of ten, mutually responsible for each other's conduct. But without going as far as this, it is perhaps safe to conclude that he anticipated vaguely the subsequent development. By his wise administration, his strict observance of justice, his redivisions of the population, and his numerous assemblies, he taught his subjects the elements of the lesson of self-government. It is fairly clear that it was from Wessex that the characteristic features of the English polity were extended to Mercia, and thence to Northumbria, and much of this may be due to Alfred.

(3) Alfred was also an energetic military reformer. His early experience had convinced him that failure was the **Military reforms.** result not of inherent inferiority in the English but rather of defective organization. Accordingly he arranged that the "fyrd" should be so mobilized that while one half remained at home to till the land, the other half should serve in the field. The thegns were included in the new scheme; one out of every three months was to be spent in attendance at court, so that the presence of a regular military force concentrated under the king's hand was assured. Nor did Alfred, as we have seen, neglect the fleet. From his efforts to revive the English power at sea the king has often been called the founder of the British navy; but this is hardly correct. All Alfred had desired was to meet the Danes on their own element; he did not organize a permanent naval force. His success in restoring the military power of Wessex and Mercia is best illustrated by the triumphant advance of his successors.

(4) But Alfred was statesman enough to know that to create a really vigorous state still more searching measures were necessary. The mental and spiritual sides of Ufe

are always quite as important elements in national greatness as the purely physical capacity of fighting well. At the date of the Treaty of Wedmore England had sunk into a deplorable state. The church and education.

The long and cruel ravages of the Danes, besides ruining the material prosperity of the soil, had proved especially disastrous to the church, to molality, and to education. The monasteries had been sacked, their books burnt, the churches gutted, and the clergy dispersed: and the whole country thus plunged in ignorance. The king himself says pathetically: "So clean was learning gone out of the land that very few this side the Humber could understand the meaning of their own Latin service-books, or translate aught out of Latin into English". In his youth Alfred had been noted for his love of books, and there is a pretty story of him, that as a child he had learned to read, in order to get the illuminated manuscript which his stepmother promised him as soon as he could understand it. Now that he was free from the engrossing task of war, he set to work to undo the mischief wrought by the long struggle with the Danes; in a word, to educate his people. He invited to his court all the Jearned men who would come, and employed them as teachers. Among them were Asser (his future biographer), John the Saxon from Corbey, Grimbald of St. Omer, Plegmund the archbishop of Canterbury. Churches were soon restored, monasteries planted, schools set up, and there is a well-known legend (quite untrue) that he founded the University of Oxford. The church slowly recovered its former position of being a teaching as well as a preaching body. Alfred himself set an example of "unquenchable zeal; amidst all his labours he found time to work as an earnest student. For the benefit of those who did not understand Latin, he translated into his mother tongue several Latin authors—*Orosius*, *Bede*, *Gregory the Great*, *Boethius*,—and histories especially, so that his nation might learn the deeds of other people, and perhaps be inspired to imitate them. He even encouraged the monks to write a history of England

from year to year; for it seems certain that the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle—the earliest history which any modern European nation possesses in its own language—was begun in his reign.

It is now possible to see how richly Alfred has deserved his fame. His strong administration and wise reforms steadily consolidated Mercia and Wessex, and at the date of his death they were ready to advance and win back the land held by the Danes. But the great king was denied the privilege of seeing all England united under a single ruler. He had done his work, and was obliged 'o hand on the task of reconquest to other hands (901).

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE RECOVERY OF THE DANELAGH, 901-955.

Edward, the son of Alfred who became king of Wessex in 901, had not inherited his father's many-sided ability.

Edward the Elder. 501. He was not a legislator, a reformer, a scholar, but rather a typical example of the warrior-ruler who comes on the scene at the right moment, when there is a greater need of the sword than of the pen. His reign is little else than a record of ceaseless fighting and almost unbroken successes; and yet, judging by the able organizing power shown in deftly welding on to Wessex the new territory won back from the Danes, Edward must have had more in his character than simple military skill. The brilliant results of his campaigns were not entirely due to himself. During the first years of his government his sister Ethelflaed, the wife of the Eaidorman of Mercia, played an equally prominent part in directing the war. "*The Lady of the Mercians*", as she was called, continued sole ruler of Mercia on her husband's death, and her wonderful energy and skill, added to her loyal co-operation with the Wessex army, mark her out as one of the few women in history who have shown great military talent.

The time was certainly ripe for a forward policy. The Danelagh was not united under a single head, as was the case with Wessex and Mercia, and it was clearly possible to play off one section of the Danes against the other; at the same time a very large percentage of the population consisted of Angles who, now that their own royal houses had died out, were quite ready to accept the West Saxon kings in preference to the Danes. No doubt this feeling was powerfully stimulated by the success of Alfred's constructive measures, so that Edward in his advances could count on aid among his foes.

But before Edward could commence a war of annexation, he found himself confronted by a rival at home. Ethelwald, a son of Ethelred I, in his desire to win the crown, tried to stir up the Danes to aid him. War followed in East Anglia, but by 906 the would-be usurper had been crushed and a peace was made with the Danes on the basis of the Treaty of Wedmore. In the next year (907) Ethelflaed began a long series of operations, from the side of Mercia, by seizing and fortifying the important town of Chester. By this strategic move all succour from the Ostmen in Ireland to their kin the Danes was completely prevented. In 910 the war broke out along the whole frontier. Edward beat the Danes at Tettenhall in 911, and slew their kings Eguils and Halfdan at Wodnesfield in 912.

In the years 913-918 the West Saxons steadily advanced in a series of vigorous campaigns in which the "Lady of the Mercians" was especially prominent. Between them Edward and his sister gained Stafford, Tamworth, Warwick, Hertford, Witham (in Essex), and then followed up their victories by reducing Derby (917) and Leicester (918), two of the chief towns in the Danish Confederation known as the *Five Boroughs*. In accordance with the policy already acted upon, these acquisitions were turned into fortified strongholds, and thus served as a basis for further annexation,

In 918 Edward had the misfortune to lose his able partner, who died suddenly to the great grief of her subjects. Her decease probably accounted for the absorption of Mercia into the kingdom of Wessex; since the king no doubt felt uncertain of any other ruler in the Ealdormanry at such a critical stage of affairs.

Edward was quite ready to continue the war alone. In 919 and 920 he added Bedford and Towcester to the list of towns wrested from the Danes, and like the earlier acquisitions these were strongly fortified. The Danes however were by no means disposed to submit without a desperate effort to retain the territory still left intact. A great attack along the length of Wessex and Mercia was planned, and the Welsh were raised as a diversion on the flank. But Edward's good fortune did not desert him. The scheme failed and the West Saxons were uniformly victorious, the only result of the campaign being that East Anglia, Essex and Northamptonshire submitted, after a battle at Tempsford in which Eohric the last Danish king of East Anglia fell. In the next year (922) the triumphant king was able to turn his arms against the Welsh, who, after a stubborn resistance, were compelled to accept peace. The Welsh princes acknowledged the West Saxon ruler as their overlord, and thus freed from serious danger in the west Edward could devote all his energy to completing his conquests in the east. In the same year that Wales was mastered he reduced Stamford (another of the Five Boroughs), so that practically all England south of the Humber had been recovered. Yet the danger of a reverse was not quite dispelled. North of the Dee and the Humber the Welsh of Strathclyde, the Danes of Northumbria, and the kingdom of the Scots still remained formidable foes. Edward proceeded against them with his usual caution. He spent the year '923 in capturing and fortifying Thelwall and Manchester, and in 924 made himself master of the last of the Five Boroughs—Nottingham,

In the same year there followed the crowning glory of his reign. At Bakewell, -as it would seem (though the actual spot is somewhat uncertain), the Welsh of Strathclyde, the Danes of Northumbria, and the Scots solemnly admitted his suzerainty; The exact nature of this submission has been fiercely disputed, but there is little reason to doubt the truth of the famous entry in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle which runs as follows:—" And him chose then to father and lord the king of Scots and all the folk of the Scots . . . and all that in Northumbria dwell . . . and eke the king of the Strathclyde Welsh and all the Strathclyde Welsh". It is also asserted (but the evidence is not so good) that Edward on this occasion granted Lothian (*i.e.* northern Bernicia) to the king of Scots as a fief.

Pinal sub«  
mission to  
Edward.

The importance of this acknowledgment by the kings mentioned cannot be overrated, because the future relations of the English crown to Scotland turn on the year 924. The claim of suzerainty (to glance forward nearly four hundred years) urged by a greater namesake of the West Saxon monarch—Edward I.—was really based upon the supremacy established in 924.

Relations of  
Edward with  
Scotland.

Next year (925) Edward died, having faithfully carried out the task bequeathed to him by his father. Wessex was once more the dominant power in the whole island. The title that the king chose to adopt, "*rex Angul-Saxonum*", points unmistakably to the character of his conquest. England was for the future to be a unified realm in which there were no longer to be Angles and Saxons, but only Englishmen. The West Saxon monarchy had in fact become imperial; while a large portion of the island was directly under its sway, the remainder was ruled by dependent sovereigns.

Edward's son Athelstan, "the glorious Athelstan" as the Chronicle calls him, succeeded to the throne (925). Though his reign lasted only fifteen years it marks another step taken towards the gradual consolidation of the kingdom. The first years

Athelstan.

of **the new** king were occupied by wars with the Welsh, who took advantage of his father's death to strike a blow for independence. Athelstan promptly showed that Wessex had not lost in the change of sovereigns. - Two **Wars with the Welsh.** campaigns proved to the Welsh how useless resistance was, and in 926 their princes at Eamot agreed to renew the submission previously made to Edward. The details are not very clear, but it would appear that in the west the Wye, and in the south the Tamar were fixed as boundaries. It is noticeable that in the course of the war Athelstan had recovered Exeter entirely for the Saxons, the Welsh who had hitherto shared the town with them being expelled. In the north Athelstan annexed Northumbria, and (if we can trust our authorities) confirmed the cession of Lothian to the King of Scots as a fief.

Peace followed this vigorous assertion of the royal power, but the Danes and Welsh were not yet convinced that the day had gone against them. During the next ten years a great conspiracy was built up which had for its object the ruin of Wessex.

In the memorable year 937 the long smouldering resentment burst into flame. All that were in danger **Battle of Brunanburh.** from Wessex—the Danes of Northumbrian Constantine King of Scots, the Welsh of 237- Strathclyde, even Anlaf King of the Ostmen massed their forces for one tremendous blow. Athelstan did not refuse this challenge: With his brother Eadmund he met the allies at Brunanburh (the site of which is not known, but which is probably in Lancashire), and after a desperate struggle completely routed them. No less than five Danish kings and seven earls were left dead on the field. This battle has been celebrated in a magnificent war-song, of which a few lines may be quoted—

Now Athelstan king, Of Earls the Lord,  
To warriors the ring-giver, And his brother eke,  
Eadmund Ætheling, Eld-long glory,  
Won in the fight, With the sword's edge,  
By Brunanburh.

This crushing victory enabled Athelstan to close his reign in peace, and in order to administer his dominions more efficiently, the system of governing it through *ealdormen* as deputies was begun. East Anglia was intrusted to a namesake Athelstan who from his prowess was known as "the half-king"; Essex, Bucks, Oxfordshire, and Middlesex formed another province, while the turbulent Northumbria was placed under a Dane with the significant name of Eric-of-the-Bloody-Axe.

Perhaps the most striking proof of Athelstan's greatness is seen in the marriages of his sisters to powerful rulers on the Continent. Thus Eadgifu became the wife of Charles the Simple, King of the West Franks; another Eadgifu was married to Louis of Aries; a third, Eadhild, to Hugh the Mighty, Duke of Paris; and a fourth to Otto the Great, who was later to become Emperor of the West. Athelstan's object in these matrimonial alliances was to secure his position abroad, and to ally himself to the foreign kings who, like himself, were waging war on the Danes, and they point to the growing connection of England with the Continent.

During the reign of Edward a new element had been introduced into European politics by the settlement of a numerous colony of Northmen in the land subsequently known as Normandy. fertile province in 912 had been granted by Charles the Simple to the leader of the Northmen, Rollo or Rolf, who speedily succeeded in establishing a powerful state, Rollo shortly received the title of duke, and he and his successors, as dukes of Normandy, rapidly took rank among the most powerful vassals of the Frank kings. The Normans were intimately connected by blood with the Danes, and Athelstan feared danger to his newly founded to hem them in by a network his own house. Nor was mandy was to play an activity



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At home Athelstan's prestige steadily increased. The fact that Welsh princes and Danish earls sat as members of his Witan shows that his high-sounding title *Basileus of all Britain* was no empty vaunt. In 940 his death promoted his brother Edmund, so conspicuous in the fight at Brunanburh, to what may now be fairly called the crown of all England. The new king was styled "the doer of great deeds", and the Chronicle adds that "he was no friend to the Northmen". Early in his reign there was as usual a rising among the Danes in Mercia, but the work of suppression had already been so thoroughly done by his brother, that the rebellion was put down without a pitched battle. Edmund then overran the kingdom of Strathclyde, now largely inhabited by Norwegians who had displaced the original Celts; but instead of keeping it in his own hands he transferred it to Malcolm, King of Scots, on condition that he should be "his fellow-worker by land and sea" (945). This statesmanlike cession on the part of the English king bound Scotland closely to its neighbour, while it enabled the heirs of Malcolm to ensure their hold over the realm that they had formed in the centre of Scotland, whence later they annexed the old Pictish kingdom in the north. Henceforward the dominant races in the island were to be the English and the Scots, and not, as at one time seemed likely, the English and the Danes.

Edjnund did not rule very long. In 946 he fell a victim to the dagger of an outlaw named Leofa, and was succeeded by his brother Eadred, the third son of Edward to occupy his father's throne. As usual the change of rulers was signaled by a somewhat serious revolt of the Danes, and the Archbishop of York, Wulfstan, was implicated in the movement. The rebellion dragged on for several years, but it was finally quelled in 954.... Despite these risings the Danes were in reality being slowly amalgamated with the English, and the distinctions which had formerly sharply severed them from the Saxons were being gradually obliterated. Eadred, who called himself

**Edmund king. 940.**

**Alliance with Scotland.**

**Character of his rule.**

*Casar totius Britannia*, thereby asserting the claims to imperial power made by the West Saxon kings, continued in his government the policy of his predecessors, ruling Northumbria through an Englishman, Oswulf, who received the title of Earl—the etymological equivalent of the Danish word Jarl, but having the same meaning as the older term "ealdorman". Eadred's uneventful reign came to an end in 955: it was marked by little of note save the rise of Dunstan, who was to play a leading part for the next thirty years.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE TIMES OF EADGAR, 955-975.

Eadwig, the next occupant of the throne, was only fifteen years old at his accession (955), and his short reign was marked by a serious conflict with the two leaders of the church, Archbishop Odo and Dunstan, abbot of Glastonbury, as to whether his marriage with a cousin, who came within the degrees of consanguinity which the church prohibited, was a valid one. Both archbishop and abbot, in this attitude of hostility, represented the harsher side of a great reform movement, which originated from the famous monastery of Cluny in Burgundy, and thence spread over the western church in the tenth century. In itself primarily a monastic revival, it took the form of enforcing celibacy among the clergy, and more generally of making the church, through the *Regulars* (as the monks were called in distinction to the *Seculars* or parish clergy), a more efficient agent for upholding morality in society. Dunstan was even a more remarkable man than Gdo. When created abbot of Glastonbury by Edmund, he had succeeded in establishing in his monastery a great school, which almost served as a university for England. But he was much more than an energetic

Eadwig (955)  
and the  
church.

Reform move-  
\*ment in-the  
church.

abbot; he was a real statesman, gifted with rare political ability, and inspired by lofty and broad conceptions of policy, which his intense earnestness and strong will subsequently enabled him to realize. As one of Eadred's chief advisers he already stood out as a foremost figure in England. It is not surprising, therefore, that when Eadwig found his marriage opposed by men of such force of character he had ultimately to give way, though not before the quarrel became dangerous, for Odo and Dunstan did not hesitate to set up the king's brother, Eadgar, as ruler north of the Thames. Happily Eadwig's death in 959 prevented any real disruption, and Eadgar was then quietly accepted as king of the whole island.

The period from 959 to 975 is the culminating epoch in Anglo-Saxon prosperity, and its most characteristic mark Eadgar king. is the profound peace which lasted almost 959\* unbroken up to the king's death. Well may the Chronicle say: "He (Eadgar) the folk's peace bettered the most of the kings that were before him",

**Dunstan.** This great result was largely due to the harmony that subsisted between the sovereign and his chief minister Dunstan, who, on Odo's death, was promoted to the archbishopric. Dunstan's virtual premiership commences the "political episcopate" of England, and from his pre-eminence dates the position of the Archbishop of Canterbury as the chief adviser of the crown. He in fact was the first of a long line of masterly ecclesiastical statesmen, which includes such names as Lanfranc, Anselm, Becket, and Wolsey, and ends with Archbishop Laud.

It is hardly necessary (even if it were possible) to try to assign to Eadgar or his archbishop their respective **Policy of the reign.** shares in the policy pursued during the reign. As they worked together loyally, so must they divide the credit. - Their all-important aim was to maintain the unity of the kingdom and the supremacy of the crown unimpaired. This was attained chiefly on three ways.

(1) By continuing the wise plan of keeping up friendly

intercourse with the King of Scots. The cession of Lothian was renewed to the Scottish sovereign Kenneth; and the picturesque legend that **Scotland.** Eadgar was rowed (as a sign of submission) by six Celtic kings on the Dee, even though not historically true, points to the relations existing between the English monarch and his dependants.

(2) The system of government through delegated ealdormen was organized on a complete basis. It is no doubt true that this scheme of administration tended **The aaldor-** towards feudalism and proved disastrous in **men.** the next reign, because under a weak king the earls became almost independent princes. But that is hardly a reason why we should condemn it under Eadgar. The present sovereign and his minister were strong men, who by codifying the laws, creating an elaborate police, and maintaining a navy, made the central government thoroughly efficient. "Twice every year", we are told, "the king rode through every shire inquiring into the law-dooms of the powerful men, and showing himself a powerful avenger in the name of justice."

(3) Eadgar did all he could to conciliate the Danish portion of the population; and perhaps the **The Danes.** surest proof of his success is the petulant charge of the Chronicle that he showed too much favour to the "outlandish men".

Dunstan was not content to stop at this point. He naturally regarded the church as the backbone of the political structure, and the real breadth of his **Dunstan and** policy can be traced in the reform that he **the church.** instituted in the ecclesiastical system. He was a true follower of Alfred, and aimed at carrying on in his spirit the work of reconstruction already sketched out. The mission of the church was not to be merely that of an organization working for righteousness, but also that of a civilizing force. The parishes as well as the monasteries were to become the schools of the kingdom, the homes **of the arts** and crafts. "Let every priest learn a craft", was **the maxim always** on his lips. Apparently, too, he

was in favour of celibacy for the clergy, but wisely did not attempt to enforce it strictly; and he discountenanced the efforts made by his followers, Ethelwold of Winchester and Oswald of Worcester, to carry his policy further by substituting regulars everywhere for the secular clergy. Dunstan saw only too clearly that such zeal must lead to discord (as it ultimately did), and his cardinal idea was to secure perfect unity. Before he became archbishop he had spent some time on the Continent, and had there been profoundly influenced by the ideas underlying the monastic revival; now that he was at Canterbury he kept up his relations with the leaders of the movement, and so strove to bring England into touch with the best thought of his time. The tenth century is a fruitful epoch in the history of the church; in almost every respect Dunstan's happy mixture of patience and enthusiasm raised it to a higher level than it attained in other lands of Western Europe.

With Eadgar's reign closes the first chapter of the Danish invasion, for it is a mistake to call it a conquest, **Influence of the Danes.** since the Danes only formed a permanent settlement, and did not bring about a marked political reconstruction. For the real conquest we must wait until Canute. None the less the Danes were instrumental in producing a great change. Their direct influence on institutions was comparatively slight, for like the Northmen in Normandy they showed a greater capacity for being absorbed by, than for themselves absorbing, the peoples with whom they came into contact. Such direct influence as there was no doubt accounts for the greater amount of freedom in the northern shires. But indirectly the infusion of fresh Teutonic blood, from a stock not so completely developed as the Anglo-Saxons had become in the 9th century, stimulated the whole race. Furthermore the long struggle between Dane and Englishman, by reacting on the latter, accelerated the centralizing tendencies towards unity already at work. From the military point of view the position of the thegns was materially strengthened, and this in turn aided the growth

of the royal power. The consolidation of Wessex, rendered imperative by the pressure of the Danish invasion, had ultimately resulted in the unification of England under the West Saxons.

Since the days of Alfred there had been a steady if slow political and constitutional development. The campaigns of Edward had brought about a rapid growth in the towns which did not cease at his death. Eadgar's reign probably saw the further extension of the shire-system from Wessex into other parts of England. The shires appear to have grown up in two ways, (1)

**Development of the Constitution.**

**The shire.**

In Wessex and East Anglia they represented the areas formerly occupied and administered by independent tribes or "folks", in which, as their kings died out, the old "folk-moot", now the "shire-moot", was retained as the machinery for administration. (2) The system of division into shires was artificially extended into Mercia and Northumbria when they were won back from the Danes, But this process of division into territorial areas was not finally completed until after the Norman Conquest. The shire and shire-moot are the central fact in the constitution and really form the backbone of the political machine\* The shire-moots, attended by all freemen, and presided over by the ealdormen and bishops, helped by the king's official the *shire-reeve* (sheriff), were the main courts of justice in the realm, and, being essentially self-governing, kept alive the idea and system of self-government when other circumstances were tending to destroy it.

Over and above the shire-moot came the Witan—the king's council of wise men. Now that the island was properly unified there existed only one such Dody, of which the ealdormen, the bishops, and the greater thegns were members. Its powers were very extensive; besides being a council of state it was the legislative body, and on the king's death elected his successor. Along with the shire-moot this institution kept alive the idea of control over the crown, and in the future was to act as a powerful check on despotism.

**The Witan.**

In other ways there had also been an equally remarkable growth, not quite so beneficial. Two chief points may be noted, (1) The increased authority of the king, consequent on the political expansion. Eadgar's splendid coronation at Bath in 973, which has been felicitously termed "the typical consummation of English unity", and his assumption of the magnificent title of *Augustus Albionis imperator*, form the high water mark of Anglo-Saxon royalty. But this extension of the prerogative was theoretical rather than real. The decline of the "fyrd" or national militia, the concentration of the military resources in the hands of the thegns, the steadily growing importance in administration of his deputies the ealdormen, had shorn the king of much of his direct authority. (2) There had been a gradual reduction of the once free *ceorl*, either to pure serfage or to dependence upon a powerful thegn or lord. This depression had been accompanied by a change in land-tenure. Originally held and cultivated largely in common, the land, owing to the steady growth of private property, had slowly passed into the hands of the thegns and ealdormen and the church. The increasing inequality of distribution had brought into existence powerful territorial potentates, whose pre-eminence now formed a standing menace to the effective control of the crown, and the liberty of the humbler classes of its subjects.

Eadgar's reign has been often described as the beginning of a decline, and it is true that the political organization now contained many elements of disintegration. Had there succeeded a king who could have combined the Sagacity and insight of a statesman with the administrative vigour of a strong ruler, it would have been still possible to stave off disaster. But this was not to be. Unfortunately Eadgar was followed by a monarch who was rash, shortsighted, and weak, and, moreover, had to cope with a powerful and relentless foe—a situation calling for consummate ability and strength of character.

The history of the next century has been summed up as the "struggle of royalty with territorialism", which means that the problem pressing for solution consisted in the necessity of making a new distribution of the political and social functions to be exercised by the crown, the church, the ealdormen, and the ceorls. The trial of strength between the crown and its instruments—the great ealdormen—was inevitable, but when there was added the strain of a fresh invasion from Denmark, the ultimate result was only too certain.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## ETHELRED AND CANUTE, 975-1040.

On Eadgar's death (975) a quarrel broke out between the ealdormen as to the succession. The monastic party desired to have the younger son Ethelred, **Edward the Martyr. 975.** while their opponents stood out for the elder Edward. Dunstan threw the weight of his influence into Edward's cause and accordingly he was crowned king. His reign was but a short one. Very soon the prevailing discontent took the form of assassination, and the young king was murdered at Corfe (978). From the circumstances of his death he has been called Edward the Martyr.

Ethelred was now raised to the throne (978) at the early age of ten. His disastrous reign is almost wholly occupied by a long and terrible struggle with the Danes, closing with the loss of his crown **Ethelred. 978. His character and reign.** and the conquest of England. The blame of this miserable state of things must largely fall on the king's shoulders, but not entirely; for the task imposed on him was almost hopelessly difficult. England required an Alfred, and she found herself led by an Ethelred—an impetuous self-willed man of very moderate capacity, who speedily earned for himself the cruel title of *Unready*, an epithet which it must be remembered

does not mean "unprepared", but denotes the attitude of mind in one who will not listen to the "rede" or counsel of others. Ethelred had to face the problem of territorialism, aggravated by the revival of violent local jealousies which had marked his brother's short tenure of power. He had become king at a critical epoch when, unless speedy steps were taken to check them, the disintegrating forces might get the upper hand. The church in spite of Dunstan was beginning to decline. Her bishops preferred to be statesmen rather than ecclesiastics, and with the growth of her material wealth abuses crept in and sapped her moral strength. The death of the great archbishop in 988 deprived the crown of the only adviser of supreme ability in the country, and there was no one to replace him. The moral influence of the church no longer acted as an effective ally on the side of the king. The spirit of disunion soon spread to the Danish section of the population, who, no longer conciliated as they had been by Eadgar, threw themselves into the arms of their invading kinsmen. Ethelred had not the power to stamp out the controversies, or sufficient force of character to unite discordant factions. Such strength as he had he used merely to irritate, by petty acts of misguided harshness, those whom he should have either attached to himself or completely crushed. As regards the Danish enemy he commenced the suicidal policy of trying to buy them off, instead of fighting to the last as his sires would have done; and thus he not only burdened the already harassed land with taxation, but did not even keep the Danes away. However, it is fair to bear in mind that this futile scheme was suggested by the Archbishop Sigeric, and received the full consent of the Witan. Ethelred also was unfortunate in his leading men. The ealdormen, jealous of each other, turned their arms against their rivals, and many were guilty of gross treachery, particularly the ablest of them, Eadric Streona<sup>1</sup>. But in fact the king inspired no

Ethelred's  
difficulties.

<sup>1</sup> *Streona* means 'the grasper'; the epithet was applied to him on account of his unscrupulous ambition,

confidence; he made no effort until too late, either by organizing the fyrd, raising the navy, or systematizing the military force of the thegns, to arrest the growing demoralization, and in the universal breakdown of the political structure men naturally played for their own hand. Everything, it would seem, combined against this unfortunate ruler. Wales, thoroughly kept in check by his predecessors, threw off the yoke under its patriotic leader Meredydd, and Ethelred found himself with a fresh foe menacing his flank. In all this there was much ill-luck, but there was still more ill-management. The heart of the country still remained sound, and the king's heroic son Edmund showed later on what a leader of genuine ability and earnest enthusiasm could do, when his father had thrown up the struggle as lost.

The invasion of the Danes and Norwegians who in 984 swooped down on England in swarms, was due to the same causes as those which had produced the similar inroads in the reign of Ecgbert. <sup>The Danish invasion.</sup> During the ninth and tenth centuries, under Harald Harfager and Gorm the Old there had grown up in Denmark and Norway two strong kingdoms. But these countries were too poor and small for the rapidly increasing population of restless adventurers who inhabited them, and as it had been two hundred years before, so now numerous bands of fierce marauders poured out from every fiord to make new homes for themselves. At first they tried to find a footing on the mainland of Germany, but driven thence by the Saxon king, Henry "the Fowler", and the Emperor, Otto the Great, they turned westwards to whet their appetite for fighting and plunder on the rich island of Britain. It did not take long to discover that here was an easier prey than Germany, and, just as before, the ravaging hordes were converted into an army of conquest. Matters rapidly became serious. In 991, after a bloody battle at Maldon in Essex (where as an old song says the English gave the invaders terrible "hand-play"), they defeated and killed the brave ealdorman Brihtnoth. Ethelred then took the fatal step of buying them

off by a payment of ;£ 10,000. This was raised by a land tax, hence called the *Danegeld*, and it is important to note that it was the first imposition of the kind raised in the country. The money, a mere temporary sop, acted as a direct incitement to fresh raids.

In 994 Olaf Trygvasson, an exiled king from Norway, and Swegen, another exiled prince from Denmark, attacked London with a huge army; but the Londoners stoutly resisted and beat them back. Thereupon the two kings left their ships, seized horses for their host and roamed through the country, doing, as we can well believe, "unspeakable evil". Ethelred, instead of supporting the gallant Londoners and mobilizing the fyrd of the shires, again preferred to buy them off. For £16,000 Olaf was finally got rid of, but not so Swegen. This relentless foe, who soon after recovered his kingdom in Denmark, had seen enough in his campaigns to know that England lay at his mercy. He simply bided his time, and meanwhile the plundering, carried on by many smaller chiefs, continued all round the coast.

In his despair Ethelred turned to Normandy. He married Emma the sister of Richard the Good, its powerful duke, but though this alliance closed the Norman harbours to the Danes, who had used them as a basis for their attacks, it did not bring any direct aid. Yet the connection so formed proved important both to Ethelred and England. It was the beginning of the close tie between Normans and English which was only to end in a Norman duke gaining the crown.

The year 1002 was marked by a stupid act of butchery. On *St Briefs Day*, Nov. 13th, all the Danes who had recently settled in the country were massacred. The deed has often been grossly exaggerated, for the Danes of the old Danelagh, who were the majority in their own shires, could not, of course, be included in the slaughter. It gave Swegen, however, a splendid excuse for retaliation,—his **own**

Olaf and Swegen in England.

Ethelred and Normandy.

War with Swegen. 1003-1013.

sister and his brother-in-law had been among the victims—and he left Denmark at the head of a powerful army, with the avowed intention of conquering England. The years 1003-1013 form, a miserable decade of disaster, produced by the ceaseless ravages of Swegen and his host throughout the country, by the murderous quarrels of the ealdormgn, the attacks of the Welsh, and the unprovoked treachery of Ethelred's chief men, Ælfric and Eadric Streona. Ethelred desperately organized the "fyrd" into eight divisions and raised a fleet, but the effort came too late. The land was cowed by repeated defeats and the disunion that prevailed everywhere. In 1012 Ælfheah, the Archbishop of Canterbury, was brutally slain by the Danes, and later was canonized under the title of S. Alphege.

England slowly succumbed. The Danelagh was the first to submit, but in 1013 Wessex and Mercia followed its example. Ethelred abandoned the struggle and with his wife found a refuge in Normandy. With his flight the long supremacy of Wessex ended.

Conquest of  
England.  
1013.

In 1014 Swegen suddenly died, and though the Danes elected his son Cnut (Canute), the English Witan invited Ethelred to return. He left Normandy with his son Edmund, to find that Canute had sailed away to collect reinforcements. But next year the Dane appeared with his host, fell on the country and was at once joined by the traitor, Eadric Streona. During 1015 the contest between the two claimants remained undecided; and in 1016 Ethelred died, leaving Edmund to inherit the disputed crown. For seven short months the gloomy story of defeat is now illuminated by the brilliant achievements of the young king, 1016 was a year of battles. Edmund's vigour had roused England to his own pitch of enthusiasm, and for the first time since 984 there was organized an unflinching resistance. At Penselwood in Somerset the Danes were defeated; at Sherstone in Wilts an indecisive battle was fought; at Brentford and Oxford the Danes were success-

Canute and  
Edmund.

Struggle in  
1016.

ively routed. Finally at Ashington, in Essex, after a desperate fray, Edmund was defeated, mainly owing to the treachery of Eadric, who had again changed sides. "Here", says the Chronicle, "all the English nobles were destroyed." But Canute had had enough of such a struggle. Victor though he was, he arranged a peace at Alney on the Severn with his undismayed rival, by which England was divided between them. But before the year was out the West Saxon ruler had died, leaving Canute undisputed master. Posterity has added to Edmund's name the adjective of *Ironsides* (which anticipates the title of Cromwell's invincible soldiers), and it has not given it without reason. It is most satisfactory to know that Eadric Streona, though at first rewarded by Canute, was shortly afterwards executed, on showing symptoms of returning to his old game of rebellion and treachery.

Canute's accession to power marks the real conquest of England by the Danes. But, though a Dane and owing his throne to his sword, he ruled as an English king. The country was but little changed; it continued in almost every respect the England of Eadgar. Canute gave a signal proof of his great ability by the extraordinary skill\* with which he reorganized the shattered structure of the constitution. The peace and prosperity which followed the exhaustion of the past twenty-five years were largely the result of the wise and healing measures of the new ruler, whose moderation was such that England had no cause to regret the change in the dynasty.

Nothing is more remarkable than the singular alteration in the character of the king himself. The Canute of the period of conquest was a brutal pirate of striking military capacity, who shrank from no step however cruel. The Canute who reigned from 1016 to 1035 was a firm but placable statesman, whose aim is best summed up in his famous saying, "I have vowed to God to lead a right life in all things, and to rule justly and piously"\*

Politically Canute was more than a king, for, before his reign was out, he had added Norway and Denmark to his realm of England, and he has been called, not inaptly, 'The Emperor of the North.' **Canute's "Empire"**. But though the ruler of a powerful Northern Confederation, he made England its real centre, and devoted most of his time to its administration. Nevertheless his unique status as a triple monarch made it necessary to revive the old system of government by ealdormanries.

From his time England was divided mainly into four great provinces, called Earldoms. These were:—1. Wessex (including Kent and "Sussex), placed under Godwin; 2. Mercia, under Leofric (both these **The four Earldoms.** two earls established powerful families destined to play an important part in the history of the future); 3. East Anglia; and 4. Northumbria, the most turbulent and difficult to govern; it was often split up into two parts, but by the end of the reign was united in the hands of the vigorous Siward. Canute's experience of the country, and his dealings with the shifty Eadric Streona, had taught him that if he was to be a king in more than name Eadgar's line of action must be followed, and the central government made a real controlling power.

While therefore he dismissed the major part of his Danish army he retained a compact body, numbering from three to six thousand, whom he paid and kept at head-quarters and who were known as the **"hus-carls"**. By this innovation of a standing army he had always ready ample means for speedily crushing any chance rebellion. Much of the success of the reign was due to the growing prominence of the Earl of Wessex. Godwin's prudence and ability raised him to be the second man in the kingdom, and in Canute's frequent absences on visits to Denmark and Norway he acted as regent "*secundarius regis*"—a position closely anticipating the later office of Norman justiciar,.

The key to the prosperity of this epoch lies in Canute's statesmanlike effort to rule England **for the** English, through the English; and it was this policy which led

him to revive openly what men called " Eadgar's law " **Canute's government.** *i.e.* the constitution and ordinances as they had been worked by Eadgar and Dunstan., As a strong king Canute was bent on keeping "good peace", and (reversing Eadgar's action) favoured the English at the expense of the Danes. From his relations with the church we can see clearly how sincerely he followed the ideal of government set before them by the West Saxon kings. Canute's\*own zeal may be traced in his pilgrimage to Rome, but in every way he did his best to foster the healthy alliance between church and state. The building of churches and monasteries was encouraged (notably one at Ashington by which he strove to wipe out the painful memories of that cruel victory); the payment of tithe was enforced and education supported. In a remarkable charter, which sums up these efforts, he enlists the moral and spiritual powers of the bishops and priests in support of the civil law.

His foreign policy was equally inspired by the same broad statesmanship. It was easy to see that Normandy **Canute and Normandy.** might be a thorn in his side, for Ethelred's sons, Alfred and Edward, were being brought up at their uncle's court. Just at this period, too, the Normans with their daring spirit of adventure—"gens *effrenatissima* " as a chronicler calls them—were<sup>^</sup>asserting themselves in Southern Europe, where Robert Guiscard and his adventurers, the true sons of their Viking ancestors, had overrun Naples and were laying the basis of a great kingdom, later to include the rich island of Sicily. Canute rightly feared that the same spirit of restlessness might find an outlet in an attempt to use the claims of Ethelred's sons as an excuse for an invasion of England; and (though the affair is obscure) there actually seems to have been some such expedition planned if not actually executed. Canute foiled the scherie by marrying Ethelred's widow, Emma, who, curiously enough, was ready to become the wife of the man who had ousted her first husband. But it is important to note that William, the bastard son of the famous duke "Robert the Devil", passed his child-

hood in an atmosphere of annexation which must have early turned his thoughts across the Channel.

Scotland was the other power menacing the safety of England. Malcolm, the king of Scots, had early in the reign defeated the Northumbrians at Carham (1018), but Canute, by a display of force, reduced him to submission and in 1031 wisely renewed the cession of Lothian, by which the Scotch sovereign was turned from a dangerous foe into a powerful ally.

**Relations  
with  
Scotland.**

In 1035 Canute died, and, when once his strong hand was removed, the empire which he had ruled so successfully broke up. He left two sons, Harthacnut and Harold, both of whom claimed the English crown, the former being supported by Godwin and the latter by Leofric, which points to the growing rivalry between the two English houses, "The cry", says the Chronicle, "was greatly in favour of Harold", but the matter was at first compromised by a division between the two brothers. Just at this time Alfred, the elder son of Ethelred, attempted to assert his right to the throne, but he was seized and blinded, and died shortly afterwards. The blame of this cruel act was transferred rightly or not to Godwin, and is the foundation of the hatred of the Normans for the Earl of Wessex, which in the next reign produced so much mischief. As Harthacnut preferred to remain in Denmark, where he had been accepted as king, the whole of England passed to Harold, who reigned until 1040. On his brother's death in that year Harthacnut succeeded to the English crown, but unlike his father incurred no little unpopularity by ruling as a thoroughly Danish monarch. Otherwise his short tenure of power was uneventful, and in 1042 we are told that Harthacnut died "as he stood at his drink". With his decease the Danish royal line in England came to an end, after having been established on the throne twenty-eight years.

**Reign of  
Harold I.**

**Harthacnut.  
1040-3.**

## CHAPTER IX.

## EDWARD THE CONFESSOR AND HAROLD, 1042-1066.

England was tired of her Danish sovereigns, and turned gladly to Ethelred's youngest son Edward. "All folk", we are told, "chose Edward to be king." The ruler thus selected was quite unlike, from his early life and training, any of the previous West Saxon sovereigns. He had been brought up in Normandy at the duke's court, had mixed entirely with Normans, had learned their language—in short was completely saturated with Norman ideas. It was but natural, therefore, that when he came back to rule in England he should be accompanied by a train of Norman retainers and friends, and that throughout his life he should exhibit a marked preference for Norman officials. And yet, in spite of this bias, he succeeded in acting as a fairly good head of the government. Though he is frequently represented as a weak puppet, ready to follow the initiative of any will stronger than his own, such a view is a mistake. Edward was not of course gifted with the versatile statesmanship of Alfred, the vigour of Canute, or the dashing soldierly qualities of Athelstan; but for all that, in his own quiet way, as the events of his reign show, he was capable of asserting his rights and of making his influence felt when necessary. There is no doubt that his Norman proclivities did not prevent him from being thoroughly popular. His love of peace, his culture and moderation, above all his severely ascetic piety (which earned for him the title of "Confessor"), so much in keeping with the great wave of monasticism then sweeping over Western Europe, appealed strongly to his subjects, especially when contrasted with the loose and boisterous characters of the last two Danish kings.

Edward's reign has been called the first stage of the Norman Conquest, and if by that is meant the impregnation of the country with Norman ideas, the phrase is

correct; but it is abundantly clear that in the matter of government the Normans did not have it entirely their own way. There had been a profound revival of national sentiment (all the stronger as a reaction against Danish and foreign influences), which made the pre-eminent position of Godwin possible. The Earl of Wessex's predominance dated from Canute's time, and his long experience of affairs gave him unique claims on the new ruler. Godwin was a true statesman, yet, though masterful and deeply ambitious, he never allowed his lofty schemes to override his keen and cautious judgment. He has been accused of planning to secure the crown for his house; this may have been his cherished idea, but he never attempted to win the throne for himself, and all that it is safe to assert is that he insisted on being, next to the king, the most powerful person in the land. In 1042 his position was undisputed. Edward at once confirmed him (and he could scarcely have acted otherwise) in his earldom of Wessex. Furthermore his son Harold was Earl of East Anglia, while another son, Swegen, and a nephew, Beorn, held smaller earldoms, so that the family was territorially almost supreme. When a little later the king married Godwin's daughter Eadgyth, another step had been taken to secure the predominance of Wessex. On the other hand the two great earldoms of Mercia and Northumbria were held by Leofric and Siward, and a Norman, Robert of Jumteges, had become Archbishop of Canterbury; but common opposition to Godwin had not yet united them into a formidable coalition.

The reign falls naturally into two parts, separated by the year 1051 in which Godwin was banished. Edward had not long been king when the hatred between the Wessex party and the Normans slowly came to a head, and it required all his tact to keep the peace. Swegen, his son, a brutal, sensual man, roused the king's displeasure by carrying off the abbess of Leominster, and his father's wrath by murdering his cousin Beorn. Matters

drifted on in this way until 1051, when the king's cousin, Eustace of Boulogne, visited England, and a riot ensued at Dover between his retainers and the English. Edward called on Godwin to punish his followers, but Godwin refused, whereupon the king acted with promptitude. He summoned a council at Gloucester to consider the defiance of the royal authority, which Siward and Leofric attended at the head of their forces. Godwin found himself in a minority, and at another meeting in London **Godwin's exile.** was banished together with his sons, Swegen and Harold. The Norman and anti-national party thus scored a triumph. The whole affair reveals the rankling jealousy of the Wessex house, which caused the northern earls to unite with the Normans in crushing it; but it also illustrates the reserve of vigour that lay behind Edward's apparent listlessness, and it is remarkable that the difficulty was quietly settled without an appeal to arms.

At this point there comes on the scene the man who was, fifteen years later, to occupy Edward's position. **William of Normandy.** During Godwin's absence Duke William of Normandy paid a visit to the king. Though an illegitimate son he had, when quite a boy, inherited the dukedom. As a minor among the turbulent Norman barons his duties had not been easy, but the long struggle to enforce his disputed rights taught him the art of government, and already he had given proof of immense force of character, conspicuous military capacity, and a strenuous determination to be master. From the first Normandy rebelled against his authority; but when William reached manhood, he stamped out future attempts at rebellion by a crushing victory at Val-fes-Dunes. His far-reaching schemes of aggrandizement revealed themselves in his wresting Alencon and Domfront from his neighbour the Count of Anjou, and by 1051 Normandy, long so unruly, enjoyed peace under his iron hand. We have only the biased accounts of Norman chroniclers to inform us as to William's relations with Edward, but it is quite probable that his visit was connected with the succession to the English crown, and must certainly have

proceeded from a desire to spy out the nakedness of the land. Norman writers relate that Edward promised to make the duke his heir, and as the king was **Edward and childless** he may have done so, though it is **William.** clear that Edward, apart from the Witan, had no power to give such a pledge, and that if there was a promise it was worthless.

This visit strengthened the Norman influence for a time; but in 1053 Godwin and his sons (with the exception of Swegen, who had died in the interval) made an effort to return. A reaction in their favour broke out, and Godwin was restored as quietly as he had been expelled. The Witan "outlawed all Frenchmen that aforetime made unlaw, deemed ill doom, and red unrede in the land".

Robert of Jumieges, the archbishop, fled with many of his countrymen, and the see of Canterbury was filled by the promotion of a Wessex partisan, **Restoration of Stigand.** As Robert had not been deprived **Godwin.** by the proper ecclesiastical authority, Stigand's acceptance of the office violated the canons of the church, and was regarded as illegal by the Pope. This had an important result later on.

Godwin died in the year of his restoration, and Harold, his son, at once stepped into his place. Whether Godwin had aimed at the crown or not must be **Harold Earl of Wessex.** doubtful, but Harold certainly seems to have made it the goal of his ambition\* and all his measures were directed to this end. He followed his father's policy of manipulating the ealdormanries in the interest of his house; he himself took Wessex, Northumbria passed to his brother Tostig, East Anglia to another brother Gyrth, while to a third, Leofwine, was allotted a district on either bank of the Thames. Mercia alone remained under Ælfgar, the son of Leofric, but hemmed in as he was by his rivals his power was broken\*

In 1063 Harold proved his claim to be regarded as the ablest man in the kingdom by a vigorous campaign in Wales, in which the Welsh were reduced to depend-

ence. Though Harold showed himself to be able and energetic, he had not inherited his father's tact and patient statesmanship. He made fatal mistakes. Abroad Godwin's idea had been to maintain a close alliance with the powerful commercial state of Flanders, and thus to check any attempt from Normandy by bringing the Flemish fleet and army to His policy.



bear on the duchy. Harold allowed the alliance, so carefully built up, to slip into abeyance, and at the critical moment, in 1066, when any movement in Flanders would have been a serious danger, William found nothing to bar his way until he reached England. At home the support given to Stigand threw the Papacy into open hostility, whereas William sedulously cultivated friendship with Rome. In the north Harold quarrelled with Tostig, which was the most unfortunate act of all. -

The question of the succession demanded settlement,

and in 1057 Edward (and this throws doubt on the alleged promise to William) called over from Hungary his nephew Edward, the son of <sup>The succes-</sup> <sup>sion.</sup> Edmund Ironsides. His death, however, in the same year left Harold the sole competitor in England. In 1065<sup>a</sup> a revolt occurred in Northumbria against the harsh government of Tostig, and for reasons which we do not know Harold consented to his banishment. A redivision of the earldoms followed. Northumbria now went to Morcere, a son of Ælfgar, and Mercia to his brother Eadwine, while Northampton and Huntingdon was handed over to Waltheof, a son of Siward. England was therefore practically ruled by two families.

In January 1066, Edward died, childless. In many respects his reign had proved important. The Danegeld had been remitted, a most welcome boon; and thanks to the Norman influence there <sup>Death of</sup> <sup>Edward.</sup> had been a steady development of a central government in the shape of the organisation of the royal chancery. London, too, had been slowly replacing Winchester as the capital, since Edward, perhaps wishing to be free from the control of the Wessex house, had generally resided there. The king's best energies had been devoted to the church, and in his numerous buildings of chapels and monasteries he had introduced from Normandy the system of round-arched architecture, which after the Conquest completely displaced the Saxon style. It is interesting to note that a church had been begun on the site now occupied by Westminster Abbey.

On Edward's death Harold was at once ejected king by the Witan. The vexed question of William's claim is now aggravated by the famous Norman story <sup>Harold king.</sup> that, at some date not fixed, Harold, when wrecked on the Norman shore, had Solemnly sworn to aid the duke in gaining the crown. Whether Harold swore, and what he swore, it is impossible to say, but he may have made some vague promise. Anyway it did not prevent him from accepting the election of the Witan, and, as in the case of Edward's supposed pledge, such a

promise was quite illegal without due ratification by the Wise Men.

William was not to be so baulked. He declared his intention of asserting his right and set about collecting an army and a fleet. With great skill he had contrived to make out a very plausible case for his claims. He alleged Edward's promise, he denounced Harold as a perjurer and rebel, and he enlisted the Papacy on his side by avowing his intention to chase the usurper Stigand from Canterbury and to restore the lawful authority of the head of the church. It was no small gain that the Pope Alexander II, by sending him a banner which he had solemnly blessed, gave to his enterprise the character of a crusade. Whatever might be William's pretension (and we only know Edward's and Harold's "promises" from Norman chroniclers), it was clear that the issue could be decided by the sword alone; and both sides made elaborate preparations. Against the Norman cavalry, archers, and spearmen Harold was forced to pit the national "fyrd"—a mere peasant militia—and the "hus-carls" retained from the days of Canute, but he knew that the bravery of the English, if ably led, could work wonders, and that a single defeat meant ruin to William.

The early part of the year was spent in making ready for the inevitable war; William was massing his army and fleet at St Valery, Harold was strengthening his defences and keeping a vigilant watch. But fortune declaffed against the English king. Late in the summer the terrible news reached him in the south that his brother Tostig, in alliance with the mighty Harald Hardrada, king of Norway, had landed with a vast army in the Humber to seize the kingdom, and that the two northern earls, Eadwine and Morkere, had already been routed. Harold at once hurried to the north; by good luck he surprised the Danish host on the Derwent, near Stamford Bridge, and after a furious encounter annihilated the foe. Both Tostig and Harald Hardrada (who ended a life of romantic adventure on English soil) were

slain. But while the English army was feasting in celebration of the victory, a messenger announced that the long-expected blow had fallen. Duke Wilikm had crossed the Channel and already disembarked at Pevensey.

There was no time to be lost. In spite of the fact that the spiritless Eadwine and Morkere gave him no aid, Harold, collecting troops as he marched, **William lands** hurried to meet his rival. By Oct. 13 he had **in England.** planted his standard—the Golden Dragon of Wessex—on the memorable ridge of Senlac (8 miles north of the town of Hastings), to give battle for the English crown. Over against his force on to the lower ridge of Telham the Norman host came flooding up.

Harold had chosen his position with masterly skill, his object being to leave the Normans as little advantage as possible. Knowing that in the **Battle of** open plain his army of footmen, armed for **Senlac. Oct** the most part with javelins and battle-axes, **19, 1066.** must inevitably go down before the onslaught of the Norman knights, he had carefully selected a steep ridge, where the cavalry of the enemy could not be freely usefls. He further strengthened the site, apparently by fencing the summit in with some sort of palisade or abattis to stop the rush of the Norman cavalry, behind which the serried ranks, forming a shield-wall where every man stood shoulder to shoulder, could ply their javelins and axes with deadly effect. Seeing that success depended on keeping the line unbroken, he urged his men on no account to leave their ranks; and it would have been well had they implicitly obeyed his commands.

The battle was fought on the 19th of October, and certainly was a struggle worthy of the stake at issue. The fray commenced with the advance of the Norman archers, but they speedily fell back, to allow of a fierce charge of the knights, who attempted to break the barricade and drive the English down on to the level ground. In spite of William's bravery the attack failed, and after some hours the Normans were repulsed with severe loss. William,

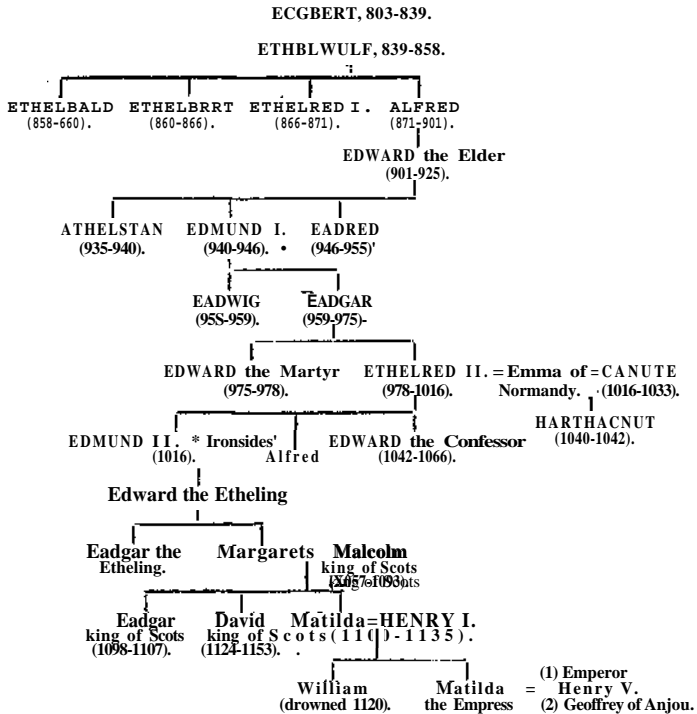
undaunted, headed a second assault on the hill, with slightly better success. The horsemen rode up in the teeth of the English axes, and in this fresh desperate melee, Leofwine and Gyrth were killed. But still the barricade confronted the Normans unbroken. Baffled once more, William had recourse to stratagem. He ordered his forces to simulate flight. The device succeeded; part of the English left their ranks to pursue the apparently routed foe, whereupon the Normans suddenly turned and cut them to pieces. Having achieved their object and broken the hitherto compact array, the Normans were now able to ride up the hill with some chance of penetrating the barricade. The battle had by no means been won, and a determined struggle raged along the summit. Round the standard, Harold and his "hus-carls" still maintained their shield-wall intact, and, thanks to their terrible battle-axes, held their own unvanquished. Unless a gap could be made in this serried ring the Normans must remain beaten. As twilight was fast coming on, William once more brought up his archers, who were directed to shoot into the air, that the arrows might descend "like bolts from heaven". Slowly and surely this cunning plan wrought havoc in the English ranks: but if

**Death of  
Harold and  
defeat of the  
English.**

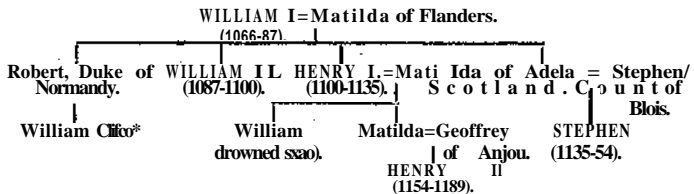
Harold had not been slain by a shaft piercing his eye, it is probable that the unconquerable "hus-carls" would have held out till night-fall, when the Normans must have retreated.

But with Harold no longer there to inspire their efforts the English defence was gradually broken, and the Golden Dragon finally captured. Even then the "hus-carls" refused to surrender, and perished to a man at their posts, On the slope where now is the parish church the last stand was made, but though the Normans suffered severely in the dark, owing to their ignorance of the ground, the battle was really over. The English king had fallen, the English army had been annihilated, and William was left victor on the bloody ridge.

THE HOUSE OF ECGBERT.



THE ANGLO-NORMAN KINGS



(M1)

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## CHAPTER X.

## THE REIGN OF WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR.

Though the victory at Senlac had destroyed William's rival, it had not given him the English crown. If the Norman duke was to succeed in becoming king *de jure* as well as *de facto*, he had still to obtain a lawful election by the Witan. The Witan, however, had already pledged their allegiance to another. On Harold's death the Etheling Eadgar (a grandson of Edmund Ironsides) had been hurriedly chosen king. But the selfish earls, Eadwine and Morkere, whose desertion of Harold had already ruined the national cause, retired to their lands and refused to fight. William on the other hand lost no time; immediately after the great battle he marched on London, but as he intended to terrify it into submission he refrained from direct attack, and instead wheeled away to the west, crossed the Thames at Wallingford, and then struck back to Berkhamstead, thus cutting off all communication with the north. The Londoners very soon abandoned Eadgar and accepted William as their sovereign. On Christmas-day the Norman duke was solemnly crowned by Ealdred, the Archbishop of York, and William might now fairly maintain that by virtue of his election and coronation he was lawful ruler of the whole dominions of the West Saxon line.

In reality some years of hard fighting were to elapse before he became actual master of the whole country. The first step towards this end was taken when Eadwine and Morkere acknowledged his rule, and placed the North at his disposition, so that in 1067 William—who had already settled many of his Norman followers on estates held by Harold's supporters—was able to return to his duchy, leaving Odo of Bayeux and William Fitz-Osborn as regents. In his absence their harshness and cruelty provoked the first insurrection, William at once came

back to subdue the districts he had hitherto left unvisited. Even at this eleventh hour the English, if united, might have driven him across the Channel, but they foolishly rebelled in the most haphazard way—one at one time, another at another—and in favour of three different pretenders, so that failure was inevitable.

In 1068 the king was in the West, where he took Exeter and suppressed a rising in favour of the young sons of Harold in Devonshire and Somerset. Thence he was called away to the North by a massacre of Normans which had taken place at Durham. Eadwine and Morkere, though implicated in this fresh revolt, pusillanimous as ever, at once submitted. Next year, however, there was another insurrection, aided by an inroad of Swegen, king of the Danes, and William made up his mind to teach the North the same lesson he had already taught Normandy,—that he was not a ruler to be trifled with. In the most ruthless and systematic way the country was devastated, and the once fertile district from York to the river Tees was turned into a melancholy waste. So thoroughly was the work of destruction done that it took centuries for the land to recover its former prosperity. Leaving the North, the king in bitter wintry weather marched through the snow to Chester, and then scoured the Welsh border. After this terrible example there was only one more rising on the part of the English. In 1071 the famous Hereward "the Wake" made a last stand in the Fen district, and was joined by Eadwine and Morkere. Like the previous insurrection the attempt was a failure. Eadwine was killed by his own men, Hereward held out for a year\* at Ely, but at last submitted on favourable terms of surrender, while Morkere ended his inglorious career as an exile in Normandy. William had still to reckon with Malcolm, the king of Scots, who was troubling the North. True to his policy of never doing things by halves, the Norman king invaded Scotland, and at Abernethy compelled the Scotch sovereign to renew the submission which his predecessors had made to Eadgar and Canute.

Yet though England was now subdued\* William's difficulties had by no means ended. In 1075 there was a very serious rebellion among the Norman baronage, headed by Roger Earl of Hereford and Ralph Guader Earl of Norfolk. The rising met with the same fate as did similat English revolts. Ralph shortly fled the country and Roger was imprisoned for life. At the same time Waltheof, the last surviving English Earl, who had been privy to the conspiracy, was executed at Winchester, though he had revealed to the king what he knew of the plot. This attempt of the Norman barons is chiefly important as indicating what in the future would be the main source of danger to the royal authority, for by this time the English had learned the wisdom of submitting in silence.

Henceforward William could devote all his energies to the supremely difficult task of reorganizing the administrative system and of establishing his government on a firm basis. Yet, momentous as were the changes slowly introduced, it must always be remembered that the Norman king, though he really owed his crown to his sword, invariably professed to rule as the legitimate successor of Edward the Confessor. The old constitution was supposed to continue as it had existed previously, the alterations that were made being in theory merely those required by the new and different conditions of the political problem. Hence it is only by keeping this fact steadily in view that we can find an explanation of the apparent contradiction between the arbitrary doings of William's reign, and the veil of legality in which they were wrapped.

First, with regard to the land. The change may be roughly summed up by saying that during his reign William established the system of tenure known as feudalism. According to the feudal theory as it prevailed on the Continent, the sovereign was strictly regarded as the sole owner of all land, while the actual holder and tenant of any estate, as the condition of his remaining in possession, was required to

**Rebellion of the Norman Earls.**

**Feudalism.**

swear an oath of fealty to the king, by which he became his "man" or *vassal*, and was bound to serve him in time of war. All such tenants owing direct allegiance to the crown were known as *tenants-in-chief*. Should the holder fail to perform his military service, the land was forfeited (*escheated*) to the king, who could then grant it afresh to another vassal. In England the change from the old English system to the new feudalism was effected mainly in three ways. (1) After the battle of Senlac, all the lands of those who had fought for Harold were confiscated on the ground that they had been forfeited by rebellion\* and were principally distributed on the new tenure to the Norman barons as a reward for their aid. In the course of the insurrections of 1067-70 many other broad lands became similarly vacant, and were granted out on like conditions. (2) The English landowners who had not fought against William, and who were allowed to keep their possessions, were in the same way required to have their position guaranteed, by doing homage and undertaking the performance of military service. (3) When William came to the throne he found large portions of territory in existence known as the "folkland", out of which, as has been seen, the Anglo-Saxon kings had from time to time, with the consent of the Witan, allotted estates to their thegns. The Norman lawyers easily assumed that this "folkland" belonged to the crown (*terra regis*, "king's land", they called it), so that William was able to grant out any part of it as he pleased. Most of it, however, he kept in his own hands, and it was largely from this *terra regis* that, the royal forests were created, the best known of which is the great New Forest in Hampshire. <sup>The king's forests.</sup> William and his Norman successors always claimed that the king alone (or those whom he permitted) had a right to hunt, and much misery was caused in the vicinity of royal forests by the prohibition of all cultivation which would interfere with the deer. Moreover, all such tracts as were set apart for this purpose were governed by a peculiar set of harsh ordinances known as the *Forest laws*.

which punished severely all violations of the regulations, and by which "the peace of the deer" was preserved. Well might the chronicler say of William "that he loved the tall stags as though he were their father", and the people believe that a curse rested on the king who made the New Forest.

Besides the military services due from all tenants of land, there was also a certain amount of feudal taxation to be paid. This consisted principally of fines called "reliefs", levied when a son succeeded to his father's estate, and of "aids", *i.e.* money contributions levied when the **William\*\*** king was in need. Over and above this **taxation.** land-taxation William revived the old Dane-geld, which had been remitted by Edward. As this was a payment according to the extent of land, it became necessary to know exactly how much each owner possessed, and how much therefore he ought to pay; and it was this necessity that led to the drawing up of the famous *Domesday Book*—a kind of searching land census, **Domesday** in which the results of the inquiries of the **Book.** king's officials were accurately drawn up (1085). "He (William) sent into every shire his men, and let them find out how many hides<sup>1</sup> were in the shire . . . and not an ox, nor a cow, nor a swine was left out in his writ." This severe inquisition particularly stirred the resentment of the English, but it was the real beginning of an ordered financial system. It must be noted briefly that the same feudal tenure was applied by the tenants-in-chief to all who were their tenants. Just as the former had been granted land by the king, so they could re-allot it to others, who thus became their vassals. And as the tenant-in-chief, so long as he performed his services, was master of everyone on his lands, the villages came to be regarded as belonging to him, and, as the Norman lawyers phrased it, were his "manors". The result was that most of the free *ceorls* of Anglo-Saxon times were degraded from the position of being free

<sup>1</sup> Units of cultivation of varying size: in some parts as small as 8 acres, in others as large as 50.

owners to that of serfs (or "villeins" as they were called), holding their plots from the lord on whose property they happened to be.

Undoubtedly the most serious problem that confronted William was that of the government itself, which from the nature of the case involved a dual difficulty; for nothing could be more opposed than the interests of the English and the Normans. William endeavoured to meet the dilemma by a number of ingenious checks. In the first place, while practically relying on the constitutional machinery already in existence, he had learnt in Normandy the value of a strong central executive. The nucleus of such a body lay to his hand in the Witan, and all that William did was to modify and develop its powers. Under the Anglo-Saxon regime the **The Great Witan** had been attended by ealdormen, **Council.** bishops, and such thegns as were *officially* connected with the king. Under William it became a feudal assembly, and its name was gradually changed to that of the Great Council (*Magnum Concilium*), which *all* the tenants-in-chief had the right to attend. Thus in theory it was composed of the chief landowners meeting in virtue of their direct relations with the sovereign, but inasmuch as many of the lesser tenants did not take the trouble to attend, the council was practically limited to the rich and powerful, who in time were distinguished by the title of Baron. Technically this council, with the king, was the sole legislative body, but William probably never allowed it to have any great amount of authority, though many of its members, especially the officials of the royal household, were the instruments by which the government was carried on.

But William was not content to stop at this point. Under a strict system of feudalism the under-tenants swore only to be faithful to their lord, and the result was that in France, for instance, if a baron rebelled, his vassals were obliged to follow him against the king. William was determined to prevent such a state of things in England. He

**Difference of English and foreign feudalism.**

summoned a great meeting or "gemot" at Salisbury in 1086, and "then there came to him", says the Chronicle, "all the landowning men there were over England, whosoever men they we're, . . . and swore that they would be faithful to him *against all other men*". This was perhaps one of the most important of all William's acts, as it completely prevented continental ideas of feudalism from getting a footing in England.

The English were not really hard to rule, as their power was already broken by the wide-spread confiscation of their land; and in the presence of the Norman barons, together with the numerous castles which both they and the king erected, there were ample means for controlling any rising. It was the Normans who constituted the real danger. Though William had refused to continue the great Anglo-Saxon ealdormanries, he had early in his reign created three or four analogous smaller earldoms, in Durham, Chester, and Shropshire, which were known as Palatine earldoms, and in these the earls were as powerful as Godwin or Harold had been in the old pre-Conquest days, though of course on a smaller scale. But after the rebellion of 1075 he ceased to add to their number, and as those already created lay on the frontier of Wales and Scotland, they were not so dangerous, and their rulers did good work in wrestling with the lawless population on the Marches. William was careful never to allow a single baron to accumulate estates in any given district, and by judiciously scattering the tracts of land held by the wealthiest of his vassals he effectively checked the growth of great territorial potentates, to whom whole counties might otherwise have fallen. As time passed and William saw that the Normans really were a standing menace to the royal authority, he was slowly forced back on the support of the English. Certainly this must have been the motive which led him to foster the old Anglo-Saxon institutions—the hundred, the shiremoot, and the fyrd, which supplied a fresh check on the baronial power. No doubt in the shire the Anglo-Saxon ealdorman had been replaced by the Norman earl,

The Palatine earldoms.

but William counteracted his influence by increasing the power of the shire-reeve (sheriff), who being appointed by the crown, acted as general manager of the business and represented the king's rights in every county. In many shires, too, there was no earl to give trouble, and the sheriff presided alone in the moot. In a word, the king's idea was, to maintain equilibrium by playing the Norman against the Anglo-Saxon, leaning especially more and more on the English element. To assist the royal power in establishing this equilibrium, William had recourse to the policy of his predecessors, and called in the church to his aid.

As regards the church, the accession of William had brought a twofold change. In the first place, the personal element had been widely altered. Normans for the most part replaced Englishmen in the bishoprics and other places of preferment; and William, true to his declaration on the eve of the Conquest, deposed Stigand, and transferred the see of Canterbury to his ablest adviser in Normandy, Lanfranc, the energetic abbot of the famous Abbey of Bee. Lanfranc signaled his primacy by vigorous efforts to root out the abuses which ever since Dunstan's death had been slowly choking the life out of the church. As abbot in Normandy he had already played a leading part in promoting the monastic ideal of church government, so largely associated with the name of Hildebrand, who as Pope Gregory VII. (1073) aimed at making the church completely independent of, and indeed superior to, the state. Wherever he could, Lanfranc enforced celibacy, and insisted on the chapters in the cathedrals conforming to the strict discipline of the "regulars". But William in his desire to strengthen the efficiency of the church was prepared to go further, and in two important respects he completely altered the structure of the ecclesiastical organization. (1) He separated the ecclesiastical from the lay courts. Under the Anglo-Saxon kings a violation of church discipline had been judged by practically the same body that took cognizance of breaches of the civil law, William

henceforth decided that all ecclesiastical causes—such as divorce, perjury, witchcraft, heresy—were to be tried by an ecclesiastical court in which only churchmen sat, so that in this point the church gained a large amount of independence. (2) But William was the last man to allow any institution in his kingdom to be quite free from his control\* The Conquest had brought England once more into close connection with the Papacy, and in order to prevent any encroachments on the royal rights, the king laid down three rules which were to determine the conflicting relations of the civil and ecclesiastical powers:— (a) that no pope, other than the one acknowledged by the king, was to be recognized in England; (b) that any rules passed at a church synod could only be binding provided they were ratified by the king; (c) that the tenants-in-chief were not to be excommunicated without the king's consent. And as a matter of fact, when Gregory VII demanded William's homage, it was firmly refused on Lanfranc's advice.

William's ecclesiastical policy was by no means perfect. Though he laid the basis of the royal supremacy subsequently developed by his successors, his scheme was full of difficulties. Inasmuch as it set up two conflicting authorities, it required infinite tact and forbearance on the part of both king and archbishop if friction was to be avoided. Though there was complete harmony between Lanfranc and William, who understood each other thoroughly, yet in subsequent reigns, when there existed no longer the same sympathy and readiness to give and take, serious quarrels broke out. Nevertheless with the Norman Conquest the church began a new life. Lanfranc's tenure of his see was a period of busy organization\* in which he was ably seconded by many of the bishops. Always great builders, the Normans left the mark of their architectural genius at Peterborough, Ely, Gloucester, Tewkesbury and Durham, as well as in many parish churches and in their majestic castles. The church itself, again brought into direct contact with the current of western thought, became once more the centre of learning

and civilization, and it was from her fold that during the next two hundred years most of England's statesmen were drawn.

Though in the later days of his reign the Conqueror had little trouble from rebellions in England, he had seldom any long rest from wars. A quarrel with his neighbour the Count of Anjou forced him to take over a great army, mainly composed of native English, to hold down the frontier district of Maine, which had rebelled against him. He was completely victorious, but a few years later he had again to call on the loyalty of his subjects on this side of the sea, to aid him to crush a Norman revolt. His own eldest son, Robert, rebelled against him [1077], stirred up to this unfilial act by Philip of France, who was always glad to make trouble for his too-powerful vassal. King William was beaten at Gerberoi by his son, and would have fallen in the battle if a brave English thane, Tokig of Wallingford, had not saved his life at the expense of his own. But Robert was finally forced to submit and ask his father's pardon [1080], which was not denied him, though he was punished by being deprived of his claim to the English throne.

William's eventful reign came to an abrupt end in 1087. He had quarrelled, not for the first or the second time, with Philip I. of France, and war ensued. To requite Philip's devastations in Normandy, William set fire to the French town of Mantes, but as he rode through the burning streets his horse shied and dashed the corpulent king against the pommel of his saddle. So serious were the injuries inflicted that he died (Sept. 9, 1087).

William, though a great ruler, cannot be called a popular one. "He was mild", we are told, "to the good men who loved God, but beyond measure stark to those who opposed his will", and this sentence briefly but graphically describes his masterful character. Nor can it be claimed that in his many sweeping measures he always gauged clearly what their

Foreign wars  
and rebel-  
lions. 1073-80.

Death of  
William.

William's  
character.

effects would be. He was in the position *of* a man who finds himself in a unique situation with a terribly difficult problem to solve, who grapples with it seriously and ably, but who naturally must fail to see the full import of all his efforts. To his contemporaries he appeared as a harsh, covetous and despotic sovereign, bent on securing his own power at all costs; but it may be urged on his behalf that much of his pitiless severity was absolutely necessary, if he were to succeed in the hard task of holding down both Norman and Anglo-Saxon, each by the other's aid, and of welding together his unwieldy dominions. Of his profound and statesmanlike insight there can be no doubt, and in no respect did he give more convincing proof of his sagacity than in his clear recognition of the fact that the turbulent Normans constituted the most serious danger to the stability of the government.

In his wise attempt to foster the growing alliance between the English, the church and the crown, he indicated the most beneficial method for checking the selfishness and anarchy of the feudal baronage. For the English his reign was certainly a period of sore trial. The cruelty of the law, the monotonous regularity of the taxatiQn, the harsh oppression of the Norman landowners were a high price to pay for the maintenance of law and order. But England in 1066 was torn by internal strife, and it was necessary for the country to pass through the fire of adversity before the disintegrated elements could be fused into an organized state. As has been well said, it was only by community in suffering that the English learnt the secret of true unity.

## CHAPTER XL

## THE REIGN OF WILLIAM RUFTJS, 1087-1100.

The Conqueror had left three sons, and on his death his dominions were divided. Robert, the eldest, succeeded to Normandy; William, the second, according to his father's wish, was to have England; while Henry, the youngest, received no more than a sum of money. This division, by which the second son inherited the most important share, was somewhat unusual, but the Conqueror, who knew well the character of his sons, had purposely arranged it so, fearing that the sluggish Robert would not be so competent to grapple with the government of England as his fierce and masterful brother. The partition still needed the ratification of the Great Council, and accordingly William speedily crossed over to England, where, thanks to the hearty support of Lanfranc and the English, he received the crown.

William II., the new king—Rufus, or The Red, as he is known in history,—thus started his reign by owing his crown to the Church and the English. In character he was far inferior to his father. But though irreligious, profane even to blasphemy, thoroughly vicious and subject to fits of ungovernable temper, he was not without considerable ability and great energy. He had inherited marked soldierly qualities\* but was totally lacking in the self-restraint and calm insight so remarkable in the Conqueror. Yet it was just these qualities which were needed most at the present juncture, for events soon proved how accurate had been his father's diagnosis of the situation. During the whole of his reign, the anarchy of the restless Norman barons chafing under the royal yoke, was to be the thorn in William II's side\* Almost at once a serious rebellion broke out under the leadership of the king's turbulent uncle, Odo

of Bayeux, who had just returned to- England. The Normans professed to rise in support of the claims of Robert, as the Conqueror's eldest son, but in reality aimed at overthrowing the monarchy altogether. William acted with great energy; he called on the English for aid against their oppressors, and drove Odo into Rochester, when he was compelled to submit. Once more the soldier bishop of Bayeux became an exile.

Unhappily, when this insurrection was once crushed, William showed little desire to conciliate the English **Ranulf** by orderly government, and when in 1086 **Flambard.** the death of Lanfranc removed the sole adviser who might have acted as a check on him, he gave full rein to his lawless passions. His chief agent in administration was the notorious Ranulf Flambard (originally a clerk in the king's chapel), who kept his place at the head of affairs by carrying out the king's wishes. Flambard, an able man, but utterly unscrupulous, had made his services indispensable by his ingenuity in squeezing money out of the country. "He drave the gemots all over England", says the chronicler, and oppressed English and Normans alike with impartial severity. Some years later he received the strange reward of being made Bishop of Durham.

William's attention was soon drawn to Normandy. The indolent Robert was quite unable to govern the **William and** duchy, and the land, once so quiet under his **Normandy,** father, had become a scene of license and anarchy. The duke's extravagance speedily plunged him into debt, and he was driven to sell part of it—the Cotentin—to his younger brother Henry, whose cool-headed calculating precision marked him out as one of those who act on the principle that "everything comes to him who waits". Henry ruled his little province well, and his success drew down the resentment of both William and Robert. In 1091 they joined together in attacking him, and Henry quietly gave way and surrendered his dominions, calmly biding his time. Four years later (1095), at the call of the misgoverned inhabitants of

Domfront, he made himself master of the place, and shortly recovered the district he had lost in 1091.

Meanwhile Rufus' hands had been full-at home. For some years the see of Canterbury remained unfilled, but in 1093 the king, frightened by sickness, consented to place Anselm in the archbishopric. Anselm was one of the most remarkable men of the day. He had succeeded Lanfrano as Abbot of Bee, where his saintly piety, his beautiful character, and his rigorous observance of the monastic ideal of life made him famous throughout Europe. But he was much more than an enthusiastic monk. He was also a genuine thinker, and a scholarly writer whose work as a philosophical theologian heralded the dawn of a great intellectual revival in the west. Even to this day he is reckoned as one of the chief glories in the list of Catholic doctors. The new archbishop, however, was more of a student than a man of affairs; he had none of Lanfranc's supple tact and aptitude for practical politics, and his pure morality, coupled with intense aversion to mix in the sordid world of intrigue, little fitted him to cope with the brutal violence of the king and his court. In his own pathetic words, he was a weak old sheep to be yoked with an untamed bull. Yet he was not lacking in courage, and his righteous zeal soon embroiled him with Rufus, who quickly repented of having consented to his promotion. The quarrel at first was confined to minor matters. Anselm had indignantly rebuked the king for his licentious and irreligious life, and continually protested against the spoliation of the church. But later a more serious question arose. It happened that at this time two rivals, Urban II. and Clement III., claimed to be pope, and Anselm asserted that, of the two, Urban was the lawful pontiff. William at once fell back on his father's injunction that no pope should be recognized without the king's consent, and no doubt he had the law on his side. Anselm persisted, and brought matters to a crisis by demanding leave to go to Ronte in order to receive investiture from Urban. A

Anselm,  
Archbishop of  
Canterbury.

Anselm's  
quarrel with  
the king.

great council was summoned at Rockingham, at which—curiously enough—the bishops supported the king, while the barons sided with Anselm. Two years later the archbishop, weary of the struggle with the king and disgusted by the vicious life of the court, retired to Rome, where he was hailed with enthusiasm as the defender of the rights of the church and treated almost as Pope of the far West—*alterius orbis Papa*. In the quarrel it must be admitted that Anselm was in the wrong. He had broken the ordinance laid down by William I., and by retiring had left the English church without its lawful head. On the other hand, there can be little doubt that the king's opposition came, not from a disinterested enthusiasm for the law, but from a desire to prevent any serious check being put on his selfish indulgence. The whole affair aptly illustrates the unworkable\* nature of the Conqueror's scheme when there happened to be a self-willed and despotic monarch placed in opposition to a zealous if tactless archbishop.

William continued to find England no easy country to govern, and, in addition to the difficulties of home **William and Scotland.** administration, the affairs of Scotland called for his interference. In 1092 he had overrun Cumberland, wresting it from the Scottish king, and had then established at the fortified town of Carlisle an important post for guarding the northern border. In 1093 Malcolm, the king of Scots, was slain during an inroad into England, and a period of anarchy followed owing to a fierce dispute between two rival claimants, Malcolm's illegitimate son and his brother Donaldbane. Thanks to an English force both these were displaced, and in their stead, Eadgar, a son of Malcolm by his wife Margaret, the sister of Eadgar Atheling, was put on the throne. In return for this service Eadgar consented to do homage to the English king, and for the remainder of the reign there was peace between the two countries.

The year 1095 was marked by another rising of the Norman baronage, under William Mowbray, Earl of Nor-

thumberland. Rufus acted with his accustomed energy, and the rebels were driven to take refuge in the sea-girt rocky fortress of Bamborough, <sup>Norman rebellion.</sup> which Mowbray only left to end his life in perpetual imprisonment. A lull, which was largely due to the departure to the East of the unruly barons of the First Crusade, followed this vigorous assertion of the royal power. For some time past the Mohammedan Turks in Syria and Palestine had been brutally ill-using the Christian pilgrims to Jerusalem. In 1095 the Pope Urban II called a great meeting at Clermont in France, where, amidst a scene of intense enthusiasm and rapturous cries of "God wills it", a great expedition was arranged to recover the Holy Sepulchre. Many of the Norman barons joined readily in the army, glad no doubt to escape from William's tyranny and to find an outlet for their adventurous spirits in a war with the Turk. Among the princes who volunteered was the needy Robert of Normandy, already so deep in debt that in order to raise money for his retinue he had to pledge his duchy to his brother William, who ruled it for the last four years of his life.

Rufus, whose character was scarcely one to be touched by religious zeal, took no part in the Crusade; besides, he knew that his absence from England at so critical a juncture would involve the loss of his crown. At this time he was busily engaged in reducing the Welsh, but unable himself to subdue them completely, he adopted the policy of allowing his barons a free hand in seizing the country for themselves. Many of his vassals availed themselves of the chance, and the southern districts were largely occupied by Normans, whose strong castles gave them a firm footing among the Welsh. <sup>Conquest of South Wales.</sup> Among the most powerful of the new settlers was Robert of Bellme, already the owner of a rich fief in Normandy. A typical Norman of the worst kind, his brutal cruelty and licentiousness had made him a by-word even among his own countrymen. At Bridgenorth near Shrewsbury he erected a powerful castle, whence he

waged war on the Welsh, more as an independent prince than a vassal of the crown.

The remainder of the Red King's Ufe was spent in fruitless wars in Normandy and in efforts to recover Maine, which had slipped from his control. On Aug. 2, 11 00, he had gone hunting in the New Forest, where his followers found him lying dead, pierced by an arrow. Whether he was murdered or not it is impossible to say; but the English, whom he had so mercilessly harried, saw in his death the vindication of the curse supposed to rest on his father for laying waste the land.

William's reign, little else than a dreary period of savage misgovernment, has few redeeming points. The king was chiefly bent on securing his own absolute supremacy, and the most that can be said for him is that he did his best to prevent anyone plundering his subjects save himself. Though our information is incomplete, it would seem that constitutionally the most important result of the years 1087-1100 lay in the further development of the feudal system, and this must probably be attributed to the policy of Ranulf Flambard, the chief Justiciar. It must certainly be taken as a proof of his genuine capacity for organization, that henceforth instead of there being several justiciars (as had been the case under William 1.) there was now placed at the head of the executive a single official who acted as viceroy in the king's absence. The establishment of this undivided justiciarship was hardly more than a Norman revival, with increased authority and duties, of the Anglo-Saxon *secundarius regis*. In his administration Flambard strove to carry the principles of land tenure, introduced by the Conqueror, to their logical conclusion. The king in theory being sole owner of the land, the next step (and Flambard apparently took it) was to make him supreme landlord in the pecuniary sense. The taxes due from the tenants-in-chief were gradually reduced to fixed and rigorous system. Under the head of "feudal

**The king's death.**

**Character of the king and his reign.**

**Flambard's policy.**

**To the barons.**

incidents " (*i.e.* dues from a fief) were classed three kinds of money payments—(1) a fine paid by the heir on coming into his inheritance; (2) a contribution towards the king's ransom should he be taken prisoner; (3) an "aid" when the king married his eldest daughter, or knighted his eldest son. Flambard also claimed for the king as sole landowner two farther rights\*—(i) the privilege of finding a husband for an heiress\* because otherwise an unfit person might be responsible for the military services; (ii) the guardianship of all minors by the king, who would thus draw the income from their lands. All these taxes were raised with unflinching regularity, and many heirs were long kept out of their inheritance, because the king was loth to give up their revenues\*. But <sup>To the church.</sup> the most important development was reached when these principles were applied to the lands held by the church. Flambard's idea, we are told, was "to make the king every man's heir, whether he was in orders or a layman".\* Under the Conqueror bishops and abbots had held their lands on the same condition as other vassals, and they were now subjected to exactly the same taxation as that imposed on the lay-barons. Though a churchman himself, Flambard had no more scruples about pillaging the church than about pillaging any other body. And it was probably *totally* purely pecuniary reasons that the see of Canterbury had remained vacant from 1089 to 1093, and that in Anselm's absence the king seized the lands of the archbishopric for himself. No wonder, therefore\* that the church and the English hailed with joy the prospect of a new king and a new minister, in the places of the profane and cruel Rufus, and his harsh and greedy minister.

## CHAPTER XII.

## THE REIGN OF HENRY I, 1100-1135.

On the Red King's death, Henry, who was in England, was at once accepted by the barons as his brother's successor. He thus secured the prize for **Henry's accession.** which he had been waiting so long; yet feeling, no doubt, how precarious his position was, he made a bid for popularity by issuing a charter in which he solemnly promised to sweep away all the misgovernment of his brother. What was still better, he gave good earnest of his pledges by arresting the hated minister Flambard, recalling Anselm, and taking stern measures for stamping out the anarchy in the country. Further, a politic marriage with Edith, the daughter of Malcolm of Scotland (closely connected by descent with\* the Anglo-Saxon dynasty),<sup>1</sup> pleased the English, and secured peace and support from the Scots. All these acts only served to heighten the contrast between the new king and his predecessor. **His character.** Hard-headed, cool, and far-sighted, Henry showed by his energy and masterfulness, that he was not without his share of the Conqueror's strong passions. An indefatigable worker, who in an age of no great learning was nicknamed "Beauclerc" or "scholar", his immense love of order and passion for routine, his great practical qualities and unsparing attention to the administration, made him just the ruler to piece into a compact system the disjointed machinery of the constitution. He was not a man of genius like his father, who, from sheer force of mental power, must always be in the front rank, but, given the position, no one was better fitted to make the most of it.

Like Rufus, Henry owed his crown to the English, and before long was obliged to test their allegiance. His **Norman rebellion.** impoverished, discontented, indolent brother Robert, recently back from the Crusade, was bitterly jealous of his rise, and it only needed the

<sup>1</sup>See table on page 81.

persuasion of Flambard, who had escaped across the Channel, to induce him to make an effort to wrest the crown from Henry (1101). But the English stood firm, and at Rochester Robert abandoned all his claims. The whirligig of time had brought its revenge, for some ten years before Henry had been struck to his knees by his now impotent brother. Robert's insurrection had been backed by the Normans, and Henry saw that he could never be safe until he had mastered them. Accordingly he set to work and quietly, reduced them one by one. Robert of BellSme alone seriously resisted, but his stronghold was stormed and the cruel tyrant driven to Normandy. Well might the English sing "Rejoice, King Henry, and give thanks to the Lord God, now that thou hast overthrown Robert of BellSme" (1103).

But Henry had not done with Normandy. Robert, unable as usual to rule the duchy, fell into trouble by oppressing some of his brother's subjects. Henry and Normandy. To vindicate their rights Henry crossed the Channel with an army and overthrew the duke at Tinchebrai (1106). In this victory the English had a large share, and it has been well said that "Tinchebrai reversed the verdict of Senlac". Robert ended his days in Cardiff Castle, and Normandy was once more united to the English crown. Its possession soon brought Henry into touch with the European powers, and for some years the land was disturbed by the intrigues of Louis VI.—the Fat—king of France, who supported William Clito, Robert's son, in his claims on the duchy. After a weary period of intrigues and desultory fighting, Henry finally routed" the French at Brenneville (1109).

It was the danger from France which led the prudent English king to court the friendship of other rulers, and it may be taken as a sign of Henry's im- Marriage alliances. portance that he found a husband for his daughter Matilda in the Emperor Henry V. His dealings with a lesser principality—Anjou—which lay to the south of Normandy, were destined to determine the

future history of England. The Counts of Anjou were among the „ ablest, *the* most energetic and the most ambitious of the french king's vacate, and for more than a century Normandy and Anjou had been driving for the supremacy over Maine. In 1119 Henry married his son to Fulk of Anjon's daughter\* and still later (1127) the widowed Empress Matilda became the wife of Fulk's heir, Geoffrey Plantagenet, who was the father of Henry II, and the founder of the "Angevin" line of English Kings..

During these years of persistant diplomacy abroad  
 1 Henry ted heen ably governing England, and had settled a dispute between Anselm and himself which had threatened to develop into a serious rupture, The

Anselm. quarrel was not really due to either, but arose from the close connection of England with Rome. In his efforts to assert the superiority of the spiritual to the seqnlar power, the pope had forbidden all bishops to receive investiture from a layman, or to do homage for their lands to any lay authority. This new departure had embroiled Gregory VII. in a bitter struggle with the Emperor Henry V., into which England was drawn. Anselm, who had received investiture from William II, when required to do homage by Henry, had refused, urging the papal decree as his reason- Happily the archbishop had in every other way supported the king, especially against the Normans, and so, though obliged from his obedience to the pope to persist in his refusal, he found a far more reasonable man to deal with than  
 Its settle- the Red King, Ultimately in 1106 a come  
 ment. promise was arrived at, by which it was

arranged that all elections to bishoprics or abbacies fould; take place in the king's present, and that the arehbishop should ordain those seated, but that before ordination they were to do homage to their sovereign, Both sides, in fact, abated, their claims. Henry gave up the; royal investiture but retained the homage (otherwise the bishops would have been free from all control), white Anselm by consenting to the act of homaga, gained for the spiritual power the right of investiture, It is notewarthy

that this agreement preceded by fourteen years a similar one on the Continent, known as the *Concordat of Woyfns*, and it speaks volumes for the practical spirit of both king and archbishop,

The other great question that occupied Henry's mind was the suasion to the throne. In 1100 he had the terrible misfortune to lose his only son and heir, William. Only a year after his marriage the young prince was drowned in the Channel by the carelessness of a drunken captain who ran his ship upon a rock. The popular legend that Henry never smiled again shows how profound and sincere his grief was. He was thus obliged to fall back on his daughter Matilda. At a great council he made the barons swear fealty to her as their future queen. This attempt to settle the succession beforehand marks the growth of the hereditary principle, as opposed to the right of election, and was probably imitated from France, where the kings usually had their eldest son crowned during their lifetime. But the next reign will show that the principle took some time to sink into the English mind.

In 1135 Henry died, regretted by all his subjects. His eventful reign owes its real importance to the internal development of the country under Death of the stern, if not harsh, rule of the king whose title "The Lion of Justice" tells how effectually he had obliterated the painful memories of his brother's lawless tyranny. On every side there had been a remarkable material growth and expansion—Trade especially flourished? and in the charter of self-government The towns. which the king granted to London, we can see what a prosperous city it must have been. From this charter dates the steady rise of the towns, and though the other cities were still hampered by feudal taxation, they had LONDON as an ideal to encourage them to win a similar municipal liberty. The church, The church. too under Anselm's diligent superintendence grew richer and stronger. At conference in 1102 celibacy was made the rule of the English priesthood,

thus ending the struggle begun as far back as Eadgar's reign. It was during Heftry's tenure of power that the Cistercians—a new order of monks—were introduced into England. Settling in out-of-the-way spots, such as the sites of Fountains or Tintern abbeys, they occupied themselves with promoting agriculture, and in another hundred years the Cistercian monasteries were the greatest wool-growers in the kingdom.

But it is mainly in Henry's constitutional changes that his best work is to be found. Here he carried on his **Constitutional development.** father's task from the point where William had left off, and by firmly laying down the basis of an administrative system he made possible the still greater advance under his grandson, Henry II. The key to the alterations that were made is to be found in purely practical needs. To help him in the government the king formed out of the great Feudal Council two **The Curia Regis.** committees, one called the *Curia Regis* (King's Court), composed of men who sat as judges to try cases in which the tenants-in-chief were concerned, the other called the *Exchequer*—a **The Exchequer.** body of officials controlling the entire finance of the country. The unity of the administration was maintained by creating the Justiciar president of both these boards. The importance of their creation lies in the fact that regular principles of justice and finance grew up, which slowly stiffened into laws and in time checked even the despotism of the sovereign. Henry's desire for money, as the source of power, led him to extend the judicial system in a new way, since justice was the safest method by which the revenue could be increased. He sent round justices (*Justitiiarii errantes* or *itinerarii*, i.e. "justices on circuit") to decide cases in the shires, and by so doing connected the local courts with the central power of the crown. The officials that were employed in these various duties were largely drawn, **A new baronage.** not from the Norman baronage, but from the classes socially below them, who thus owed their position to the king **and** were much more dependent

on him. The " new men " were heartily despised by the old Normans, but backed by the king's favour this official class slowly wormed its way into the baronage itself, and in time replaced almost entirely the purely feudal tenant-in-chief who had come into existence with the Conqueror. By all these measures Henry enormously strengthened the crown, and raised a subtle\* but none the less most effective, barrier against Norman anarchy.

It must not be forgotten, that just as the Conqueror had been aided by Lanfranc and William II. by Flambard, so in all this rapid development of the governmental machinery Henry had found <sup>Roger of</sup> <sup>Salisbury.</sup> an able minister in Roger, bishop of Salisbury, who figures as the leading statesman of his reign. Originally only a clerk, *i.e.* a chaplain, in the Chapel Royal, his ability had attracted the king's notice, and he was speedily promoted to a bishopric and the office of Chief Justiciar. Bishop Roger's originality, unflagging energy, and devotion to his sovereign amply justified his rapid rise. The thorough organization of the Exchequer court, as well as the general success of the whole administration, has been ascribed by tradition—and probably rightly—to his fertile brain and masterly capacity for business.

Nor did Henry's reforms neglect the interests of the English, who constituted the bulk of the population. Urged by a twofold motive—a desire to <sup>The English</sup> <sup>institutions.</sup> attach the English to the crown and a natural wish to develop to their fullest extent the financial resources of the land—the king issued an ordinance by which the judicial activity of the old hundred-court and the shire-moot was revived. This wise step gave a 'new lease of life to the Anglo-Saxon machinery of self-government, and produced results far more important than a mere increase in the revenue. It enabled the English, already a numerical majority, to become the predominant element in the new nation that was springing up, and that too without sacrificing their most essential Teutonic characteristics. For some time past there had been a steady fusion between Norman and Anglo-Saxon,

*and* all that was wanted to make the latter supreme was a complete recognition of the institutions which were the basis of their identity as a race. This stage was successfully passed in the period from 1100 to 1135, so that thirty years later a Norman writer is found declaring that the racial distinction between Norman and Saxon was a thing of the past, so thorough had been the intermixture of the two peoples.

With Henry's death the strictly Norman epoch closes, and all that is now necessary is to review briefly the more general results of the Conquest other than those to which attention has already been drawn. We have seen that, regarded even in their most concrete aspect, the three reigns between 1066 and 1135 were fruitful in changes—a new system of land tenure, a rapid development of the executive, a vital reconstruction of the church. Yet it would be erroneous to suppose that the Conquest was in any way a subversion of the Anglo-Saxon polity. The new era was no sudden political upheaval; deep and momentous as were its results, they were only gradually brought about. No old institution was actually abolished; hardly anything that was really new was created; the process of growth was marked and rapid, but it involved *no* breach of continuity. In short "the Norman superstructure was welded on to the Anglo-Saxon substructure", and this happened because the Conquest as a political fact was the product of slow stages. It is above all in its indirect results that the lasting importance of the Norman era is to be found, and these were even more slow and gradual in taking place.

(1) The battle of Senlæ meant the advent to power of a new dynasty—rulers, that is, who were dukes of Normandy as well as kings of England. After 1066 it was quite impossible that England could remain hedged in insular seclusion, out off from the ebb and flow of the great tides of continental affairs. Henceforth it was imperative that her sovereigns should have a foreign policy; as Norman dukes they were especially

brought into the closest contact with the kings of France, and it is an exaggeration to say that the long and bloody contest for supremacy, which modified the foreign relations of England during the middle ages and long after, and has influenced so profoundly the life of the two nations, sprang from the Chain forged by the Conqueror's victory.

(3) For the church, too, it was likewise the opening of a new epoch—England became **The church.** (what she had only tended to become in the days of Duncan) a definite member of the organized Christian states of the west, bound by close ties to the papacy, and therefore open to all the wide-spread influences of culture and thought which emanated from Rome. The signal part that she took in the Crusades is perhaps the best example of how the new connection was translated into concrete facts.

(3) On three classes of society **Society.** the Norman settlers left ineffaceable traces of themselves. Not to speak of the indefinable results of Norman manners and customs, it is from William's reign that the baronage dates, and in the baronage were contained the germs of the later aristocracy and the House of Lords. For two hundred years the country was organized on a feudal basis and though the influence of feudalism was checked by various causes, it permanently, in two remarkable ways, modified the social structure of realm and nation—England owed to the Normans the system of primogeniture together with that congeries of ideas, institutions, and practices which we call chivalry. (4) The English language during the same period was **The English** thrown as it were into a crucible. "The Normans"

had brought with them their own tongue, a kind of modified French, which was gradually absorbed into the Anglo-Saxon speech; but it must be carefully noted that it was an absorption, not a radical destruction. English lost many of its inflexions, and added to its vocabulary many French words, as it had already added many Latin and Danish ones, but while thus strengthened, it still remained in its grammatical forms and its genius essentially Teutonic. (5) But over and above all these wonderful

results that the Norman Conquest brought in its train, unquestionably the most important was that effected by the intermixture of the two races. **The two races.** Here as elsewhere the same broad conclusion can be drawn. It was the Anglo-Saxon who swallowed up the Norman, and not the Norman the Anglo-Saxon. This was no doubt due to two causes. First, the Norman was, like the Dane, really a Teuton, though he had acquired a slight French veneer by his residence in Normandy. Secondly, he belonged to a branch of the race that had shown a singular capacity for being moulded by its environment. ' Just as the Norman had been Frenchified by his settlement in France, so he became thoroughly Anglicized by his settlement in England. He came, too, at a critical juncture, when the Anglo-Saxon races had degenerated into sloth, indifference, or faction, when the bracing stimulus of fresh blood was sadly needed. The Normans by their nerve, their restless energy and highly strung temperament, with all the charm of its dash and brilliance, permanently invigorated and enriched the more solid if less "attractive qualities of their insular kinsmen, and the outcome was a fusion out of which, in the course of the centuries, a really strong national character might be slowly evolved.

We have now finished the tale of the bringing together of the four elements—Welsh, Saxon, Danish, Norman—out of which the English people has been built up. Since the eleventh century it has suffered no further infusion of new blood to any appreciable extent, and all that it has become or done in later ages proceeds from development from within, not from modification from without. For good or evil, the race was made by the time that the last of the Norman kings was succeeded by the first of the Plantagenets.

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