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FOR LITTLE

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INTRODUCTION.

Not long ago there lived in a small village, within twelve miles of London, an old man who had seen a great deal of the world. Through the greater part of his life he had enjoyed exceedingly good health, and when he was young, he had been both very strong and very handsome. His spirits had been uniformly cheerful, and sometimes high, and in his gay fits he had at times done foolish things. He nevertheless had always been fond of reading when he had time, and he

had received a very good education for a man of his station, so that he wrote and read his own language very correctly, and thought a great deal upon everything that came under his notice. He had, too, a way of thinking in general different from most other people, which made it very pleasant to hear him talk. The books of which he was most fond were Shakespear's plays and the histories of his own and other countries, and as his memory was very good, he seldom forgot a line that he had read. Indeed, he would say that memory only required to be exercised to be as good in every one as himself; and that in those who pretended not to be able to recollect things as well, the fault was not in their memory, but in their attention.

"Everything to which people attend very much," he said, "they are sure to remember. If I cut a line deep in a slate

with a penknife, nobody can rub it out; but if I only draw it with a slate-pencil, it is gone in a moment. Those who wish to know anything must attend, for attention is the penknife, and memory is the slate."

Even after his strength had failed, and his hair was as white as snow, he was still exceedingly cheerful and contented, though he was not at all a rich man, and his mortal life was coming near a close. He was very fond of children, too, and loved to join, as well as he could, in their little sports and amusements; and God, who had thought fit to deny him many things in life, and whose will was bringing him slowly to the grave which Adam has left open to all, had been bountiful to him in surrounding his old age with that which he valued more than the gifts of fortune—namely, a number of bright young kindred faces.

Old John Jones, when he had gone through

many different scenes in different lands, after having left his native town in Wales, and lost much money, partly by imprudence, and partly by accidents, sat himself down in the village I have mentioned, and married the daughter of the schoolmaster. He then took a nursery-garden, which he managed well for thirty years, and during that time he had six sons, and two or three daughters. Each of his sons received an excellent education, that is to say, such a one as fitted them for their station in life, without making them discontented with it. He qualified them to make the best of their means and of their industry; he opened to them many sources of calm and innocent pleasure, and none of discontent. His sons and daughters all married early and well, for his neighbours were glad to have for the partners in life of their children, persons who had been brought up as they had been. The eldest born son

each of his children was called John, out of love and respect for the old man; and as they were all settled in the same village, there was a little colony of young John Joneses, who used often—almost every night—to gather round their grandfather in his cottage, like a wreath of roses clinging round an old oak. For some time he amused himself and them by telling them stories of the different adventures which had occurred to him in the early part of life; and he was sure, while so doing, to draw some good lesson from the tale he related, often blaming himself, and pointing out errors which he had committed, for old John Jones was by no means a vain man, although the attention with which his little auditory listened, might, I will own, create a degree of self-satisfaction in his heart. Such stories, however, will exhaust themselves, and as the children were evidently as well pleased to hear him relate

what he had read, as that which he had done, he soon began to draw from other sources than his recollections of personal adventure, and night after night, during the greater part of 1836, he told the children the tales which follow, taking care to prefix to every little tale a slight but sufficient sketch of the preceding history, and of the characters about to be introduced.

The effect was, to fix upon their minds, not only some of the most striking events in modern history, but to give the young people, who were growing up around him, a clearer and more definite idea of the past progress of Europe, since the fall of the Roman Empire, than is generally found in the class to which they belong, especially at their age.

His first stories were all taken from the History of England, and he began them when the eldest of the little party which

gathered round him was thirteen, and the youngest nine, on one fine summer evening of the year I have mentioned. Occasionally he stopped to explain the meaning of a word which he thought the younger of his hearers might not understand; but such explanations, where they are needful, I will put at the bottom of the page, in order to let the stories go on without interruption.

Let us suppose that we see him, then, my young friends, sitting in his blooming garden, at his cottage door, with his long white hair falling on his shoulders, and all his grandchildren about him; and let us think we listen to what he says.

THE ROMAN PERIOD.

I DARE say, my dear children, you have all heard of the Romans. What, little Charles has never heard of them? Well, I will tell you all about them another time. They were a very great nation, living in a country called Italy; and, by their courage and skill in war, conquered the greater part of Europe, and a part both of Asia and Africa. For many years, none of the half-barbarous tribes who surrounded them could resist them successfully; and the more civilized and luxurious nations of the East fell before them, with even less resistance.

Julius Cæsar, the first emperor of the Romans, after having conquered Gaul, and extended the Roman Empire to the shores of what we call the British Channel, determined to invade the little island which we now inhabit; and fifty-five years before the birth of our Saviour, he accordingly embarked, with a small force of infantry, at a French port, supposed to be Calais, and leaving his horse soldiers to follow, sailed for England, on the 26th of August. This country was, at the time, inhabited by a people called the Britons, who were then in a very barbarous state, if we may believe the accounts of the Romans. At all events, they had been greatly alarmed by the tidings which had reached them, of that famous people who had conquered Gaul, being about to attack them also; and at first they had sent ambassadors to Julius Cæsar, to persuade him not to come, by

offers of submission. Finding, however, that he was about to sail, they made preparations for resisting him, as well as they could, and flocked in immense numbers to the place where he was likely to land. The whole cliffs, in the neighbourhood of Dover, were covered with their wild troops, which followed the Roman ships, as they sailed along the coast, till they reached a spot, now called Walmer, where Cæsar prepared to disembark his men. A fierce battle took place at this point, the Britons rushing down into the sea, to prevent the invaders from landing; and the Romans were almost disheartened with difficulties, which they had not been accustomed to encounter. The better discipline and arms, however, of the invaders, carried the day. The Britons were defeated, and the Romans landed. The natives of the country then submitted for a short time, but soon renewed the war, and were again de-

feated, if we can trust to Cæsar's own account. It is very clear, however, that he was in a great hurry to get away; and it is probable that he was not quite so successful as he represented.

He returned in the following year, with a much larger army of both foot and horse soldiers, and, after a great number of battles, forced his way onward to the banks of the Thames, contriving to take advantage of the old quarrels which existed amongst the British princes, in order to weaken the enemy, and gain assistance and provisions for his troops. The principal British forces that opposed him, under a prince called Cassibelanus, did more than could, perhaps, be expected against a well-disciplined army, attacking the Romans frequently with their war-chariots, of which, at one time, there were four thousand in the field. Nevertheless, Cassibelanus soon saw, that, in the

present state of the country, it would be impossible to resist very long; and towards the end of the year he entered into a treaty of peace with Cæsar, by which he agreed that Britain should pay a certain yearly tribute to the Romans, and give hostages for the performance of the terms. Cæsar, who had then advanced as far as St. Albans, or perhaps somewhat farther, retreated to his ships, and left Britain for ever.

It is probable the tribute was never paid, and the emperors frequently threatened to come and take it, but for nearly a hundred years the Romans never again set foot in Great Britain. The next invasion took place while a prince named Claudius was emperor; and the Roman army which now landed is said to have amounted to fifty thousand men. Several battles took place; but the Romans made small progress; for although the Britons were constantly de-

reated, they still continued to resist, under a prince called Caractacus, till, at length, that great hero was attacked, on a hill in Shropshire, still called Caer Caradoc, and completely defeated by the Romans, to whom he was afterwards treacherously betrayed. During the ten years that followed, the Romans made considerable progress, founding cities, building forts, and establishing colonies; but they did not enjoy their conquests in peace, for about the year 61, a general revolt of all that portion of Britain which had submitted, took place. A number of different tribes placed themselves under the command of a queen, called Boadicea, who had been shamefully injured and insulted by the Romans, attacked and utterly destroyed one of the Roman colonies, defeated the ninth legion, and captured several large towns, putting the Romans to the sword wherever they

were found. Success gave new courage to the Britons. An army of two hundred and thirty thousand men was collected, and marching rapidly on, attacked the small force of Suetonius, the Roman governor, amounting to not more than ten thousand men; but the ill-disciplined forces of the Britons were, once more, totally defeated, and Boadicea poisoned herself in despair.

From that time, till the arrival in Great Britain of a famous officer, named Agricola, the portion of the island which had fallen into the hands of the Romans enjoyed a considerable degree of tranquillity, notwithstanding the insurrection of several of the subdued tribes. It was in commanding one of the Roman legions against these enemies, that Agricola obtained his first great military renown; but he was afterwards rewarded by the government of Britain, which had now become a Roman province. In this high office,

Agricola showed himself equally great in a civil and military capacity; and in the course of seven campaigns, he never met with a defeat, but extended the bounds of the province far into Scotland, marking the limit by a line of fortresses or castles, from a great branch of the sea, called Frith of Forth, to another on the opposite side of the island, called the Frith of Clyde. The Caledonians, or Scots, were his most pertinacious enemies, but were defeated in every battle in which they ventured to engage, and, it would appear, were only saved from complete subjection by the inaccessible fastnesses of the highlands. While yet in this full career of success, Agricola was recalled by the tyrannical Emperor Domitian, after having caused a fleet to sail completely round the island. For many years after this, the Romans continued to hold possession of the country they had obtained, without any very great

trouble, though they were engaged from time to time in warfare with tribes who were always anxious to shake off the yoke. Some of the Roman emperors seemed to have neglected the province altogether; and few of them took any great trouble to retain it. The Emperor Hadrian, however, came into England in person, reformed a great number of abuses that existed, and built a wall of earth, from the mouth of the river Tyne as far as the Solway Frith. The Emperor Severus, too, also came into Britain, and died at York, worn out by fatigues and sorrows. He it was who built the greatest Roman work that was ever erected in this country, employing his troops in raising a wall of solid stone, of twelve feet high and eight feet thick, as near as possible to that of Hadrian, but at the distance of many miles from another wall, which had been previously built between the Forth and

Clyde, by one of the Roman governors during the reign of the Emperor Antonine; and it is supposed that the whole country between these two walls, had, in the meantime, been lost by the Romans.

After the death of the Emperor Severus, at York, the Roman empire was disturbed by a great number of quarrels and disputes, which prevented the various emperors from attending to the government of distant provinces; and the barbarous nations inhabiting the shores of the north seas began to ravage the coasts of Great Britain. The principal of these were Franks and Saxons; and the Roman governors, in order to quiet them, and to derive some advantage from their warlike character, foolishly took a number of these barbarians into their pay as soldiers. Rather more than eighty years after the death of Severus, Great Britain was visited by the Emperor Constantius; and

shortly after, that prince also died at York, A. D. 306, leaving the empire to Constantine, surnamed the Great, the first Christian emperor. That celebrated prince is said to have been born in Britain, and various authors assert that his mother, Helena, was the daughter of a British prince, but I do not think that there is any truth in either statement. Certain it is, however, that Constantine was first saluted emperor at York. He was killed in the year 340.

The disturbances and contentions in the Roman empire which followed the death of Constantine, and the partition of the empire between his sons, was far from delivering Great Britain, as might have been expected, from the presence or exactions of the weak monarchs of different portions of the Roman empire. Nor did the tribes which had submitted to their rule escape the incursions of the Picts, Scots, Franks, and Saxons; but

the province Britain had risen into great importance, and the number of Roman soldiers which it contained more than once decided who should be emperor. A great number of evils, however, and dangers too, gathered round the Roman empire, like the black clouds that we sometimes see coming all round the sky, on a summer evening; and at last, an emperor, called Honorius, was obliged, for his own defence, to call almost all the regular troops out of Britain. The rest of the Roman population soon followed, and the natives of the country were left to defend themselves as best they could against a great number of enemies, who were ready to fall upon them. The Saxons were the most powerful of these, and proved the most successful; but before I go on to tell you about them, I will just say a word or two regarding some curious points in the history of the ancient Britons.

The Romans found the inhabitants of the British Isles undoubtedly in a very barbarous state, compared with themselves; but yet they were a great deal more civilized than the savage tribes which we found in North America, and in the islands in the South Seas. In the first place, they had a regular system of religious worship, with an immense number of priests, called Druids, who had a very great influence over the whole people, and had recourse to a number of cunning tricks, both to keep up their authority, and make the rest of the nation pay them handsomely. It may seem wonderful to you, my dears, that they should have obtained or kept this influence, when I tell you that their exactions and their tyranny were very great, and that their doctrines, rites, and ceremonies were so barbarous and bloody as to be revolting to every feeling of humanity. People pretend

that the Druids had amongst themselves, in secret, a purer sort of religion; but it certainly never influenced their actions, and was not communicated to the people in general. All barbarous nations are superstitious, and whatever excites their fancy, or strikes them with fear, obtains their reverence. This was one cause of the Druids obtaining power; but the Druids also possessed a much juster source of influence, for they were by far the most learned of the people; and there can be little or no doubt that they had advanced a great way in several of the sciences, such as astronomy and natural philosophy. Of mechanics they also knew something, and they were the physicians, surgeons, and, in general, lawgivers of the nations of which I speak. This of course gave them very great authority; and perhaps the art of telling fortunes, to which they pretended, gave them still more. Never-

theless, several parts of their revenue would not have been easily collected, if they had not had recourse to a cunning device for bringing in supplies. In the first place, they taught the people that no act of religious worship, great or small, could be performed without the presence of a Druid; and in the next place, that all fires throughout the whole land should be first lighted from the sacred fire which they kept burning on their altars. Every man was forced to put out his fire on the last day of October; and he was forbidden, under pain of excommunication, from relighting it with any but the sacred fire. This of course brought immense numbers of the people to the temples of the Druids on the first of November; and there is reason to believe that fire from the altar was refused to all those who had not paid their yearly tribute to the priests. At the same time, all other persons were forbidden,

under pain of excommunication, to supply fire to those who had been refused by the Druids, so that every one was obliged to pay the tax, or shiver through the winter. Besides this yearly payment, the Druids obtained a share of all the people's wealth, in the shape of offerings at the temples; for it may easily be supposed that men, who, in their superstition, would give up a great number of human beings to be enclosed in a wicker image, representing a man, and then burnt to death, as an offering to the gods, would not refuse a large portion of the spoil taken from the enemy, or even a part of their own riches. It is but too certain that such horrible sacrifices as I have mentioned, were offered by the Druids, and many other abominations, which I will not stop to tell you, were practised among them.

A great many people have supposed that when Cæsar first invaded Britain, the inha-

bitants were ignorant of the art of clothing, and went quite naked, with their bodies painted. But this is altogether a mistake, for there can be no doubt that long before the Romans reached these shores, the people not only had garments of skins, but had learned the art both of dyeing and working cloth, and were as well clothed as the tribes in Gaul. It is true, many of the British nations did paint their bodies with various figures of birds and beasts, or merely smeared themselves all over with a sort of blue dye, called woad; and there is reason to believe, that in some of their religious ceremonies, they appeared painted in this way, without any clothing. We find, moreover, that this painting, as it has been called, was, in reality, tattooing—that is to say, the rubbing in of various colours, in different figures, into small holes made in the skin with needles. The operation was very painful,

but when once performed, the colours remained in the skin, and did not wear out for many years.

That the ancient Britons, before the arrival of the Romans in this country, had a considerable knowledge of various arts, is proved by the immense number, and different sorts of their carriages and war-chariots. These they drove with the greatest quickness, stopped them, turned them about, jumped in and out of them, and performed other feats with them, so cleverly, as to astonish the Roman commanders. All this shows that the chariots themselves were lightly and skilfully constructed; but after the conquests of the Romans, many arts were lost by the Britons, while others were introduced or greatly improved.

As a Roman province, indeed, Britain soon began to put on quite a different appearance. Large towns were built, roads

were opened in different directions, and fortresses erected; temples, country houses, and theatres were also erected, and all the arts and luxuries of Rome were imported into this country. But, at the same time, the Romans took a step which was fatal to the British people. They disarmed the whole inhabitants who had submitted to their rule; and the Britons, losing all their martial spirit and skill in war, became incapable of defending themselves, as soon as the Romans had retired from their shores. It was in vain that some troops, sent over in compassion by the Emperor Honorius, endeavoured to revive the courage of the people, and to teach them once more the use of arms, which they had formerly taken from them. The nation had been crushed down by the yoke, under which it had so long groaned, and had no longer strength or inclination to struggle with the enemies

by whom it was surrounded. It seemed to look round, bewildered and confused, like a deer suddenly attacked by hounds, but was as unable to fly on account of the seas which surrounded it, as to resist, on account of the weakness and idleness which had been occasioned by long slavery and inactivity.

THE SAXON PERIOD.

In the north of Britain, and in some parts of the west, there were several tribes, which had resisted the power of the Romans with unwearied courage. They had not waited to be attacked, but had frequently been the assailants; and when repelled in their incursions, and pursued by their well-disciplined enemies, had found shelter amidst the rocks, mountains, woods, and morasses of the Highlands of Wales and Scotland. The more northern and more important tribes, during the first period of the Roman possession of England, are known only

by the general name of Caledonians; but towards the close of the Roman dominion in Britain, we find them spoken of as two people, the Picts and Scots. It may be easily conceived that these nations, who had resisted, with unconquerable determination, the rule of the greatest empire in the world, and had suffered defeat after defeat from civilized and well-disciplined enemies, without being in the least degree dismayed or overcome, were hardy, daring, and persevering; and no sooner had the Romans retreated from Britain than the Picts and Scots poured over the barriers which had been erected, and, in various incursions, slaughtered the inhabitants, and swept the fields of the weak and long-subjected inhabitants of southern Britain. They met with little or no resistance, for military skill, civil government, active habits, and hardy resolution were all at an end. From

the wall of Severus to the most southern point of the island, innumerable petty wars raged amongst the people themselves, preventing them from joining together to repel the common enemy.

The Scots and Picts never made any long stay in the country they invaded, but killed the inhabitants wherever they met them, collecting whatever plunder they could find, and retired to enjoy their booty in their woods and hills. Towards the middle of the fifth century, however, a rumour spread, and was generally believed, that it was the intention of these two nations to move to the south, with their whole forces, to put to death all the degenerate Britons who had submitted to the Romans, and establish themselves in the more fertile land. This put the southern Britons into a great fright; and in a general assembly of the great men of all the tribes, at which a king called Vor-

tigern presided, it was agreed to send ambassadors to the Saxons, beseeching their assistance to repel the Picts and Scots. The Saxons were a nation, inhabiting the middle parts and sea-coasts of Germany, exceedingly brave, wonderfully active, powerful in body, highly intelligent, though uncultivated in mind, and possessing, as it would seem by nature, a spirit of perseverance and strong determination, which has been shown by no other people. They were fond of war, accustomed to the sea, and their sport, rather than their occupation, was to go out in their small ships, in all seasons and in all weathers, and ravage the coasts of their neighbours. They little cared where they landed or whom they attacked, for war was their amusement, and conquest their business. To them, of all other people, the southern Britons determined to apply; and their message not only

completely changed the fate and destiny of this country, but also had a great effect upon the Saxons themselves, giving them the first idea, it would seem, of gaining fresh territories, and changing their object from the mere plunder of moveable goods to the conquest of foreign countries.

We do not easily discover to which of the very numerous Saxon tribes the British messengers were sent. All that is certain is, that they were joyfully received, their petitions granted; and that two celebrated Saxon chieftains, named Hengist and Horsa, sailed for England, accompanied by a considerable force, although we find only three large ships mentioned; but I cannot help thinking, from what happened afterwards, that a great number of smaller vessels must have accompanied them. Hengist and Horsa landed in what is called the Isle of Thanet, in the year 449, and were received with the greatest joy by the weak and un-

happy Britons, as friends and deliverers; and it is very probable that these fierce men of the north had at first no other object in view than to enrich themselves, by the recompences they hoped to receive for fighting against the Picts and Scots. They stipulated at first for nothing but an ample supply of provisions and certain rewards, which the Britons readily promised, and in return, the Saxons vowed to wage perpetual war against the enemies of their new allies. The first great battle which took place after their arrival was fought near Stamford, and the Saxons and Britons obtained a complete victory, and drove the Scottish hordes back into their own country. But Hengist and Horsa had by this time remarked two very important facts: that the country was exceedingly rich and fertile, and the inhabitants disunited in counsels, and enfeebled by long submission to the Romans. The extravagant gratitude which the Britons showed

towards their northern auxiliaries proved how strongly they had felt their incapacity to defend themselves; and Hengist soon found an excuse to send for fresh help from his native country. A large body of Saxons, Angles, and Jutlanders soon came over to support him in anything that he might design. By this time, it would appear, he judged Britain a great deal too comfortable a place to be abandoned easily; and the wolf had only to seek a pretext for attacking the lamb, which was not very difficult to find or to make. The Saxon leaders pretended that their troops were not sufficiently supplied with provisions, and had not been sufficiently rewarded; and without delay they concluded a separate treaty of peace with the Picts, contrary, we are assured, to their express promises. The Britons, alarmed, now began to remonstrate; but the Saxons speedily contrived to help themselves by ravaging all the country round.

Some of the Britons resisted gallantly, and made the Saxons fight for the territory they were determined to possess. Not long after, a new Saxon army appeared upon the coast of Northumberland, and took possession of that county, as well as a large district on the opposite side of the Tweed. For a long time, however, this division of the Saxon forces seems to have made small progress, and kept up little communication with their brethren who had previously arrived. Horsa having been killed in battle, left his brother Hengist to assume the title of King of Kent, with which county several others on the opposite side of the Thames were joined to form the sovereignty of the first Saxon monarch. Reports of the success and continued prosperity of the invaders, and of the rich country which they had explored, reached the ears of their countrymen; and a fresh inroad of the Saxon tribes took place accordingly. Every day the power

of the Saxons increased. The Picts and Scots still continued to pass the Roman wall; and what between their unfriendly allies and their fierce enemies, the unhappy Britons were nearly driven to despair. As it is one of the most simple, so it is one of the most ordinary arts of cunning barbarians to produce enmity between those people whom they wish to overcome, and to take advantage of the hostilities of surrounding nations. It is a much higher degree of what is called policy to gain advantages from establishing and promoting peace and good-will amongst men. Whether Hengist really did anything to keep up the quarrels between the British tribes among themselves, and between them and the Caledonians, I cannot tell; but certainly he did nothing to quiet the disputes of the one people, or to stop the incursions of another, except when the latter menaced the power he had usurped.

Towards the close of his long life, the Britons seeming to revive, troubled the quiet of his reign, and he had to fight more than once for his throne. But in two great battles he signally defeated his enemies, and saw the foundation laid of the second of those seven monarchies which the northern conquerors were about to found.

Encouraged by his success, a body of Saxons invaded England under Ella, in the year 477, and landing on the eastern coast, they marched into the country, and founded the kingdom of Sussex.

Shortly after, another band commenced the kingdom of the West Saxons; and so this conquering and active race went on till four more kingdoms were added, forming what you will hear called in history the Heptarchy. The four last which I have named were called the kingdom of Mercia, the kingdom of the East Angles, the kingdom of the West Angles, and the kingdom of

Northumberland; and although they were often at war with each other, as well as with the Britons, it is curious to remark what progress these tribes made when they were once settled in a foreign land, and enjoyed the benefits of a regular government, of which they had but the merest shadow in their own country.

EDWIN.

It would only tire you without improving you, to tell you all about the seven kingdoms of the Saxons, and therefore it may be as well to give you any little stories about the different princes of these kingdoms. You will remark, however, that, from its foundation, Wessex, or the country of the West Saxons, seemed destined, as it eventually did, to swallow up all the others. The Saxon state which appeared at first likely to be its rival in greatness was that of Northumberland, which was at first

divided into two, but was very soon united under a man of considerable ability, named Ethelfred, of whose history I am going to give you some account, as it was very closely connected with that of Edwin, one of the greatest of the Saxon kings. Ethelfred having married the daughter of Alla, one of the two kings of Northumberland who reigned in that portion called Deira, determined, it would seem, to obtain possession of the crown on his father-in-law's death, although Alla had a young son named Edwin, just three years old at the time of his father's death. As it was very likely in those barbarous times that the infant heir would be murdered by his brother-in-law to secure possession of the crown, those who had charge of Edwin carried him off to the court of the British king of North Wales, where he was educated with great care; but, having provoked the enmity of Cadwallon, the

son of his protector, he was forced to fly once more, and took refuge with Ceorl, King of Mercia. Being handsome in person and distinguished in manners and education, he was received with great favour by the King of Mercia, who gave him his daughter in marriage. In the meantime, Ethelfred's power had increased by the death of his father, who had reigned in the other half of Northumberland, and to whom he now succeeded. His fondness for war soon showed itself; and, in continual hostilities with the Scots and Picts, he not only gained a number of unimportant battles, but defeated them so completely in the year 603, that he was free from apprehensions of any attack on their side for many years. He then turned his arms against the Britons, and laid siege to Chester, to the defence of which place marched Brocmail, King of Powis, with a large army of Britons. This king, however,

not contented with the services of his soldiery, carried with him no less than twelve hundred and fifty monks, in order, it is supposed, to bless his arms in the approaching conflict with the heathen Saxons. The monks were all drawn up in a body on the field; and Ethelfred cunningly directed his first attack against them, in which no less than twelve hundred of these unfortunate men were slain. The panic produced by this slaughter spread to the whole British army, which fled and left Ethelfred master of the field. He thus became possessed of Chester and a great part of the neighbouring country, and it would seem, turned his attention now to the destruction of his brother-in-law, Edwin, who found himself obliged to fly from the court of Mercia lest he should bring destruction upon the head of his benefactor. His next place of refuge was at the court of Redwald, or Redowald, as it is some-

times written, sovereign of the small kingdom of the East Angles, who received him with the greatest kindness, and discovered in him even in exile and poverty those great qualities which he afterwards displayed as a monarch. But even here Ethelfred did not cease to persecute him, and endeavoured both by promises and threats to induce Redwald to give up the unfortunate young man to his enemy. Whether he yielded to the tempting offers of the King of Northumberland, or gave way before his furious menaces, I do not know; but Redwald at length determined to commit a very dishonourable action, and put Edwin in the hands of the King of Northumberland. During his short residence at the court of the East Angles, however, Edwin had made many friends, and one of these gave him secret intimation of his danger, and advised him to escape as speedily as possible. The prince, however,

despairing of finding another asylum, weary of wandering from place to place, and not knowing whereto find a protector who would deal faithfully and honestly by him, determined to remain where he was. In the meantime Redwald communicated his determination to his queen, who, struck with the dishonourable nature of the act, represented so strongly to her husband the disgrace which would fall upon him if he betrayed a prince whom he had promised to protect, and who relied implicitly on his good faith, that Redwald's purposes were entirely changed, and instead of giving up Edwin to his enemy, he offered to assist him in the recovery of his kingdom. Secretly and hastily he raised as large a force as the kingdom of the East Angles could muster, and advanced by rapid marches into the kingdom of Northumberland. Ethelfred was surprised, but not dismayed, by this sudden

attack; and, collecting what forces he could in the short time allowed him, marched to meet the enemy. The advanced guard of the East Angles was commanded by Rainer, son of the king, the main body by Redwald in person, and the rear by Edwin. The two hosts met on the banks of the river Lile; and Rainer, it would seem, had advanced so far that he could receive no timely support from his father and Edwin. Upon him then fell the first fury of the conflict; and the troops of Rainer, though fighting gallantly, as did their commander, were overpowered and dispersed, Rainer himself being killed in his daring efforts to repel the enemy. Flushed with success, Ethelfred then attacked the corps of Redwald and Edwin, which had by this time united; but here fortune failed him; and, after a fierce and sanguinary struggle, his troops were routed. Ethelfred himself, resolved not to survive his defeat,

cast himself into the fiercest of the strife, and perished fighting to the last.

Redwald, with the greatest generosity, forbare entirely from attempting to aggrandize himself at the expense of the prince he had succoured and befriended, and put him in full possession of the whole of Northumberland. The three sons of the late king fled into Scotland, and the people of the country submitted without a murmur.

They had reason to rejoice in the event which placed Edwin on the throne, for instead of seeking by the barbarous means of war to extend his sway, he devoted his attention principally to establish peace and order in his dominions, and succeeded so perfectly, that historians assure us, during his reign, a child with a purse of gold in his hand might have gone through the whole kingdom of Northumberland without the slightest danger.

Nevertheless, Edwin was not altogether free from ambition; and he openly aspired to sovereign sway over the other monarchs of the Heptarchy, especially after the death of Redwald, which seemed, though we do not clearly see by what means, to place much greater power in the hands of Edwin. The King of Mercia, the King of Kent and the East Angles, yielded to his pretensions, and appear undoubtedly to have acknowledged a certain degree of superiority in the King of Northumbria; but the two Kings of Wessex bore his assumption of authority with great impatience, especially the younger, Quicelm, who had recourse to the basest and most dishonourable means to rid himself of one whom he did not feel equal to encounter in the field. In the early part of the year 626, it was announced to Edwin that an ambassador named Eumar was approaching his court with a friendly message from

the kings of the West Saxons. The monarch received him in great state at a beautiful palace which he possessed at Aldby, on the banks of the Derwent; and Eumar, as was customary in those days, commenced a florid harangue to the Northumbrian king, approaching nearer and nearer as he went on. When he judged himself within a sufficient distance, he drew forth a poisoned dagger and aimed a furious blow at Edwin. One of the courtiers, however, named Lilla, devotedly attached to his royal master, had conceived some suspicions of the ambassador, from seeing him put his hand under his robe. The moment the dagger was raised, he threw himself between the king and the assassin, and received the weapon in his own bosom. The monarch's attendants and guards instantly rushed upon Eumar and despatched him, but not before he had slain another of Edwin's faithful servants named Frodherri.

As may well be supposed. Edwin did not submit patiently to this injury; but, marching an army into the territories of the Kings of Wessex, he took a terrible revenge, and compelled them to sue for peace.

Edwin was the first Christian King of Northumberland; his conversion having been brought about in a somewhat curious manner. Amongst his fellow-kings, the one whom he seemed to regard with the greatest favour was the young monarch of Kent, whose sister Ethelburga had become celebrated for her virtues and her beauty; and being now a widower, and still in the prime of life, Edwin sent to demand the hand of the princess in marriage. It is probable that Ethelburga was not disinclined to unite her fate to that of so renowned and excellent a prince; but there was an obstacle to their union, which neither she nor her brother were at all inclined to overlook. Edwin

was a pagan and idolater, while she had been strictly brought up in the Christian faith. Long negotiations ensued, in which the scruples of the sister of the King of Kent had full weight. The hope of converting her heathen lover induced her at length to consent, on the condition that the free exercise of her religion was secured to herself and her household, and that a bishop of the Christian church should accompany her to Northumbria, and be permitted to preach the gospel to the people of that kingdom. Edwin promised all that was required, and in his fondness for his new bride, undertook to hear and consider the truths of Christianity. Paulinus, a priest who had been sent from Rome, was consecrated Bishop of Northumbria, where not a single Christian was as yet to be found, in order to accompany Ethelburga; but he made only small progress in his sacred mission, till he called, as it would

appear, superstition to his aid, and persuaded Edwin to believe, by a reference to some former passages in his life, that he had a direct commission from heaven. It seems that Edwin had no great esteem for the idols he worshipped, nor indeed were his subjects very staunch idolaters, treating matters of religion with that lightness which is found amongst the ignorant and unenlightened, upon subjects of the importance of which they are ignorant. Like all strong-minded men, however, he had a great objection to changes without just cause; and, knowing little or nothing of the nature of Christianity, he put off the consideration of the subject from day to day, notwithstanding the solicitations of his queen and the exhortations of Paulinus. We are told that, when Redwald was on the point of giving him up to Ethelfred, the information of his danger was conveyed to him by a stranger,

though it was evidently sent by one of his friends at the court. In order to make him pay more attention to it, the messenger assumed a superior tone, promised him great future prosperity to be attained by the assistance of a great and powerful friend, for whom he bespoke the prince's gratitude, and laid his hand upon his head as a token by which he might know, at an after period, the friend of whom he, the speaker, was merely the messenger. This story having been told to some of the king's friends, came at length to the ears of Paulinus, who determined to take advantage of it; and, one day rushing into the king's presence when surrounded by his courtiers, he laid his hand upon his head, exhorting him by that token to become a servant of the true God who had given him the promised prosperity. Edwin was convinced, or rather overcome, by these means, and, after hearing and examining more fully

the doctrines of Paulinus, was baptized, and became a Christian.

Now understand, my dears, that although this is the story told of Edwin's conversion, and that in some degree by a very good man of the name of Bede, who lived not very long after, yet I do not feel sure of its truth, for the people of those days were too ready to believe everything that was told them; and both cunning men and foolish men manufactured a great number of marvellous tales, which would not now be credited, but which nobody at that time ventured to doubt.

And now I must tell you what became of Edwin after all this. The authority which he assumed over the other kings gave great offence to Penda, King of Mercia, who succeeded to the throne of that district in the year 626. Penda was a bloody and barbarous tyrant, who delighted in war and

slaughter. He attacked, at various times, all the neighbouring monarchs, ravaged their territories, and slew more kings in battle than any one mentioned in history, except some of the leaders of the Israelites. Amongst others, he made a sudden eruption into Northumberland, accompanied by Cadwallon, King of North Wales, an old enemy of Edwin's. Their force when united was very large; and Edwin, taken by surprise, was unable to bring an army of equal number into the field; but he nevertheless marched to meet the enemy with what troops he could collect, and a bloody battle took place at Heathfield, or Hatfield, in Yorkshire, where the skill of Edwin, and the courage of his troops, would probably have gained the victory, had not the prudence of the King of Northumbria abandoned him on seeing the death of his son, who was slain at his feet by an arrow. To avenge his death, Edwin rushed into the midst of his enemies, by whom he was

surrounded and killed, before his troops could follow to support him. The Northumbrians were immediately dismayed, fell into confusion, and abandoned the field. The conquerors displayed the greatest possible cruelty, ravaging the country from end to end. Penda continued to carry on the same bloody hostilities against his neighbours for many years; slew another king of Northumberland in battle, and was again invading the territory, after having rejected the most submissive offers from Oswi, then king of the country, when he was met by that prince with a small but determined army, and defeated and slain, with almost all his companions.

MURDERS OF ETHELRED AND KENELM.

After the death of Penda, a long period succeeded, very little worth the trouble, I think, which historians have taken to make

it more clear. As far as the Anglo-Saxons were concerned, I shall only tell you that Kent, Essex, and Sussex every day decreased in power and importance, and by the beginning of the eighth century, that is to say, the year 700, Wessex, Mercia, and Northumbria were the only important states left. But a still greater and more extraordinary change had taken place amongst the people of the country—I mean the Saxons, for the Britons themselves by this time had been driven into a few remote districts by the energy and perseverance of the invaders. The change I speak of was produced by the Christian religion, which, after being professed and abandoned by many different princes and tribes, had nevertheless made its way to the hearts of men, so as to have become, at this period, the general religion of the inhabitants of the land. Although it has never had the power to restrain altogether the bad

passions of man; yet its natural tendency is to produce peace and goodwill, and to promote those arts and habits which unite men together in tranquil pursuits, rather than separate them by injuries and hostilities. The Saxons began to see that there was something more worthy of living for than merely to fight; but, though they were, perhaps, the most energetic and persevering race that ever was known, they did not immediately find rational means of employing themselves after their warlike habits were in a degree abandoned; and multitudes of them, including even their kings and princes, retired from active life to the idleness and superstitious devotion of the monasteries. The wise and prudent looked upon this state of things with some alarm, and even the venerable Bede himself, one of the most devout churchmen that ever lived, seems to have been afraid of the consequences. After

having told his readers that the Picts and Scots were, at the time he wrote, at peace with the Saxons, and that the Britons themselves had sunk into a state of tranquillity, he goes on to say, "What will be the consequences of this calm which has made so many of the nobility and the common people abandon the use of arms in this kingdom of Northumbria, and flock into the monasteries, time alone can discover." Nevertheless, quite enough fighting took place, from time to time, to keep up the martial spirit of the people. Very shortly after the time of Bede, the kingdom of Northumberland was thrown into the greatest state of confusion by the abdication (that is to say, the resignation of his crown) by Eadbert, or Edbert, one of the greatest of its monarchs, who placed his son upon the throne, and retired into a monastery; and in the space of thirty-six years, seven complete revolutions,

attended with the murder or deposition of the reigning king, took place in that country. Such a state of uncertainty and turbulence always renders the land in which it exists weak and incapable of any great exertion, so that from that time Northumberland, like many other of the Saxon kingdoms, fell into insignificance, and Mercia and Wessex were left to contend for the superiority. The great advantages of Wessex would probably have decided the matter sooner, had it not been for the abilities and courage of two kings of Mercia, Ethelbald and Offa, the latter of whom was one of the greatest, but not the best, of the Saxon princes. He applied himself from the very beginning of his reign to increase his territories, deprived the kingdom of Northumberland of the county of Nottingham, invaded and subdued the kingdom of Kent, defeated the king of Wessex in a bloody

battle, annexed Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire to his dominions, and drove the Britons back into the Welsh mountains. As ambition is rarely considered as a vice in princes, Offa might have appeared in history in a fine light, had he not stained his character, towards the end of his reign, by one of the basest and most shameful acts that a monarch could commit. The kingdom of the East Angles had been long in a state of dependence upon the crown of Mercia, but in the year 792, the young king of East Angles, named Ethelred, gave proofs of virtues, and high qualities, which might, perhaps, in time, have raised his little state to independence. He was handsome, we are told, in person, and gentle in his manners, though brave; but, unfortunately for him, the beauty and good qualities of Alfhrida, daughter of Offa, as well as the advantage of uniting his fate with that of the

child of his powerful neighbour, induced him to seek the hand of the Mercian princess in marriage. His proposal was favourably received, and he was invited to the court of the king of Mercia, who was then residing at Mardon, in Herefordshire. Full of love and expectation, the young king hurried to receive the hand of his promised bride, and was received with every mark of affection. It would appear that Offa himself fully intented to deal fairly by the young king; but his base wife, Kendrida, persuaded him to violate the sacred rights of hospitality, and Ethelred was murdered in cold blood. The object of this crime was obtained, and the kingdom of the East Angles annexed to Mercia; but bitter and poignant remorse seized upon Offa; he drove the instigator of the deed from his presence with abhorrence, made a pilgrimage to Rome to obtain absolution,* and spent

* Forgiveness which the Pope pretended to be able to give.

large sums in benefactions to monasteries and churches, without, however, giving up possession of the fruits of the evil deed.

This prince obtained from Rome the canonization* of the first British martyr St. Alban, and built a magnificent abbey and church to his honour, at the place where his bones were said to have been found, the name of which was changed upon the occasion from Verulam to St. Albans. Remorse, however, it would appear, still preyed upon him; and he died two years after the deed which gratified his ambition, and wrung his heart.

His son only survived him four or five months; but Kenulph, who succeeded, had a long and prosperous reign. At the death of that prince he left two children, a daughter named Kendrida, of eighteen or twenty years of age, and a son named Kenelm, considerably younger. Prompted, it would appear,

* The insertion of his name in the Romish list of Saints.

by an ambitious lover, Kendrida caused her young brother to be murdered, in order to raise her favourite to the throne; but her ambitious schemes were disappointed, and remorse and punishment followed the act. A sweet, but somewhat feeble poet, named Shenstone, lived near the spot where this horrible act was committed, and, in one of his best productions, commemorates the fate of the unhappy Kenelm, in the lines which I am going to repeat.

Fast by the centre of yon various wild,
Where spreading oaks embower a Gothic fane,
Kendrida's arts a brother's youth beguiled;
Then nature urg'd her tenderest pleas in vain.

Soft o'er his birth, and o'er his infant hours,
The ambitious maid could every care employ,
Then with assiduous fondness cropped the flowers,
To deck the cradle of the princely boy.

But soon the bosom's pleasing calm is flown,
Love fires her breast, the sultry passions rise,
A favoured lover seeks the Mercian throne,
And views her Kenelm with a rival's eyes.

How kind were Fortune! ah, how just were Fate!
Would Fate or Fortune Mercia's heir remove!
How sweet to revel on the couch of state!
To crown at once her lover and her love!

See, garnish'd for the chase, the fraudful maid
To these lone hills directs his devious way;
The youth, all prone, the sister-guide obey'd,
Ill fated youth! himself the destined prey.

The brother of Kenelm's father was placed upon the throne, but his reign only lasted a year; and the same sort of disorderly spirit rose up in Mercia which had already enfeebled Northumberland. We generally find that what is called the advent or coming of great men is prepared by scenes of turbulence and anarchy, which sweep away many of the obstacles, whether they be prejudices, customs, or institutions, which might have proved difficult for them to overleap. We have now seen Sussex, Kent, Essex, East Anglia, reduced to dependence upon, if not subjection to other Saxon monarchies, and

Northumbria and Mercia rendered feeble and incapable of any great efforts by the frequent revolutions which had taken place therein. This, then, was the moment best suited for a man of a great and comprehensive mind and enterprising character, to abolish the division of the Saxon territory, and unite the several kingdoms under one crown. Such a man did not fail to appear, and arose in that district which had been less subject to revolution than any other of the seven Saxon kingdoms which formed what is called the Heptarchy. Before I speak, however, of Egbert himself, I must take some notice of those who preceded him, and also of the position of the kingdom of Wessex as the central point from which all his efforts were directed. Wessex had been invaded and peopled by Saxons and Jutes. It was bounded on the south by the British Channel, on the north by the Thames, on

the east by Sussex and Kent, and on the west by the river Tamar; at least, such are the limits usually assigned to it. The territory, however, had been very greatly increased in the course of time, extending to the shores of the Bristol Channel and the mouth of the Severn, while the Britons of Cornwall had been reduced to a state of passive submission, and the small kingdom of Sussex annexed to Wessex by one of the early monarchs. The limits of the territory, however, varied so much at different times, that it is hardly possible to fix the extent accurately. In a long line are twenty kings of Wessex; but there are only two or three whose history is well known and worthy of notice. Ina, who ascended the throne about 688, is reputed one of the wisest and best of the Saxon princes. He displayed his valour and his skill in wars with the Britons in Cornwall, and against the kings of Kent,

Sussex, and Mercia. He was a liberal benefactor of the church, and a lawgiver of no mean abilities; but it is a reproach to his name that he taxed his subjects for the benefit of Rome, and, perhaps, no high honour to his wisdom, that he renounced the world in which he was acting a beneficial part, to shut himself up in a monastery, where his abilities were useful to no one. As he had succeeded a cousin, so Ethelhard, who stood in the same relation to himself, mounted the throne at his death, and was in turn succeeded by Cuthred, whose reign of thirteen years was one long series of military expeditions. He was followed by a feeble, vicious, and cruel prince, named Sigebert, who was speedily deposed by his subjects, and Kenulph, one of the princes of the blood royal, was elevated to the supreme power in his stead. Kenulph reigned for more than thirty years, but was assassinated while in the

pursuit of criminal pleasures by the brother of Sigebert, his predecessor. His son Brithric without difficulty assumed the crown, and sought to secure it by a marriage with one of the daughters of Offa, King of Mercia, but this plan did not succeed so well as might have been expected; and he derived little assistance from his father in law. By some it is asserted that a prince, named Egbert, was nearer to the crown, according to the laws of descent in Saxony, than he was himself, being descended in no very remote degree from the early kings of the West Saxons. This was quite enough to excite the jealousy of Brithric, who determined to put the young prince to death. Egbert, however, gained information of the king's intentions towards him, and fled first to the court of Offa, King of Mercia, from whom he did not receive a very favourable reception, and thence speeding on his way, crossed over into France.

and attached himself to the court of a great and enlightened prince, the Emperor Charlemagne. By him he was treated with the utmost kindness, and every sort of distinction; and, during more than thirteen years he continued in France, Italy, and Germany, gaining lessons every day both in regard to policy and war. At length, however, Brithric was poisoned by his wife; and the West Saxons demanded loudly that Egbert should be recalled. Messengers were therefore sent to summon him to assume the crown; and the kingdom remained in perfect tranquillity awaiting his arrival. The ambassadors found him at Rome, whither he had accompanied Charlemagne on that famous occasion when the great monarch of the Franks assumed the imperial crown. With honours and presents, Egbert set out for his native country; but he carried with him a treasure far greater than any other which

Charlemagne could bestow, in the vast views of policy which he had acquired under the tuition of the mighty monarch of the Franks and the experience which had rendered sweet the uses of adversity.

Although, undoubtedly, ambitious as well as active and valiant, Egbert spent the first years of his reign in cultivating the peaceful arts, and conciliating the affections of his people. Wessex at this time displayed the only example in the Saxon part of Britain, of a united and contented nation, willingly submitting to the authority of a wise and prudent monarch. But the time for rousing their military qualities arrived, and Egbert first led the troops of the West Saxons against the Britons of Cornwall, who had displayed some signs of hostility. The more general war in which he speedily engaged, was forced upon him in 823 by Bernulf, a noble Saxon, who had deposed the last king

of the original Mercian dynasty in 819. Whether moved by fear or envy, the usurper determined to attack the king of Wessex; and, collecting a vast army, he marched on with the utmost rapidity towards Salisbury, hoping to take Egbert unprepared. That monarch, however, had received timely warning; his forces, better organized than the other Saxon troops, were more easily brought into the field, and moved with greater quickness, and, meeting Bernulph in the neighbourhood of Wilton, he defeated him with such tremendous slaughter, that the river became red with the blood of the slain.

The next step of the great monarch was to send his son, Ethelwolf, to subdue the kingdom of Kent, which was accomplished with little difficulty, placing Egbert in possession of the whole country south of the Thames. Essex was next subdued; and it then became the policy of Egbert to possess

himself of East Anglia, which had remained unwillingly beneath the yoke of Mercia ever since its conquest by Offa. Without actually commencing the war himself, his emissaries incited the East Anglians to revolt against their masters. Bernulph was slain in an attempt to reduce them. His successor, Lucidan, perished in the same manner; and another king, chosen by the Mercians, named Witzlaf, was defeated and forced to fly by Egbert in person. The West Saxon monarch, not contented with the immense success he had obtained after the conquest of Mercia, which put him in possession of the whole country from the sea to the Humber, passed that river in 827, and advanced to the conquest of Northumberland. The Northumbrian nobles, however, disunited and dismayed, offered no opposition, but met him at Dore in Yorkshire, and universally acknowledged him as their monarch.

Thus ended the Saxon Heptarchy; and the seven distinct states, of which it was composed, were merged into one, each owning Egbert as its superior lord. He did not, indeed, depose all the kings of the districts he subdued, for he was wise as well as ambitious, and those who know most about those old times have remarked that he followed a very curious but shrewd course.

The people who, with so much courage, perseverance, and success, had invaded Britain, and made themselves masters of at least two-thirds of the whole land, though they may be considered as one nation and spoke one language, were of different tribes, known by the names of Saxons, Jutes, and Angles. The Saxons and Jutes would seem to have invaded and peopled together, and they had overrun Wessex, Sussex, Kent, and Essex. The Angles, on the contrary, had taken possession of Northumbria,

Mercia and East Anglia. Now it became the policy of Egbert to unite in his own person all the four true Saxon monarchies, which union had indeed been prepared by the internal dissensions that had taken place, and by the loss of the direct line of the original monarchs. With the three kingdoms of Angles, however, Egbert acted differently. Though Mercia was actually conquered, and the King, Witzlaf, obliged to conceal himself in Croyland Abbey, yet Egbert, of his own will, restored him to the throne, only requiring tribute, and an acknowledgment of his sovereignty. He followed the same plan with East Anglia and Northumberland, ruling the kingdoms of the Saxons as their monarch, and being recognised by the kings of the Angles as their sovereign lord, from whose will they derived their crowns. It is a curious fact, however, that although the Saxons were in reality the

masters of the whole land, the country and the people took their names from the Angles, and were, from about this time, called much more generally than before, Angle-land or England, and Englishmen.

THE DANES.

SOME time before Egbert came to the throne of Wessex, a band of northern pirates, from the shores of the Baltic, reached the coast of England, and made their first descent, we are informed, on the Isle of Portland, in 789. I am not very sure that this is quite true, for the piratical fleets of this people had committed ravages on the coast of France long before, and it is not likely they should leave England unmolested. They were a very peculiar people, inhabiting a vast tract of country, where they multiplied amazingly, and whence they issued

forth in large bands to plunder their neighbours. It would seem that these bands consisted entirely of volunteers, who attached themselves to one chief of renown, and went out with him for the purposes of exercising their military genius, and gaining a certain sort of honour, as well as a great deal of plunder on the sea-coasts of other countries. In France they were called North-men or Normans, which was perhaps a better title for them than that of Danes, by which they were known in England, as they numbered a great many tribes amongst them who did not inhabit the country called Denmark. No band of these rovers owned any connexion with the others, and although we find the names of several of their kings mentioned, it does not appear that any of the early leaders paid much attention to the orders of their sovereigns, if they received any, and they certainly showed no regard whatever

for treaties entered into by other Danish chiefs. Charlemagne, or Charles the Great, Emperor of the West, and King of France, frightened, rather than compelled, Godfrey, King of Denmark, to negotiate with him, and to conclude a peace; but the treaty was badly observed, and the ravages of the Normans continued as furiously as ever, till they were terminated for a time by the death of Godfrey, and the accession of a more peaceful monarch. Certain it is, that all the early part of the reign of Egbert was untroubled by Danish invasions; but in the year 832 a large fleet of piratical vessels appeared in the mouth of the Thames, and landing on the Isle of Sheppey, they plundered the country almost unopposed. They seem at this time to have had no idea of settling in the countries they attacked, for they re-embarked as soon as they had collected the booty they desired, and sailed

away for their native country. On the following year, however, while Egbert was engaged in subduing North Wales, a fleet of thirty-five Danish vessels approached the English coast, and the pirates disembarking at Charmouth, in Dorsetshire, commenced their usual ravage. Egbert, with a small army, hastened to meet them, in the hopes of driving them back at once to their ships, but he found that he had now a more formidable enemy to deal with than he had ever yet encountered. The Danes stood their ground, and a bloody battle ensued, in which, though the Saxons fought with the greatest intrepidity, their enemies remained masters of the field. They had suffered, it is true, a terrible loss, but nevertheless they continued the pillage of the country till they were satisfied, and then returned to their ships. Two years afterwards, another and still larger body of Danes landed in Cornwall, having,

probably received a hint of the discontented state of the Cornish Britons. The natives joined the invaders in great numbers, eager to throw off the yoke of the Saxons; and the combined armies advanced at once towards the heart of the country, in the hopes of taking Egbert by surprise. He was now, however, better prepared to meet them, and he defeated them with terrible slaughter at a place called Hengisdun, now Hengston Hill. During the following year he died, and was succeeded by his son Ethelwolf. This prince, in the early period of his father's reign, had displayed some military ability in the subjection of Kent; but he had become indolent and pacific at a time when peace was only to be secured by the sword. To save himself part of the trouble of government, he made his eldest son, Athelstan, King of Kent, Sussex, and Essex, and the rest of his life passed in feeble struggles

with the Britons from Wales and the Danish pirates, whose incursions were now more frequent than ever. He fought one great battle, it is true, near Okely, in Surrey, assisted by his son Athelstan. The Danish army was the most numerous that had ever landed on these shores, and they fought with their usual determination; but they were encumbered with spoil, so that after the most bloody conflict that ever took place in England, they were completely routed by the two kings, and slaughtered in immense numbers. Two other victories were obtained over the Danes during the same year; but still a large body of these rovers, having landed in the Isle of Thanet, contrived to maintain themselves in that part of Kent, being their first attempt to settle in Great Britain. This took place in the year 851, and it would appear that Athelstan died shortly after. Ethelwolf, for his part, fol-

lowing the fashion of the times, left his dominions to take care of themselves, and made a pilgrimage to Rome, taking with him his youngest son Alfred. He remained in that city nearly a year, and, on his return through France, though by this time an old man, married Judith, daughter of Charles the Bald, a young lady quite unsuitable in point of years. His expectations of resuming the throne without opposition were disappointed; for his eldest surviving son, Ethelbald, an active and ambitious prince, had taken advantage of his father's absence, and now, with a considerable body of adherents, sought to dethrone him. A compromise, however, was effected. Ethelwolf resigned the kingdom of Wessex to his son, retaining the rest of his dominions till his death, which happened two years afterwards. Notwithstanding his treaty with Ethelbald, the deceased king had made a

disposition of his territory by will, dividing it between his two eldest sons, Ethelbald and Etnelbert, but entailing them successively upon his two younger sons, Ethelred and Alfred. That is to say, Ethelred was to succeed Ethelbert, and Alfred to take the crown after Ethelred. The eldest son, Ethelbald, who reigned in Wessex, seems to have been a turbulent and bad prince. One of his first acts was to marry his father's widow, which was contrary to all law. He died soon afterwards, however, and was succeeded by Ethelbert. This prince, who was now sole monarch of all England, spent the whole of the rest of his reign, which lasted only six years, in continual contest with the Danes. Although he left two sons, he was succeeded by his brother Ethelred, according to the terms of Ethelwolf's will. This was a brave, active, and amiable prince; but the whole of his reign was troubled with the

incursions of the Danes, who, very soon after he came to the throne, landed in Northumberland, no longer under the command of a pirate-captain, but under that of one of the royal princes, if not the actual sovereign of Denmark. There are several various stories with regard to this prince's invasion, in which there is probably some truth, and I shall therefore proceed to tell them, especially as they explain some circumstances which followed.

KING OSBERT AND EARL BRU

We have seen all the dissensions which took place in Northumberland before the accession of Egbert, and which paved the way for the subjugation of the country; but

after Egbert had established his sovereignty in the land, the Northumbrians gradually became more united, and as the power of the West-Saxon princes was checked or enfeebled by struggles with the Danes, they step by step recovered their independence, and united in placing upon the throne of Northumbria a prince of the name of Osbert. This monarch held his court at York, then a city of great splendour; but his passions soon produced fatal convulsions, which ended in his ruin and death. One of those noblemen who had contributed the most to raise him to the throne was named Earl Bruern, warden of the Northumbrian coasts, who had married one of the most beautiful, as well as the most virtuous of the ladies of the land. In hunting, one day, the king stopped to rest and refresh himself at the house of the earl. The visit being unexpected. Bruern was absent, but his wife re-

ceived her sovereign with all due courtesy, and entertained him to the best of her power. Osbert but ill repaid such conduct, and before he left the house treated her with the greatest indignity and cruelty.

As soon as her husband returned, the lady informed him how she had been insulted and wronged, and Bruern instantly took means to avenge her, and to support his own honour. He was popular and powerful in that portion of Northumbria called Bernicia, and he soon raised the whole people of the district to arms. The authority of Osbert was thrown off; and as Bruern himself did not aim at the throne, a prince of the name of Ella was proclaimed king by the Bernicians. A fierce civil war ensued; but Bruern, resolved to crush the base prince who had committed such a crime against his wife, set sail for Denmark, and allured the princes of that country to the

shores of England, by representing the distracted state of Northumbria, and the easiness with which great conquests might be made, while the people of the land were engaged in civil contentions. These solicitations were listened to with pleasure; but more especially by Ivar and Huba, sons of the preceding king of Denmark, whose story I must now tell you.

STORY OF THE KING OF DENMARK, AND EDMUND, KING OF EAST ANGLIA.

I REALLY do not know what was the exact name of this king of Denmark, for we have got a very bad way of changing foreign names. However, I find him called Lodbroc by the English writers. Being out upon the coast

of Denmark with but few attendants, returning, it would appear, from a hawking party, which he had made in a distant part of his dominions, he was caught by a storm, and driven over to the shores of England, where he landed near Yarmouth, in Norfolk, then under the dominion of the East Angles. The king of that country, at the time, was a brave and amiable young prince, of the name of Edmund; and Lodebroc having been seized by the wardens of the coast, was brought to the presence of the East-Anglian prince. He treated him, we are told, with the greatest kindness, and engaged him in the sports of the field, where the Danish monarch excelled the whole court in the ancient pastime of falconry. To this superiority is attributed the jealousy of Bern, the Saxon king's falconer, who seduced the Danish prince into a wood, and there barbarously murdered him. The crime is said

to have been discovered by the sagacity of a dog, who watched by his master's dead body for several days, going from time to time to the palace for food. The frequent appearance and disappearance of the hound, coupled with the king's prolonged absence, induced some of Edmund's attendants to follow, and the body was discovered. Farther investigations brought the murder home to Bern, who was condemned to be exposed upon the sea, without companions or provisions, in the very boat which had brought the Dane to the shores of England. It is not clear whether he was drifted by chance to the coast of Denmark, or picked up at sea by Danish vessels; but the king's boat was recognised by the Danes, and Bern was examined as to what had become of the monarch. In order to screen himself, and perhaps to be revenged upon those who had punished him, the murderer declared that

Lodebrod had been cast upon the shore of East Anglia, and there put to death by the orders of Edmund The sons of the deceased prince immediately took arms to avenge their father's death; and it was probably at this time that the application of Earl Bruern was made. With one of the largest armies which had ever issued forth from Denmark, Ivar and Huba set sail for England, with their Northumbrian confederate, and landing unexpectedly at the mouth of the Humber, they found the whole country unprepared for resistance. After overrunning with extraordinary rapidity the land to the north of the Humber, the Danes marched onward towards York. Osbert, in the meantime made aware of their landing, invited Ella to lay aside their feuds, and act against the common enemy. Ella agreed, and promised to lead his army to the support of his competitor; but Osbert's impatient character

prevented him from profiting by this favourable arrangement. Issuing forth from York before Ella's arrival, he met the Danes in battle in the open field, and, after an obstinate and bloody contest, was totally defeated, losing his own life, it is said, in the retreat. York itself fell into the power of the victors; and Ella, marching to the support of Osbert, was encountered by the victorious Danes, and likewise defeated and slain. The whole of Northumbria now fell into the hands of the Danes, who, still unsatisfied, pushed their incursions into Mercia, and laid the king of that country under contribution.

Shortly afterwards, leaving his brother Huba in Northumberland, Ivar invaded East Anglia, and defeated Edmund in a general battle. The English prince was taken alive, and then barbarously murdered in presence of the Danish chief.[1] The Ro-

man Catholic historians declare that he was offered his life on condition of renouncing his faith, but refused, and was accordingly put to death. Upon this story, he was made a saint of the Roman Catholic church; and his body, having been carried to Bury, in Suffolk, brought great flocks of pilgrims thither in after ages. The place, with a monastery attached, even adopted his name, being now known as St. Edmund's Bury, or Bury St. Edmunds.

The successes of the Danes were now very rapid, and overrunning the whole of the Saxon dominions in England, they defeated their enemies in almost every engagement.

Ethelred and his brother Alfred, however, were not inactive; neither did they suffer themselves to be dispirited by the victories and fierceness of their adversaries. In one single year, Ethelred fought five

pitched battles against them, but in the last he was carried from the field severely wounded, and died shortly after, leaving to his brother Alfred, then in his twenty-second year, a throne surrounded by dangers, and a kingdom shaken to its foundation.

ALFRED

NOTHING could be more difficult than the situation in which the young prince found himself; but he was of a bold, hardy, and resolute disposition, wise in counsel, prompt in action, and steady in resolution. It is very probable, too, that his early residence in Rome, and the education he there received, may have enlarged his mind, and given him

a greater store of resources, than was ordinarily the lot of Saxon princes.

With all these advantages, however, King Alfred was defeated at Wilton within a month after his accession; but the loss of the Danes was severe; their preceding victories had been bought by the death of many of their most experienced leaders and bravest warriors; and Alfred, even in defeat, succeeded in effecting a peace with the invaders, and induced them to quit his hereditary dominions of Wessex. The King of Mercia also purchased a short period of tranquillity by valuable presents; but the Danes soon forgot their engagements, and, receiving large reinforcements from their native country, they re-entered Mercia 874, overrun the whole country, and forced the king to flee.

Their numbers were now so increased, that they had a great difficulty in procuring

subsistence by the means they had hitherto employed. They accordingly divided their forces; and one body, marching upon Northumberland, applied itself to the cultivation of the land. A very large body entered Cambridgeshire, and thence pushed their incursions into the surrounding parts of the country.

The peace with Alfred was soon broken; and another treaty succeeded, which was as ill kept as the first. Exeter was seized almost immediately after it was concluded; and Alfred, roused to resistance, notwithstanding the enfeebled state of his country, collected what forces he could, and besieged the Danes in Exeter. A Frisian fleet, which he had taken into his pay, blockaded the mouth of the Exe, and defeated a Danish reinforcement which attempted to sail up the river. The elements also seemed to fight on his side, and a hundred and twenty of the

enemy's ships, in attempting to reach Exeter, were lost in a tremendous storm, which occurred upon the coast. The Danes in Exeter were thus forced to capitulate. They agreed to quit the whole of the West Saxon territories, and never to return to them. Large reinforcements arriving, however, from Denmark, they re-entered Wessex in the following year, obtained possession of Chippenham, and spread themselves over the whole face of the country. The courage of the West Saxons gave way. Most of them submitted to the conqueror. Numbers fled, and concealed themselves in woods and forests; and Alfred himself, obliged to fly with a few devoted friends, soon found that even these attendants risked their own safety without contributing to his, and dismissed them all while he pursued his journey alone.

It was at this period, that, disguised in

the habit of a peasant, Alfred was obliged to take refuge in the hovel of a cow-herd, and to depend upon the charity of the man and his wife for daily bread. Unconscious of his rank, the good woman employed her sovereign in menial offices; and, finding him not very skilful in performing them, set him to watch and turn some cakes that were baking in the ashes. The king, busied with many painful thoughts, forgot the cakes, and suffered them to burn, upon which the good woman scolded him heartily, telling him that he would be ready enough to eat them, though he would not take the trouble to turn them.

Shortly after this, he established himself in a small marshy piece of ground, where two rivers, called the Parett and the Thoe, meet in Somersetshire. This place was difficult to be got at, on account of the marshes and the rivers which surrounded it, having

but one narrow path by which it could be approached. Here Alfred called some of his most faithful followers to his assistance, and built a small fort, whence he carried on a system of petty warfare against the Danes in the neighbourhood, without, I believe, his real name and station being known. At the end of four months, however, a piece of good news drew him from his place of concealment. Huba, who was now in command of the Danish troops, after ravaging a part of Wales, entered Devonshire, and attacked the earl of that county in Kinwith Castle, on the banks of the Tau. The earl and his friends took the bold resolution of attempting to cut their way through the enemy; and taking them by surprise, met with so much success, that, changing their plan, they pursued the first advantage, till the whole Danish army was totally routed, Huba himself slain, and the ma-

gical standard of the raven taken by the Saxons.

The intelligence of this signal victory reached Alfred in his fort, and induced him to abandon his retreat. Before attempting to assemble an army, however, Alfred resolved to ascertain with his own eyes the number and position of the principal body of the Danes left in Wessex; and, assuming the disguise of a harper, which character he was well calculated to maintain by his skill in music, he entered the Danish camp, and so ingratiated himself with the soldiery, that he was feasted for three days, and even introduced to their chief, Guthrum. He had thus the best means of learning all that he desired to know; and, remarking particularly, that, contrary to their usual habit, the Danes had not encamped upon a hill, but kept the open field with very little precaution, he determined at once to take advantage of

their negligence; and as soon as he had satisfied himself, and could get out of the camp, he returned to his fort at Ethelingey, whence he dispatched messengers to all the Saxon leaders, on whom he thought he could depend, beseeching them to meet him in arms, with all the troops they could collect, at Brixton, in Selwood Forest. The day appointed for their rendezvous was seven weeks after Easter; and the Saxon nobles, with very great activity, and at the same time with very great secrecy, gathered their men together from every part of Wessex, and led them to the spot appointed. The force which Alfred thus found collected, was probably much greater than he had expected; he knew that the Danes, believing the Saxon resistance to be at an end, were spending their time in revelry and merriment; and he determined to attack them at once, before they were put upon their guard. Only staying

at Brixton one night, he marched the next day to Okeley, and on the following morning, advanced upon Eddington, near which place the enemy was encamped. The Saxons were animated with joy and hope by the sudden re-appearance of their king, and by the victory lately gained by the Earl of Devon. The Danes were lying inactive at Eddington, without any idea whatsoever that an army was in the field against them, till they saw themselves upon the very point of being attacked in their camp. Alfred allowed no time for the courage of his own men to cool, or the consternation of the enemy to subside, but attacked them at once, while they were yet in confusion and disarray. Nevertheless the enemies defended themselves with great courage; but they fought under much disadvantage, for not only were they in disarray, but the feelings of superstition, which are generally strong in barbarous

nations, were now against them. They had formerly placed great confidence in their famous standard of the raven, believing that they saw the bird embroidered upon it clap its wings, when they were entering upon a battle, in which they were destined to be victorious. This standard, as I have before said, had been taken, and just in proportion as it had inspired them with confidence, did its absence fill them with dismay. After a bloody conflict they were routed in every part of the field; an immense number were slain; and the few who were left took refuge in a neighbouring castle, which was immediately surrounded by the victorious Saxons. The Danes held out here for fourteen days; but no succour arriving, they at length surrendered,—some say at discretion, which means without any conditions or promises of safety, some say upon the terms afterwards granted to them. Certain it is, that Alfred

who had them completely in his power, treated them with great humanity. He offered to Guthrum and his followers the choice, either of remaining in England, and receiving a sufficient portion of land for their support in East Anglia and Northumberland, upon the condition of being baptized, and joining faithfully their forces with his to repel all other incursions: or, of embarking immediately for Denmark, swearing never to re-appear in the island, and giving hostages for the fulfilment of their promise. A great number accepted the first offer. Guthrum, with thirty of the chiefs, and a great number of the inferior soldiery, adopted Christianity and remained; but a number of others refused to be baptized, and were suffered to embark in peace for their native country.

For about thirteen years, Alfred enjoyed a period of repose; for, although there were

occasional descents of the Danes upon the coasts, they were never formidable; and the members of that nation settled in England, universally acknowledged the rule of the Saxon monarch, although it is not to be supposed that they submitted well contented. Alfred, however, wiser than most of his predecessors, employed the time of peace in preparation for war. One of his first endeavours was to create a fleet for the protection of his coasts against the rovers; and he laboured for this purpose with that successful perseverance which he displayed in all his actions. He fortified a great number of towns also, and built strong castles, both to defend the country against incursions, and to over-awe the Danes settled in England. He took possession of London, too, and placed in it his son-in-law, Ethelred, bestowing upon him the title of Earl of Mercia; and he seems, by the pains he took to fortify

and embellish it, to have foreseen that it would one day become the capital of the country.

All these precautions were soon proved to be no more than necessary, for this long period of tranquillity was brought to an end in the year 893. Several bands of Danes had quitted the English shores, especially from the coast of East Anglia, and, united under a famous leader, named Hastings, had ravaged the whole of the Low Countries, and a part of France. The booty which they collected, we are told, was enormous; but their desolating progress rendered the country through which they passed as inhospitable to them as to its native inhabitants; and, starved out of France and Belgium, they returned to England in the year 893, trusting, it would seem, that the Saxons had, during thirteen years of repose, restored the land to a state of prosperity; for these Danes, you

will remark, were fond of ploughing with other men's hands, and then reaping the harvest with the sword. Their armament now consisted of three hundred and thirty ships, and their first descent was upon the coast of Kent, where they seized a fort called Appledore. Here the greatest part of the invaders remained; but Hastings, with eighty ships, sailed up the Thames, and landed at Milton, near which place he entrenched himself. The invasion had been unexpected; and Alfred was at the time in East Anglia, regulating the affairs of that kingdom and of Northumberland. He instantly took arms, however, to check the course of the invaders, and demanding a new oath of allegiance and numerous hostages from the Danes of those two kingdoms, he marched with all speed into Kent, and took up such a position as to cut off the communication between one division of the Danish forces and the other.

He then entrenched himself; and numerous skirmishes took place during a great part of 894. Towards the close of that year, however, the Danish army at Appledore, having collected all the plunder that the country could afford, prepared to extend its operations, and, abandoning the entrenchments which had been raised, marched out, apparently with the intention of rejoining the force under Hastings, who, about the same time quitted Milton, and fortified himself in Essex.

It would seem that the Danes from Appledore intended to cross the Thames above London, for they directed their course through Surrey; but their movements were all watched by the eye of Alfred, who met them at Farnham, with all the forces he had collected, and defeated them with great loss. The fugitives fled to the camp of Hastings; and the English monarch prepared to pur-

sue them thither, and to attack Hastings in his entrenchments. He was diverted from this purpose, however, by very unpleasant tidings. The Northumbrian and East Anglian Danes, forgetting, as usual, the oaths they had taken, profited by the Saxon king's embarrassment, and not only cast off the yoke, but marched in great force, and laid siege to Exeter. To protect the people more immediately under his sway now became Alfred's great object, and turning rapidly to the west, after throwing some troops into London, he forced the army besieging Exeter to fly.

In the mean time, Hastings and his troops had not been idle; but marching out of their entrenchments, they proceeded upon one of their usual ravaging expeditions, leaving the booty they had obtained in the camp, together with their women and children, under the protection of a strong

guard. Intelligence of these facts was immediately conveyed to London; and the English troops there, together with a large party of the citizens, issued forth secretly, and marching towards the Danish camp, cut the guard to pieces. The whole of the Danish stores fell into their hands; and the women, children, and sick became prisoners of war. Amongst the rest was the wife of Hastings, and two of his children; but Alfred showed the same moderation in his present success which he had done after the battle of Eddington. He restored the wife and children of the Danish leader, on condition that he should leave the kingdom, never to return, taking with him all his own immediate followers.

Several large bodies of Danes, however, still remained in England, roaming hither and thither, and ravaging the country wherever they came. Innumerable skirmishes

took place, which are spoken of by the old writers under the name of battles. They tell us that Alfred fought fifty-six pitched battles with the Danes, of which we can trace very few. All we know is, that their numbers were, in two years, greatly diminished, both by the sword, and by a pestilence then raging, and that at the end of that time, all the Danes who had not obtained lands in the country, took to their ships, and left England to repose. A variety of circumstances combined to restore to the monarch the sovereignty of all England, and the first use which he made of tranquillity and power, was to re-establish the rule of law and to guard the poor and low against the oppression of the rich and high. It would require a long time to give you any notion of the laws which were either revived or enacted under Alfred; but his exertions to restore justice and equity are very evi-

dent, and highly to his honour. He is said to have established the trial by jury—that is to say, the rule by which the guilt or innocence of any man accused, is determined by the decision of twelve men of his own rank; but I must tell you at the same time that many learned men have greatly doubted this fact. Alfred was a great encourager of commerce, and all the peaceful arts, and under his reign England may be said to have first obtained a merchant navy. He was a protector of learning too, which had been very much neglected during the wars which had preceded his times. He called a great number of distinguished men from foreign countries to England, and founded several colleges for the instruction of youth. He himself was one of the most learned men of his own court, and he possessed that happy art, which is the characteristic of almost all great men, of so dividing his time, that every

portion was usefully employed to himself and his subjects, without that bustle and fatigue, which always attend the active and disorderly. You must all have heard him mentioned by the name of Alfred the Great, which he probably deserves better than most of those who have obtained the same distinction, for his wars were all defensive, and his love of peace, justice, and learning afford a better title to the name of Great than even his military abilities, though exercised in a righteous cause.

THE DESCENDANTS OF ALFRED.

ALFRED was succeeded by a son, called in history, Edward the Elder. He was not unworthy of inheriting the crown; but immediately after his accession, a competitor arose, whose claims must be admitted to have had

some show of justice. Alfred, you will recollect, was the youngest of the four sons of Ethelwolf, and had succeeded under that prince's will upon the death of his brother, Etheldred; but both his predecessors had left children, and the throne was now disputed by Ethelward, the eldest son of Ethelbert, Alfred's brother. This prince contended, that although the will of Ethelwolf had conveyed the crown to each of his sons successively, it could not convey it to the children of the younger in preference to the children of the elder, and he proceeded to assert his title by force of arms." It is not needful to tell you much of the war which succeeded, as the facts are uninteresting, and few of them known. It served, however, to rekindle the animosity between the Saxons and the Danes, for to the hereditary enemies of his race, Ethelward applied for assistance. Numerous battles and skirmishes ensued, which are principally remarkable for the part taken in them by Ethelfleda (daughter of Alfred,

and wife of Ethered, Earl of Mercia), who seems to have inherited the warlike abilities of her father, without his love of peace. She commanded armies, fought battles, and acted not only as her brother's counsellor, but as his general on many occasions. Though supported by the Danes of England, and by a large body of their kindred race from Normandy, Ethelward was unsuccessful in his attempts, and defeated and slain in battle. Edward pursued the war against the Danes during the greater part of his reign, and succeeded in bringing those who had settled in Northumberland into a greater degree of subjection than any of his predecessors had been able to effect. Edward died after a reign of twenty-four years, leaving an immense number of children by three several mothers. The son who succeeded him, named Athelstane, was one of the greatest of the Saxon princes, but was not of lawful

birth, his mother Egwina, being a shepherd's daughter. The eldest lawful son died a few days after his father; and, it is probable, that the high qualities already known in Athelstane made the Saxons desirous of having him for their king, rather than Edwin, his legitimate brother, who was still a youth, and gave not much promise of great abilities. Athelstane had been a favourite with his grandfather, Alfred, and with his uncle and aunt, Ethered and Ethelfreda, who took charge of his education. He had been early inured to arms, and instructed in government; and these advantages soon proved the wisdom of the Saxon choice. The new king was engaged the greater part of his life in wars with the Danes of Northumberland, aided by the king of Scotland, and the Welsh princes; but the only fact which occurred of great interest during his reign, was a battle, known by the name of the Great Battle,

which lasted from the dawn of morning till nightfall, and in which Athelstane completely defeated the King of Scotland, and a large body of princes in alliance with him. Some historians report that Athelstane put to death one of his brothers, named Edwin, accused of conspiring against him, but the statement is founded on no good authority. Unfortunately for the country, his reign was short, and in 941 he was succeeded by his brother, Edmund. The country was peaceful, the royal authority respected, and everything promised a long and happy reign, had not the extreme youth of the monarch, then only eighteen, encouraged the Danes to renew the war. Boldly marching into Mercia with great force, Anlaff, King of the Northumbrian Danes, forced his way to Chester, where he was encountered by Edmund, with an inferior army, but courage equal to his own. After a battle,

in which victory remained undecided, a peace was concluded, which would seem to show that the Danes had obtained some advantage in the combat, for the Saxons certainly made great concessions in the treaty. Anlaff, however, oppressed his own subjects; a partial revolt took place; and Edmund, having now gained more experience, and collected a larger force, speedily compelled both the kings of Northumberland to submit, and, upon their renewing the war, drove them from the island. In the civil government of his country, as well as in warlike operations, Edmund displayed many of those qualities which more or less distinguished the princes of the race of Alfred; but his reign was unfortunately cut short by a strange incident, which I will now relate.

One of Edmund's great objects throughout his whole reign had been to put down those bands of robbers, which had sprung up

during the many civil wars of England. One of these bands had been headed by a Saxon—it would appear, of noble birth—named Leolf, who had been outlawed and banished, as a punishment for his crimes. One day, however, while Edmund was dining at Pucklechurch, in Gloucestershire, surrounded by a number of his nobility, who had been invited to celebrate the festival of St. Austin with the king, it was discovered that Leolf had not only had the impudence to intrude himself into the hall, but was actually dining at one of the royal tables. Edmund, it would appear, was the first who remarked him, although there can be no doubt that the king, as well as the greater part of his nobles, had been indulging in a vice very common amongst the Saxons, that of drinking too much strong liquor. Edmund immediately ordered the intruder to be seized, and one of his sewers, named

Leo, attempted to apprehend the culprit. The poor sewer, however, was no match for the robber; and his life would, in all probability, have been sacrificed, had not Edmund himself started up, and catching Leolf by the hair of the head, thrown him down upon the ground. The ruffian, however, fought to the last, and though overpowered by the young king, he struck a blow with his dagger at that prince which pierced his heart; and Edmund fell dead upon the prostrate form of the robber. Some authors say that Leolf escaped in the confusion, but of this we have no certainty. Edmund left two sons, Edwy and Edgar, who, however, were set aside on account of their extreme youth, and Edred, Edmund's next brother, was raised to the throne. This prince, while health and strength continued, gave the greatest promise of virtues and high qualities. He not only struggled success-

fully with the Danes of Northumberland, but carried his arms into Scotland, and forced Malcolm, the king of that country, to sue for peace. On a second revolt of the Northumbrians, accompanied by acts of the grossest ingratitude, Edred twice invaded their country, compelled them to submit, abolished their separate royalty altogether, reduced Northumberland to an English province, filled the towns and fortresses with Saxon garrisons, and appointed an English governor, named Osulf, with the title of Earl. In his warlike expeditions, however, Edred had contracted a disease, which impaired both his bodily and mental health. He became superstitious, recluse, and negligent of the affairs of his kingdom. Dunstan, abbot of Glastonbury, ruled the king, got possession of his treasures, usurped his power, and obtained the reputation of a saint by the same means which have won a similar honour for more than one-half of the saints in the calendar—ambition, hypocrisy,

greediness, and daring. The latter part of the prince's reign passed in peace, which approached to sloth, and in tranquillity, which bore evil fruits. His disease grew upon him every day, till at length his reign was terminated by death, at the end of ten years from his accession to the throne.

EDWY AND ELGIVA.

EDRED was succeeded by the most unhappy of all the Saxon princes, Edwy, the eldest son of his brother Edmund, who commenced his reign by an attempt far more dangerous and difficult than the repression of revolt or the subjugation of the Danes. This was to overthrow the monkish power, and to reduce the authority of the clergy within its proper limits. Unfortunately this prince, who was under seventeen when he came to the throne, was induced to seek these objects more by personal than political considerations. At

a very early period, he became deeply attached to his cousin Elgiva, and resolved to marry her. Now, according to the rules of the Roman-catholic church, cousins are not allowed to marry, except by the express permission of the pope; but Edwy resolved to overstep all obstacles; and the opposition made by the monks and priests only enraged him still more against two bodies of men, whose evil influence had been sufficiently apparent under his uncle Edred. St. Dunstan was banished, and his favourites disgraced; but a new clerical tyrant had started up in the person of Odo, Archbishop of Canterbury. That prelate threw every obstacle in the way of the king's marriage, and even when the young king was actually united to his Elgiva, with unequalled cunning, cruelty, and audacity, the brutal archbishop watched his opportunity, caused the beautiful queen to be seized by a party of armed men, and

actually branded her in the face with a hot iron, in order to deface that loveliness which had first won the king's affection. He then sent her into Ireland. As Edwy had already shown some degree of vigour in the pursuit of his objects, Odo became naturally alarmed, lest he should be punished for the horrible crime he had committed, notwithstanding his immense power and ecclesiastical position. To guard himself, it appears, he had recourse to another crime. He defamed the character of his sovereign, and by his emissaries he excited all the Danish and Anglian population of Great Britain to revolt. The rebels placed at their head the king's younger brother Edgar; and scenes of anarchy and confusion took place throughout the whole land, which only terminated by Edwy yielding to his brother at least one-half of the kingdom. Even then his persecutors were not satisfied. The persecuted Elgiva con-

trived to escape from the hands of those who detained her; and, assured of the constant affection of her husband, hastened to rejoin him. She was intercepted by her enemies, however, at Gloucester, and immediately put to death, with circumstances of peculiar barbarity. There is little doubt, it appears, that this crime was also committed by the orders of Odo. It was the last blow to the unfortunate Edwy, who never ceased to grieve for her he had loved, and died shortly after of a broken heart.

EDGAR AND ELFRIDA.

EDWY'S brother Edgar, still a mere youth, succeeded to the whole kingdom. It would be hard to bring a charge of ambition against him for heading a revolt when he was only thirteen years of age. Nevertheless there can be no doubt that he showed a capacity for government and a manly judgment at a much earlier period than

that at which those qualities are generally displayed. He was one of the most able and prudent of the Saxon kings, and perhaps he was the first Saxon monarch who ever reigned for seventeen years in perfect peace. This long period of tranquillity, however, was owing entirely to his constant state of preparation for war. He increased his fleet to an enormous extent, having, we are assured, at one time, more than four thousand vessels upon the sea. His coasts were thus protected from foreign invasion; and against domestic turbulence he guarded by keeping a large force continually in arms. The Kings of Wales, Ireland, and the Isle of Man acknowledged his sway; and such was the fear or the affection which he inspired in the neighbouring princes, that eight of them attended his court at Chester, and condescended to row his barge down the river Dee. Amongst these was Kenneth III., King of Scotland; and although the Scotch historians would fain persuade

us that this act was no more than a frolic, it is very difficult to conceive that, in those times, when very slight deeds implied very serious acknowledgments, eight sovereigns should have been found to perform in sport, what might be looked upon as an act of subjection.

Edgar had other titles, however, to be considered as a great prince. He applied himself to reform the administration of justice, to put down theft and robbery, and to exterminate the wolves, which had multiplied amazingly in England, and were nearly as detrimental as the monks. To the latter, however, he showed great favour, probably more from prudential considerations than from affection; for, warned by the fate of his brother Edwy, he was unwilling to struggle with a body whose arms were more to be dreaded than sword or spear, and who could be restrained in using them

by no laws, human or divine. He therefore treated them with the greatest consideration, and with profuse liberality. If they possessed no other virtue, they at least showed gratitude, for they sung the praises of the king in season and out of season, and obtained for him the character of a saint, when, in truth, he was a very great sinner. The very same vices which they attributed as enormous crimes to his brother Edwy, they mentioned with great complacency in their favourite Edgar. He was, indeed, one of the most licentious of the Saxon kings, and did a great many wrong acts, of which his marriage furnishes a striking instance. He had a favourite of the name of Ethelwold, whom he had greatly honoured and promoted; and hearing frequent praises of the beauty of Elfrida, daughter of the Earl of Devonshire, he determined to marry her, if she was as lovely as had

been represented. To ascertain the fact, before he [illegible]manned her in marriage, having no means of seeing her himself, as her father kept her in strict retirement, he dispatched Ethelwold, on whose judgment he could depend, to visit the earl upon the pretence of business. Ethelwold contrived to obtain a sight of the lady, and immediately fell in love with her himself. Forgetting his duty to the king, and the task with which he had been entrusted, he demanded her hand, obtained her father's consent, and married her privately, alleging that there were important reasons for keeping their union secret. He then returned to the court, and reported that Elfrida's beauty had been greatly exaggerated; that the earl, her father, being rich, and her portion considerable, her wealth had made people see graces where they did not really exist. After having thus satisfied

the king, and induced him to give up all thoughts of the marriage. He pointed out to Edgar that a portion, which was of no importance to a monarch, would be of very great value to a subject, and ended by asking the king's leave to marry the wealthy heiress. The petition was immediately granted, and Ethelwold's marriage was publicly celebrated; but it was remarked that Ethelwold did not bring his wife to the court. Rumours spread abroad that the king had been deceived, and there are always plenty of people to tell a bad tale of a favourite. Edgar grew suspicious; and, resolved to convince himself with his own eyes, he found a pretence for visiting the part of the country where Ethelwold's wife remained. He took the unfortunate husband along with him; and when at some distance from his house, he intimated his intention of paying him and his bride a

visit. Ethelwold's efforts to avert this unwelcome honour only served to confirm the king's suspicions; and he persisted, only allowing his favourite to go forward to warn the lady of his approach. Ethelwold was now driven to confess to his wife the deceit he had practised, and he besought her earnestly to do all she could to disguise that beauty from the eyes of the king which had been the cause of her husband's breach of duty towards him. He spoke, however, to a deceitful, unprincipled, ambitious woman. Ethelwold had undoubtedly behaved ill both to her and to the king; but he was her husband, and had she possessed one spark of good feeling or virtue, she would have endeavoured to screen him from the dangers to which he had exposed himself. Elfrida promised to do so, but did not fulfil her word. Instead of concealing her beauty, she used every art to render it more daz-

zling; and the effect was such as she wished and anticipated. Edgar immediately perceived the deceit which had been put upon him, and resolved to have both gratification and revenge. To conceal the dark designs he meditated, he affected to behold Elfrida with indifference, and rode away after his visit as if nothing remarkable had occurred; but not long after, the body of Ethelwold was found pierced with a spear; and it is generally asserted that the murder was committed by the king's own hand. With indecent haste, he married the widow of his favourite; and the lady, having attained the end of her ambition, built a nunnery on the spot where her first husband's body had been found.

Elfrida did not long enjoy the dignity of queen consort, for Edgar died in 975, at the early age of thirty-two; and his son, Edward II., was raised to the throne by the in-

fluence and intrigues of Dunstan, now Archbishop of Canterbury. This prince is said to have been an illegitimate son; and Ethelred, the son of Elfrida, was at the same time a competitor for the throne. The parties of the two were very nearly equal, but Dunstan brought miracles to the aid of his candidate, and Edward was elected upon the strength of voices and signs from Heaven. Such portents, when found in the pages of history, are generally coupled with a glorious and successful reign, leading us to suspect that they were manufactured afterwards by the enthusiasm of the historian, or the admiration of the people; but in the case of Edward, no such happy result justified the marvels. The young King, who was only fourteen years of age when he ascended the throne, passed the four years that he was permitted to reign without any distinction. He showed himself gentle and kind to all

his subjects, and displayed no resentment either to those who had supported his brother, to that brother himself, or to the stepmother who had well nigh kindled a civil war to exclude him from the succession. On the contrary, he paid her every respect; and one day, the chase having led him into the neighbourhood of Corfe Castle, where Elfrida resided, he rode up alone to the gates to ask after the queen's health. Elfrida, whose cruel purpose was probably formed in a moment, came out to speak with him, and presented him with a cup of wine to refresh him after the chase. The unsuspicious prince took it and drank; but in the very act he received the blow of a dagger in the back, either from the hand of the queen, or one of her attendants. Feeling himself dangerously wounded, he set spurs to his horse, and galloped away; but growing faint, it is supposed, with loss of blood, he fell from his saddle; his foot caught in the stirrup, and he was thus dragged along

till he died. The horse stopped opposite the cottage of an old peasant woman; and the attendants of Elfrida having tracked its course by the blood of the unhappy prince, found the corpse in her house, so soiled and torn, as scarcely to be recognised. Under these circumstances, she thought it possible to conceal the crime she had committed, and she caused the body to be thrown into a well. The body, however, was shortly afterwards discovered; and, as the young prince had been a favourite and a favourer of the monks, many marvellous stories are told of the miracles worked by his relics. He was made a saint, without having shown any signs of sanctity during his life; and called a martyr, though religion had nothing to do with his death.

ETHELDRED.

By the base and treacherous murder of Edgar, Elfrida had opened a way to the

throne for her son Ethelred; and he was accordingly crowned without opposition, before he had completed his twelfth year. In the many wonderful dispensations of Providence, we find that very rarely power or wealth obtained by evil means is extended by permanent prosperity, or even a moderate share of happiness. Ethelred, known in history by the name of the Unready, from the feebleness of his character and his inactive habits, was one of the weakest, most vicious, and most unfortunate of the Saxon princes. Nothing that he did prospered; and his crimes were ever followed by speedy retribution. Nevertheless, he commenced his reign by an act of real piety. He honoured and interred the dead body of his predecessor; while his mother, driven almost insane by remorse, built monasteries, and covered herself all over with little crosses, it is said, to prevent the devil getting in at

any point, although she might have saved herself the trouble, for he had certainly obtained entrance long before. The death of Edward was perhaps one of the greatest misfortunes to Etheldred; for he came to the throne at so early a period, that the first years of his reign were naturally passed under the guidance of older people; and, instead of learning in the commencement of life to govern others, he acquired a habit of suffering himself to be governed. His subserviency to favourites was one of his greatest failings; and intense avarice, which he displayed when extremely young, was the source of many of his crimes. The only case in which he showed great vigour and determination, were in his disputes with the clergy; and it would be strange to find, that one of the weakest princes that ever filled the throne of England, had power to contend with a body which had over-awed his ener-

getic and warlike predecessors, were the fact not explained by the indifference of the people to ecclesiastical affairs. This had been produced by the state of suffering and anxiety to which the English had been reduced while the king was still a minor, through the renewed incursions of the Danes, the great scarcity of provisions, and a sort of plague, which swept away thousands of the people.

The Danes were encouraged to make fresh descents upon the coast of England, by the youth and inexperience of the sovereign of that country, and by the absence of all preparation for resistance. Edgar had died in 975, and Ethelred had been crowned in 978; so that it is very difficult to conceive how the enormous fleets and armies collected by the former king, the garrisoned forts and cities, and all the other precautions of a great and wise prince, had dwindled

down to nothing, and left the country in a state which hardly admitted of defence, in the short space of six years. This was all that elapsed, however, before the piratical incursions of the Northmen were renewed in 981, when the Danes made a new descent near Southampton. It would seem that this first attempt on the part of the Danes was a mere plundering expedition, or, at most, but a trial of the English resources, for the number of ships engaged was but seven; and, after ravaging the country to a short distance from the coast, the enemy re-embarked and sailed away. The news they carried to their countrymen and companions was well calculated to allure other hordes to these shores. They had to picture a country rich from a long peace, and inhabitants luxurious and unprepared for resistance; and, consequently, year after year, some new fleet of

marauders paid their unfriendly visits to this island, till at length, in 991, the evil became intolerable, and the forces of the Danes more formidable than they had been before. It was now absolutely necessary to take means of resistance; but, unfortunately, those means were ineffectual; and in the first great battle fought, the English were defeated with considerable loss, and their leader slain in the field.

Notwithstanding the voice of experience and history, Ethelred had recourse to an expedient which had always proved fatal. He attempted to purchase the forbearance of those whom he could not compel to retire; and a large bribe was paid to the Danish leader, on condition of his immediately quitting the land. Of course other bodies of Danes immediately followed, in hopes of the same recompence; and the very year following, a still larger fleet appeared upon the

shores of England. It then became necessary to have recourse to arms. A vigorous and sagacious plan was determined upon for the purpose of punishing the invaders, and striking a wholesome terror into those who might be disposed to follow. It was proposed to collect a very large fleet at London, and waiting till the Danish armament had entered some harbour, to blockade him therein, and attack the enemy both by sea and land. But Ethelred had become contemptible to his subjects, and even his favourites only waited for opportunity to betray him. Ealfric, Duke of Mercia, the unworthy son of a worthy father, was appointed to command one division of the English fleet; but this nobleman was already in league with the enemy, and his first step was to warn the Danes of the purposes entertained against them. The enemy had thus time to put to sea with the loss of only one ship. The

English fleet pursued, and engaged their adversaries; but Ealfric with his division went over to the foe, and thus saved them from total destruction. The expedition, however, proved sufficiently disastrous to deter the Danes from any fresh attempts at the time: but in the years 993 and 994, England was invaded by two royal armies, commanded by Swein, King of Denmark, and Oläus, King of Norway, who entered the Humber, wintered in Northumberland, and then, with a considerable accession of strength from the Northumbrian Danes, sailed up the Thames and attacked London. The courage of the citizens, however, saved that great city. The Danes were repulsed in all their assaults, and then betook themselves to ravage the country round. Again the weak monarch of the Saxons determined to bribe the enemy to desist, and leave him at peace. Oläus and Swein agreed, upon

the receipt of a large sum of money, to quit the land, and never, either by themselves or their subjects, to infest it more. Oläus, before his departure, visited the King of England, was converted to Christianity, and received baptism. He then returned to his native land, and kept his word to the letter, restraining his subjects with a vigorous hand, which, probably, had some share in bringing about his own death. Not so, however, Swein, King of Denmark, for the ravages of his subjects seem never to have ceased; but it does not appear by any means clear that Ethelred ever paid the whole of the money which he had promised. Before the conclusion of the year 1001, they had overrun, ravaged, or made themselves masters of, many of the south-western counties of England, while most of the eastern and northern counties had been plundered, or were possessed by the Danes, and every force sent

against them was defeated or dispersed. Incapable of vigorous resistance, wanting in energy, courage, and resources, the King of England had once more recourse to a large bribe, and by this means induced the greater part of the invaders to leave the kingdom. Some, however, staid behind, determined to obtain an inheritance in a land more fertile than their own; but they do not appear to have been very numerous, and, scattered over the kingdom, were not considered dangerous. To strengthen himself against the repetition of attacks from without, however, Ethelred, whose first wife, Elgiva, was now dead, sought the hand of the beautiful Emma, princess of Normandy, and sister of Richard, Duke of that country. His suit was acceded to; and the marriage accordingly took place, allying the King of England to that Danish race from which he had suffered so much. The princess herself was beautiful and

amiable, though apparently not without ambition; but very shortly after her marriage an event occurred, the consequences of which took, for the time, the crown from her husband's head, and plunged him into a sanguinary strife, which lasted to the end of his miserable life. It was determined, by whose advice it is not very clear, to attempt a general massacre of the Danes in England; and this was carried into effect, as far as it was possible to slaughter a whole nation, in the month of November, 1002. It is impossible to suppose that the whole of the Danes were put to death, and, indeed, we know that such was not the case; but still there can be no doubt that a terrible slaughter took place, that multitudes of men, women, and children, of all ages, were slain in the most barbarous manner, and that more blood flowed on that horrible 13th of November, than ever yet was shed in any Christian

land. Unheard-of cruelties, too, we are assured, were added, as if the Saxons took a pleasure in retaliating at once upon the Danes all the atrocities which they had committed during the two preceding centuries. That Ethelred was cognizant of the deed before it was committed, there can be little or no doubt, although some declare, that the massacre took place in consequence of a sudden rising of the people, irritated by the insolence of their northern guests; and some attributed it to the evil counsels of Huna, one of the king's especial favourites.

One of the most distinguished victims of Ethelred's cruelty and terror, was Gunilda, sister of Swein, King of Denmark, who, having married an amiable and accomplished nobleman in England, had made that country for some years her home. It would appear that in the first instance she was spared even by the furious populace; but

the king commanded that no mercy should be shown, and, consequently, the children of the Danish princess were murdered before her face, and then she herself was decapitated.

The rage and indignation of Swein knew no bounds; and the very act by which Etheldred strove to secure his crown was the proximate cause of his losing it. Equipping an immense fleet, and storing it with all manner of arms and provisions, Swein set sail for England in the spring of 1003. Before he landed, he contrived to corrupt the Earl of Cornwall, a Norman nobleman, who suffered him to disembark his troops without impediment; and then marching through the land, the King of Denmark ravaged everything by the way, and in the end, made a furious attack upon Exeter, which place being taken with very little resistance, the inhabitants were put to the sword, and the town reduced to ashes.

Swein, however, now came for revenge, and not for pillage, and as soon as the wintry months approached, he again embarked, and set sail for Denmark. Etheldred had not suffered this expedition to pass without making at least an effort to repel the invasion; but ever weak, imprudent, and unfortunate, afraid to face the Danes himself, and surrounded by cowards and traitors, he gave the command of the army which he despatched against Swein to Ealfric, Earl of Mercia, who had before betrayed him. The Saxon army marched to encounter the Danes; but Ealfric, feigning sickness, suffered it to disperse, and he himself retired, leaving Swein to pursue his course unmolested. Another traitor of a still deeper dye was now rising up to complete the ruin of the unfortunate king. A man of the name of Edric Streon, of low birth and bad character, had caught the attention and won the

favour of the unhappy prince. He raised him rapidly to honours and dignities, bestowed his own sister upon him in marriage, and on the death of Ealfric, which occurred not long after the invasion of Swein, gave him the Earldom of Mercia, and the command of the English army.

A short interval of tranquillity succeeded the departure of the King of Denmark; but the people were terribly oppressed by a new tax, which Etheldred had been compelled to demand by the evil habit of purchasing the departure of the Danes. This tax, which was called Danegeld or Dane money, amounted to twelve pence yearly for every hide of land. This would seem a small sum to be contributed by as much land as would support a family; but you must remember that the value of money was very different in those days, and that twelve pence would purchase more than twelve shillings would buy now.

Swein returned to England in the year 1004, and landed in East Anglia, a district still thickly peopled with Danes or their descendants; but the duke of that province, though of Danish origin, was one of the few nobles who were really honest and faithful to the King of England. Norwich and Thetford were taken by the enemy; but the Duke of East Anglia raised an army in haste, and attempted to cut off the King of Denmark from the sea. A sanguinary battle ensued, and it is clear that, if the other nobles of England had hastened to the support of the Duke of East Anglia, the Danish army would have been destroyed. As it was, the Saxons, though greatly inferior in number, kept up the fight for many hours, and were not defeated till they had effected a great slaughter of the enemy.

During nearly ten years from this time the ravages of the Danes were incessant

At times, a famine drove them away; at times they retired to secure and enjoy their plunder; but they constantly returned, pillaging and desolating the country from end to end, and finding confederates to give them intelligence, to favour their movements, and to frustrate every plan of opposition to their progress, in the court, in the council, and in the family of the unfortunate Etheldred. Almost all his counsellors and nobles seem to have betrayed him in turn; but at the head of these traitors was his brother-in-law, or son-in-law, as some call him, Edric Streon, who had obtained a complete mastery over the mind of the weak monarch, and used it for the most infamous purposes. In the end, towards the year 1013, all the finest provinces of England were completely overrun by the enemy; and Etheldred, seeing no hope of protracting the struggle with advantage, sent his wife and children into Normandy, and

followed them shortly afterwards, leaving Swein to pursue his course of conquest to the complete subjugation of the land.

London opened her gates to the victor, towards the end of the same year; and Swein was proclaimed King of England without opposition. You will not find him, indeed, named amongst the kings of this country in the books of historians, simply because he did not live to be crowned, having died suddenly at Gainsborough, in 1014, in what manner is not very well known. He had lived long enough, however, to oppress the Saxons by a very severe tax, which showed them that some effort was necessary to free themselves from the Danish yoke. The death of Swein revived their hopes; and the Saxon nobles agreed to recal Ethelred, and make a great effort for the expulsion of the invaders. A deputation was therefore directed to invite the king to

return, and after sending over his son to ascertain the state of the kingdom, the weak monarch sailed back to his native country, and found the largest army collected which had been raised in England during his reign. He promised the reform of all abuses, and the removal of burdensome taxes; and with joy and satisfaction the Saxon forces marched to assail the young King of Denmark, in the neighbourhood of Gainsborough.

Attacked unexpectedly, a great number of the Danes were killed, and the rest, with Canute, their young king, were forced to put to sea, carrying with them a number of hostages, which had been previously delivered by the Saxons as pledges of their submission. These unfortunate men were taken round the coast as far as Sandwich, where the great but barbarous monarch into whose hands they had fallen, ordered their

hands, noses, and ears to be cut off, and then set them on shore. Having performed this cruel act, Canute sailed away for Denmark, for the crown of which country a struggle was likely to ensue between himself and his younger brother. His great powers of mind, however, soon settled that dispute; and the tidings which reached him from England soon recalled him to the shores of this country. Forgetful of all his promises, Etheldred, as soon as he was freed from the presence of the Danes, overwhelmed his people with excessive taxation, which might, perhaps, have been borne, though impatiently, had not the crimes of Edric Streon, in which the king participated, roused universal indignation against him.

There were at that time two earls in England of Danish extraction, named Morcar and Sugferth, both holding large possessions, and both distinguished for the fidelity

with which they had served the crown in times of the greatest difficulty and danger. The estates of these noblemen became an object of desire to Edric and the king; and under pretence of seeking their counsel, they were inveigled to Oxford, and there barbarously murdered. Their followers, after a vain attempt to defend or avenge their lords, were driven into a church, and burnt with the building in which they had taken refuge. The actual perpetration of this crime is generally attributed to Edric Streon; but the king made himself a participator therein, by seizing the estates of the two earls, and confining the young and beautiful widow of Sugferth in a monastery. Amongst those who felt indignation at this act was the king's eldest son, Edmund, called Ironside; and, visiting, apparently with feelings of compassion, the beautiful Algitha, the widow of the murdered earl, he became so captivated, that

he freed her from her imprisonment, and married her without his father's consent.

The news of these dissensions in England encouraged, as I have before told you, Canute to return, and he landed at Sandwich with a large army, about a year after he had sailed away. The forces of England, however, were sufficient at this time once more to have expelled him, had there not been treachery in the host. But Edric was ever the evil genius of Ethelred; and there seems to be no doubt that he never ceased his treacherous intercourse with the Danes. At the head of the forces of Mercia, he commanded an army not inferior to that of Prince Edmund, which joined him shortly after the arrival of Canute; but Edmund soon discovered the practices of the traitor, whose design seems to have been to seize the prince and deliver him to the Danish king. Unable to punish the

villain as he deserved, Edmund was obliged in self-defence to separate his forces from those of Edric, who shortly after threw off the mask, and openly joined Canute, bringing over forty ships to the party of the Danes. Edmund still struggled with constant heroism; but the cowardice of his father defeated all his efforts. Now Ethelred feigned himself sick, to avoid taking an active part in the war; now affected to doubt the fidelity of his Saxon subjects, and retired from the army as soon as he had joined it. Abandoned by their king, the Saxon forces could not be kept together, and after various ineffectual efforts to keep the field, Edmund fled to his brother-in-law, the Earl of Northumberland, in order to levy an army in the north. Canute, however, who was by this time master of a great part of the southern and eastern provinces of England, pursued his gallant adversary without delay, and entered Northumberland with an immense army before

sufficient preparations could be made for resistance. The Earl of Northumberland was forced to submit, and Edmund to make his escape across the country to London. On his arrival, he found his weak father at the point of death, and a few days afterwards, Etheldred expired, leaving a kingdom overrun with enemies, an exhausted treasury, and a nation in which all hope and confidence were lost.

EDMUND IRONSIDE.

EDMUND was immediately crowned in London by the Archbishop of Canterbury: but a number of the English nobles, and a large body of the clergy, adhered to Canute, whose proclamation as King of England was performed at Southampton. Canute, however, had now a very different opponent from Etheldred. The courage and vigour of Edmund were well-known; and his first effort was to raise

the whole forces of the kingdom in order to drive out the Danes. While he was thus employed, at some distance from the capital, Canute marched his army to London, and laid siege to that place. The citizens, however, defended their walls manfully, giving time for Edmund to arrive on the opposite bank of the Thames, whence he threw abundant supplies into the city by water. Canute then endeavoured to draw his adversary away from the town, in which he was successful; but the moment that Edmund's forces had retired, the Danish king returned and assailed London once more. Again frustrated, he withdrew, and marched to give his adversary battle; nor was Edmund unwilling to risk a general engagement. The two armies met at some distance from London, and a bloody battle ensued, which lasted, we are assured, for two days. Both Saxons and Danes

fought with the greatest courage; but the scale had very nearly been turned in favour of the latter by a stratagem of Edric, calculated to throw doubt and consternation amongst Edmund's troops. Striking off the head of a prisoner who greatly resembled Edmund, he caused it to be carried on a pole to the front of the Saxon lines, calling out to the soldiers that their king was killed. This deceit at first had some effect; but Edmund, displaying himself to the troops with his head uncovered, put an end to the panic, and the battle was renewed with as much fury as before.

In the end, the King of Denmark was obliged to withdraw his troops, which was effected during the night. The victory undoubtedly remained with Edmund, but it was by no means decisive; and Canute, marching upon London with his strength little impaired, again laid siege to that city, for the third time during

that year. The year 1016, we are told, saw three sieges of the capital, and five pitched battles; but the determined valour of the Londoners preserved the city, and the engagements in the field appear to have had no result upon the campaign. On the eve of a sixth battle, Edmund is said to have challenged Canute to single combat; but the accounts of this affair are very doubtful; and it is only known that the nobles on both parts interfering to put a stop to a struggle which seemed interminable by means of arms, a treaty was entered into, by which the kingdom was divided between the two rivals, Edmund obtaining the whole country south of the Thames, together with London, and a part of Essex, while the whole northern part of the country fell to the share of Canute. Treachery, however, was still at work; and a few months after the partition of the kingdom, Edmund was murdered at Oxford. There are various accounts of the manner of his death, but it

seems generally admitted that it was brought about by the treachery of Edric Streon.

CANUTE.

CANUTE immediately possessed himself of the territories of the deceased monarch; and the two sons of Edmund falling into his hands, he sent them to Sweden, with a hint to the king of that country not to let them trouble him any more. It is probable that he was afraid to put them to death in England lest he should excite the abhorrence of the Saxons. But although his message to the King of Sweden was not to be misunderstood, that monarch, touched with the youth and innocence of the two princes, spared their lives, and sent them for education to the court of Hungary. Here the eldest boy, Edwin, died early; but the second, Edward, married the sister of the Queen of Hungary, by whom he had one

son and two daughters. The children of Edmund, however, were not the only competitors whom Canute had to fear, for Ethelred the Unready had left two sons by Emma, Princess of Normandy, Alfred and Edward, besides two others by other mothers, of whom we hear little in history. Emma, however, had wisely retreated into Normandy with her children, and, under the protection of her powerful relations in that country, was out of the reach of the Danish prince.

Canute's first steps, after taking possession of the southern portion of the kingdom, were all directed to secure the power he had attained. In order to give some show of justice to his usurpation, he declared that the treaty of peace entered into between himself and Edmund contained a stipulation for his succession, on the death of that prince, to the exclusion of the Saxon line.

Edmund's full brother, Edwy, he caused be first banished, and subsequently murdered. Another Edwy, who was not legitimate, seems to have been treated more favourably. To reward those who had assisted to raise him to the throne, and who still possessed great power in the land, he created Turkhil, a nobleman of Danish race, Duke of East Anglia; Eric, another powerful leader, Duke of Northumberland; and confirmed Edric Streon in all his possessions. He then laboured diligently to put an end to all feuds between the Saxons and the Danes, and punished with just severity, but base ingratitude, many of the Saxon noblemen who had betrayed the cause of their late monarch. Amongst the rest, the traitor Edric did not ultimately escape. It would appear that, for some time, Canute only waited for a pretence, which was soon afforded him by a man who thought himself above danger.

One day, in the king's council, Edric ventured to upbraid him for not rewarding his important services as they deserved, and in recapitulating them, he did not fail to mention the murder of Edmund. Canute immediately ordered him to be seized, declaring that if he now had avowed the murder and treason which had only before been suspected, he merited instant death. Neither trial nor reply was permitted; but the unhappy wretch was beheaded at once, and the body thrown into the Thames. Turkhil and Eric were also shortly after banished, and deprived of their possessions, so that Canute found himself possessed of the sole authority in England, with the exception of a small portion which remained in the hands of the British princes. His security was farther increased by his marriage with Emma, the widow of Etheldred, who was tempted by ambition to forget the wrongs

which her first husband had suffered, and share the throne of his powerful rival. Her sons, however, still remained in Normandy, under the protection of their uncle, murmuring loudly at the marriage settlement of their mother, by which the succession to the throne of England was secured to any children she might have by Canute. The English, however, were pleased with their lot, for now, after so many years of suffering and warfare, they enjoyed a period of peace and prosperity, with no dangerous enemies yearly ravaging the coasts, or carrying bloodshed and devastation into the heart of the kingdom.

Finding the people of the country content with his dominion, and perfect peace reigning between his Danish and Saxon subjects, Canute ventured, in 1019, to visit Denmark, where a war had broken out between the Danes and Swedes. He took with him

however, a large number of the most powerful Saxon noblemen, together with a considerable body of English troops. Amongst the former, was the famous Earl Godwin, who, it would seem, was in command of the English auxiliaries, and he soon had an opportunity of displaying his valour and skill in war, as well as his attachment to Canute. The armies of Denmark and Sweden, after the arrival of Canute, advanced rapidly to meet each other; and a battle was immediately expected; but the English forces being posted apart from the Danes in the immediate vicinity of the enemy's camp, Godwin took advantage of the darkness of the night to assail the Swedes, and utterly routed their whole army without any assistance from the Danes. When Canute rose, he found that he had gained a great victory with little or no loss; and overflowing with gratitude, he bestowed

upon Godwin the Earldom of Kent, and ever after treated him with the greatest favour. He made more than one expedition to the north afterwards, and obtained possession of the kingdom of Norway by the flight and deposition of Oläus, sovereign of that country, who had lost the affection of his subjects by restraining their piratical expeditions in accordance with his promise to Etheldred. In a subsequent attempt to recover his crown, Oläus was taken and put to death by the Norwegians; after which, for many years, the title of Canute was not disputed.

In the government of England, Canute showed great wisdom, justice, and moderation, and the latter part of his life brought to light many high qualities which had not been perceived in his younger days. The fierce and savage conqueror, the imperious and fiery monarch, became mild, gentle,

devout, and pious. He devoted himself to promote peace and goodwill, and to administer equitable justice to his people, and although not only the flattery of his courtiers, but the reverence of neighbouring princes, might well swell his pride and pamper his vanity, his acts and words were humble; and an anecdote is related of him, which, whether true or false, is remarkable, for no one would have ventured to invent it, if it had not been in some degree consistent with the character of the man. He was at this time in possession of three great kingdoms, the possession or retention of which he owed, in a great measure, to his own courage and conduct, and the adulation of his courtiers knew no bounds. They even ventured to insult his understanding, by declaring that nothing in nature could resist his commands. Shortly after, we are told Canute ordered his chair to be set

beyond high-water mark on the beach near Southampton when the tide was flowing, and ordered the sea to approach no farther. The sea treated this order, as may be supposed, by wetting the monarch's feet, and driving himself and the flatterers back from the shore. Canute, however, did not fail to give point to the lesson, by saying, "Learn by this the emptiness of all human power, and that the word of God is alone all powerful." From that moment, he is said never to have worn his crown, ordering it to be placed upon the great crucifix at Winchester.

This king has been called Canute the Great; but it is probable that his conduct has been represented in the most favourable light, for his historians were monks or priests, and we find that Canute was one of the most devoted children of the Church of Rome, that he built churches and monasteries, endowed

many religious institutions, and conferred the greatest benefits upon the clergy.

Canute died at the end of the year 1035, leaving three sons, each of an age to ascend the throne. The eldest, named Swein, was not legitimate, but he obtained possession of Norway. The second, Harold, called Harefoot, from his swiftness, was the son of Canute's first wife, and was in England at the time of his father's death. The third, by Emma of Normandy, was named Hardicanute, and happened, when the throne became vacant, to be in Denmark. The crown of England, as I have told you, had been promised on Canute's marriage with Emma to any son she might have by him; but as Harold Harefoot was in England when his father died, he seized the crown and Canute's treasures. The Danes naturally adhered to the Danish prince; but the whole coun-

try, south of Thames, being crowded with the Saxons, prepared to assert the cause of the boy who had been born amongst them. Harold was proclaimed in the north, Hardicanute in the south, and the kingdom was threatened with a civil war. It would seem, however, that some agreement was made, to the effect that the kingdom should remain divided; and the Queen Emma remained at Winchester to govern Hardicanute's portion till his return, having the famous Earl Godwin for her general.

Some very dark transactions ensued, which are little worth the trouble of inquiring into minutely. Harold, it seems, found some means to gain the famous Earl Godwin to his interests, and laboured with him to make himself master of the southern portion of the island also; while Hardicanute remained quietly in Denmark, neglecting his English dominions. The conduct of Queen Emma

in these circumstances is not very clear; but certain it is that she invited her two sons by Etheldred to come over from Normandy, and join her in England. Some have supposed that she intended to place one of them upon the throne. However that may be, the two princes, Alfred and Edward, joyfully returned to their native country, and remained for some time with Emma, at the court at Winchester; but Harold, informed, we are assured, of the queen's intrigues by Earl Godwin, and following the advice of that nobleman, invited them to his court for the purpose of putting them to death. Thinking to frustrate any evil designs, Emma would only suffer one of her sons to go; and Alfred set out, accompanied by about six hundred persons. He was intercepted, however, by Earl Godwin, the greater part of his attendants slain, after being tortured in the most cruel manner; and the young prince him-

self, after having his eyes put out, was confined in a monastery at Ely, where he died Emma and her son Edward fled precipitately on hearing of Alfred's cruel treatment, the former taking refuge in Flanders, and the latter returning to Normandy. Such is the account generally given; but I must tell you that many doubts are entertained by learned men in regard to every part of this story. If Harold really committed this cruel act, he did not long enjoy the fruits of his crime, for he obtained possession of the whole kingdom in 1037, and died without children in April, 1039.

The throne was open now to the ambition of any one of the numerous persons still living, who had more or less claims to succeed. Hardicanute, however, was favoured by various circumstances. He was at this time at Bruges consulting with his mother as to the possibility of recovering the throne of

Wessex, and we are assured the Count of Flanders had promised him the assistance of a powerful armament to aid his Danish troops, and his partizans in England. The English were friendly to him as a prince born and educated on their own soil; and the Danes of England saw in him one of their own race both by the father's and the mother's side. All, therefore, agreed to call him to the throne, and messengers were sent to Flanders to notify to him the choice of the people.

Hardicanute at once set sail with forty ships, which had accompanied him from Denmark, and was received by the English and Danes with enthusiastic acclamations. His cruelty and oppression, however, soon made him odious, and his excesses contemptible. The first indication which he gave of his temper, was an order to disinter the corpse of his brother, Harold, to chop

off the head, and throw the body into the Thames. The next was the imposition of an exorbitant tax to pay his Danish troops and fleet. The people of Worcester resisted; but an order was immediately issued by the tyrant for Godwin, Siward, and Leofric to march against that city, burn it to the ground, and put the inhabitants to the sword. The town was accordingly burnt, after four days' pillage; but the greater part of the inhabitants escaped to an island in the Severn, where they remained till the king's anger was appeased. In only two instances recorded, is there any sign of Hardicanute having shown a more placable disposition; and in one instance, if not in the other, a different passion was brought into play, to counteract the violence of his temper. Godwin, Earl of Kent, had betrayed his cause, and was generally supposed to have slain his brother Alfred; but, nevertheless, we

find that in this reign he was trusted and treated with great distinction. There can be no doubt, however, that his pardon was obtained by immense bribes and presents, one of his offerings to the king having been a beautiful galley painted and gilt, and manned with four score Saxon youths, each of whom, besides a quantity of other ornaments, and splendid weapons, wore upon each arm a bracelet of pure gold weighing sixteen ounces. Earl Godwin was merely required to swear that he had no share in the murder of Prince Alfred, which Hardicanute was kind enough to believe: The conduct of this monarch towards his half brother, Edward, seems to have been more generous. This unfortunate prince visited England, the crown of which country rightfully belonged to him, not long after Hardicanute's accession, and was received with the utmost kindness, which never varied during the rest

of his brother's life. That life, however, was very short, for gluttony and drunkenness were two of the Dane's daily habits, and he died suddenly at a wedding feast, in the third year of his reign, not without suspicion of poison.

As Hardicanute left no children to dispute the crown with the line of Saxon princes, the nobility of the realm had to choose between two Edwards, the first, surnamed the Exile, the son of Edmund Ironside, whose title was, perhaps, the best, and Edward, the son of Ethelred the Unready, and Emma of Normandy. Edward the Exile, however, was residing in Hungary, and had taken no part whatsoever in the affairs of England for so long a time, that he was nearly forgotten by the people of the country. The other Edward, indeed, possessed none of the qualities of a great king. He was weak, timid, and priest-ridden, somewhat covetous,

and not very just. His first impulse on hearing of the elevation offered him was to fly to Normandy; but unexpected proposals from one in whom the greatest power in England had long centred, induced him to remain. Godwin, Earl of Kent, was one of the most remarkable men of his day. Brave, bold, eloquent, skilful, active, he had many of those qualities which distinguish the greatest of the Saxon princes. It is true, that he was artful, unscrupulous, cruel, and that on one occasion, he had shown himself treacherous also; but in an age of traitors it was rare to find a man who had only betrayed his trust once in life. He was the most wealthy of the English nobles, and by his services to the crown during the reigns of Canute and Harold Harefoot, he had obtained the Earldoms of Sussex and Surrey, we are told, as well as the Dukedom of Wessex, and lastly, the office of high treasurer.

This powerful noble then agreed to espouse the cause of Edward, upon condition of his marrying his daughter Editha. In this young lady was united the blood of the Saxons and the Danes, and she was, moreover, learned, beautiful, virtuous, and gentle. She seems to have obtained the love, and not only the love, but the esteem of all who knew her, so that her amiable virtues, contrasted with the worst qualities of her father, gave rise to a Latin proverb, which has been translated, "As the thorn gives birth to the rose, so did Godwin give birth to Edith."

Edward willingly consented to the terms imposed; and as soon as his consent was obtained, Godwin called a general assembly of the nation, in which his eloquence and skill so far prevailed, that Edward was elected with perfect unanimity. Some historians say, that no Danes were admitted to this assembly, and that vigorous and cruel

measures were taken for driving the greater part of them from the land, and putting the rest to death. Such a thing, however, was impossible. The Danes possessed one half of England; were nearly, if not quite, as numerous as the Saxons; and the very attempt to destroy or drive them forth by violent means would have produced a civil war, which we should have heard much more of in history. The Saxons, it is true, were now the predominant party. The Danes were without any eminent leader; some outrages were committed upon them by the people, and insults were offered to them which they dared not revenge, and were not inclined to endure. Many, under these circumstances, quitted the land; and the resumption of all grants from the crown, made by the Danish kings, drove others forth, impoverished, to seek wealth in distant countries. Those who remained, submitted;

and it is one of the most curious facts in history, that from that time we hear no more mention of the Danes in England; and the two nations of Saxons and Danes seem to have been completely mixed together, and all distinction forgotten.

As long as it was possible, after his coronation, Edward deferred his marriage with Editha; but Godwin was too powerful to be trifled with, and the espousals at last took place. It proved childless, however; and the marriage was by no means a happy one.

The whole of Edward's reign shows nothing but vacillation and inconsistency. He ill-treated his wife; he pillaged his mother; he was, during the greater part of his existence, the slave of Earl Godwin, and only made a faint resistance to the power of that nobleman; when supported by the Earl of Northumberland, or the Earl of Mercia. His court was crowded with Normans, to

from he showed the greatest favour, in consideration of the benefits which he had received from them during his exile; and a monk of Normandy, named Robert, was made first Bishop of London, and then Archbishop of Canterbury. This raised the jealousy of the Saxon nobles to the highest degree; and, it would appear, hurried on Godwin to acts which brought him to the brink of ruin. Eustace, Count of Boulogne, who had married Goda, Edward's sister, came over to England, to visit his brother-in-law in the year 1050; but, as he was returning to his own country, a quarrel took place between his attendants and the townspeople, in which nineteen of the one, and twenty of the other, were slain. Eustace made his escape with difficulty; and, seeking Edward's court, made to that prince a party representation of what had occurred. Edward believed him implicitly; and, en

raged at the insult offered to his near connexion, he ordered Godwin to march against the town, and inflict a severe punishment upon its population. Godwin refused; alleging, truly, that people should be heard before they are condemned; and pointing out that, as Earl of Kent, he was obliged to defend, rather than persecute, the men of that county. The king was very much enraged at this reply, and expressed himself with great heat; but Godwin paid no attention to the monarch's wrath, and marched his troops into Herefordshire, in order to protect that county from the ravages of the Welsh. Edward's anger was now at its height; the Normans, to whom Godwin was a declared enemy, fanning the spark into a flame. He instantly sent for Leofric and Siward, and endeavoured to persuade them and others of the nobles to assist him strenuously with all their forces in chas-

sing the disobedient earl. The attitude assumed by Godwin, however, on hearing of these transactions, was so menacing, his power so great, and so strong his hold upon the affections of the people, that the English nobility wisely dissuaded the king from any violent measures; and a hollow sort of reconciliation was effected between Edward and his too powerful subject. Means, however, were devised to entrap the earl. A great council was summoned to meet at London, in September; and Godwin and his sons were summoned to appear before the assembly. But the earl and his children demanded hostages for their personal safety, which being refused, they neglected to come; and the council proceeded to try and condemn them in their absence. Swein, the earl's eldest son, who had committed many acts of violence, was outlawed with some sort of justice; and Godwin and his other children

were commanded instantly to surrender themselves, or to quit the kingdom within five days. Godwin did not choose, however, to trust himself in the hands of his enemies; and as Edward had seduced or bribed several of his supporters, so that his power was somewhat weakened, he abandoned the kingdom, and passed over into Flanders with three of his sons, Swein, Gurth, and Tosti. Harold and Leofwin took refuge in Ireland. Not contented with those proceedings, for which there was some plea, Edward showed that there was a rancorous spirit busy in his heart, by persecuting his innocent wife, Editha, on account of her relationship to Godwin. He drove her from his court, and shut her up in a nunnery. All the estates of Godwin and his sons were confiscated, all their offices taken from them, and conferred upon others; but the ruin which the king sought to inflict, was averted

from Godwin and his family partly, at least, by Edward's own acts. A number of the offices which had been held by Godwin's sons were bestowed upon the Normans, to the exclusion of the Anglo-Saxon nobility, and the cause of the banished earl rapidly gained ground in England during his absence.

In the meantime, the court of England was enlivened by the arrival of William, Duke of Normandy, whose predecessors had shown much kindness to Edward during the period of his exile. What passed between them is little known; but we are assured by one who was at the court at the time, that nothing was said in regard to the succession of the crown. After being splendidly entertained for some time, William returned to Normandy; but his presence in England, and the favour with which he was received, did not serve to regain for Edward the affection

of the Saxons. Justly or unjustly, they thought fit to suppose that Godwin was suffering in their behalf, and the earl did not fail to take advantage of this disposition. Befriended by the Earl of Flanders, whose daughter was married to the earl's son, Tosti, Godwin collected a fleet and army, and prepared to return to his native country in hostile guise. Harold also brought a number of ships from Ireland, and prepared to unite with his father in a descent upon the English coast. But Edward was not behindhand in preparation; for, knowing well Godwin's energetic disposition, he had prepared a superior fleet to check any attempt he might make, and placed it under the command of two Norman noblemen, named Randulph or Ralph, and Odda. Godwin now practised a stratagem, which proved eminently successful. As soon as he found that the king's fleet was at sea, he affected to fly

from at, and to abandon his expedition. It is probable that he knew that great disaffection existed in the English fleet, and that it must speedily retire to recruit. Such, at all events, proved to be the case; and as soon as the earl had intimation that the king's ships had re-entered the Thames, and that the greater part of the crews were dispersed, he put to sea again, followed the enemy up the same river, and approached London, where Edward lay with his army. The king showed more determination on this occasion than he usually displayed. He was anxious to put himself at the head of his troops, and to risk all upon a general battle; but the Saxon nobles in the king's council took no interest in Edward's cause. They interposed to spare the effusion of blood, and recommended that a negotiation should be entered into for the purpose of terminating the quarrel. Edward, instigated by the Nor-

mans, showed little inclination so to humble himself before a subject; but Godwin, as artful as he was bold, smoothed the way by sending submissive messages, and assuring the king that he only ventured to appear in arms, in order to justify his conduct without running that personal risk from his enemies which he had reason to apprehend. A negotiation ensued, which ended in a peace entirely to the advantage of Godwin, who, supported by the Saxons throughout the realm, may be said to have dictated the terms. The earl and his sons were to be received into favour again, to recover all their estates, posts, and offices. Editha was to be recalled to her husband's court; and the only stipulation at all favourable to Edward was, that one of the sons and one of the grandsons of Godwin were to be given as hostages for the earl's good behaviour. But Godwin took care to add a condition, which he knew would

raise his popularity higher than ever. He demanded, and received a promise, that all the Norman favourites, besides being stripped of the places they had obtained, should be banished from the kingdom. The general council of the nation willingly ratified this treaty, and solemnly pronounced Godwin and his sons innocent of the crimes with which they had been charged. Thus he who but a few months before had been driven forth into exile, came back triumphant, without striking a blow.

It is to be remarked, however, that Swein, the earl's eldest son, was already dead, otherwise the great council could not well have pronounced the children of Godwin guiltless, as his crimes were but too susceptible of proof.

All the Normans in England fled with the utmost precipitation upon the conclusion of this treaty, and amongst the rest, Robert,

Archbishop of Canterbury, who took refuge at Jumieges, one who had laboured hard to raise up dissensions between the king and his Saxon subjects.

Godwin was by this time far advanced in life, and he did not long survive the recovery of his great power. He died suddenly, as he was sitting at dinner with the king; and all sorts of improbable stories were circulated as to the manner of his death, which probably occurred from natural causes. He was succeeded in his estates, honours, and offices by Harold, now his eldest son, a man undoubtedly of very great ability; in some respects, indeed, superior to his father, but perhaps less circumspect and artful. With Godwin's power he inherited his ambition; but he was more gentle in manner, more pure and unspotted in conduct, without being less firm, energetic, and active. His object was now the crown, and

ne laboured to obtain it, as the successor of Edward, by gentle and pacific rather than by violent means He treated the king himself with the greatest deference and respect; but at the same time he showed that he possessed the military spirit of his race in an expedition against the Welsh, who had made an irruption into Herefordshire, excited by Alfgar, son of the famous Leofric, Duke of Mercia. Harold had married Alfgar's sister; but no great cordiality existed between the brothers-in-law; and, of a restless, turbulent disposition, Alfgar plotted with the Welsh, was detected, and condemned to banishment. He took refuge at the court of Griffith, the Welsh prince, and soon incited him to invade England. They were, in the first instance, opposed by the Earl of Hereford, whom they totally defeated; but Harold, raising troops in his own governments, without waiting, it appears, for the commands of

the king, encountered the invaders as they were marching on in triumph, put their forces to the rout, and drove them back into Wales. He then, with the most generous and kindly spirit, interceded for Alfgar, nor ever ceased till he had obtained his pardon, and the restoration of his estates and honours. His popularity and his power still increased; and the death of Siward, Earl of Northumberland, afforded an opportunity of still farther aggrandizing his family, by obtaining the government of that important district for his brother Tosti, with whom he was then on terms of great affection. East Anglia he obtained for himself; and the succession to Mercia, upon the death of Leofric, for Alfgar, that nobleman's son, notwithstanding the strong disinclination of the king. His liberality, his courtesy, his high and noble bearing, his talents, both as a politician and a warrior, gained him the

love and the respect of all the Saxon race; and Edward saw him not only daily increasing in power—to which result he himself unwillingly contributed—but winning more and more the affections of all men, by means which he could neither censure nor prevent.

The king's hatred to the race of Godwin however, was not extinct. He saw Harold's ambition, and perceived clearly that the people were prepared to choose him for their king on the throne becoming vacant He wavered for some time in regard to his own conduct, occasionally seeming disposed to nominate William of Normandy as his successor; at other times inclining to recall Edward the Exile, son of Edmund Ironside in order to place him upon the throne. His sole object seems to have been to exclude Harold; and as the title of Edward the Exile was even better than his own, as he was an English prince of the blood royal

born upon the soil, he trusted that the Saxons would unite in obeying him, and willingly accept the prince as his successor. This expectation at length decided his conduct; and he despatched messengers to the court of Hungary, to call Edward back to his native shores. That prince joyfully acceded, and returned to England in 1057, from which he had been forty years an exile, bringing with him his son, known in history as Edgar Atheling. The unfortunate Edward, however, died within a month after his arrival; and his son, still a youth, and with few traces of activity or genius, proved no obstacle in the way of Harold. One of the most extraordinary incidents in the life of this great and unfortunate man followed shortly after; and I must tell you fairly that the whole transaction is so dark and mysterious, that the motives of the parties have never been discovered, nor their conduct fully

explained. Harold on a sudden resolved to visit and confer with William Duke of Normandy. It is hardly possible to suppose that a man, possessed of so many sources of information, was ignorant that Edward had some inclination to place the Duke of Normandy on the throne of England; nor can it be conceived that William did not perceive Harold's ambitious pretensions to the crown. The motive assigned for the Saxon's visit to the Norman—namely, to obtain the release of his brother and his nephew, who had been given to Edward as hostages for Godwin's good behaviour and sent into Normandy, is not sufficient to account for the visit, for the negotiation could have been carried on just as well by deputy. However that may be, Harold determined to confer with William in person, and set out with a large retinue for Rouen. His voyage was not a very prosperous one, for he was

driven by stress of weather into one of the ports of the Count of Ponthieu, a district which at that time comprised the greater part of the country lying between the Seine and the Somme, two great rivers in France. He was there seized and detained as a prisoner by the count, but found means to communicate his situation to William Duke of Normandy, who immediately insisted upon the count setting him at liberty. Harold then was received with kindness and distinction by William, and many conferences took place between them. I should be only deceiving you if I pretended to tell you what they said to each other; for, although old historians have written a great deal about it, no one seems to have been rightly informed. Some say that William informed his guest, that it was the intention of Edward to appoint him, the Duke of Normandy, his successor in the throne of

England, and that he endeavoured to gain the great Saxon to his interests, warning him at the same time of all the dangers to which he would expose himself if he, Harold, attempted to seize the crown. They add that Harold, finding himself in William's power, promised everything that he could demand, and took an oath to assist William to the utmost of his power. Others, however, differ from this account altogether, and declare that Harold was actually detained as a prisoner, till he made promises which were of little value, as they were given under compulsion. In short, there is a mystery in the whole transaction which has never been clearly explained, and all that we know is, that Harold did visit Normandy, and that he returned thence loaded with presents, and accompanied by his nephew, who had been one of the hostages. The other, William still kept at his court; but it

would seem he promised Harold one of his daughters in marriage.

Whatever Harold had promised in the dangerous situation in which he had placed himself, there can be no doubt that, after he returned to England, he laboured with double diligence to secure his own succession to the throne. Fortune seemed to favour him in all respects. King Edward took no measures to insure the crown for William; and, indeed, I have many doubts whether Edward ever promised him anything of the kind. In the meantime, in the year 1064, the Welsh being once more in arms against the English, Harold called to his assistance his brother Tosti, Earl of Northumberland, and invaded Wales. His expedition was so skilfully planned, and so vigorously executed, that the Welsh, after being defeated in several places, resolved to dethrone their king, Griffith, who had

been the chief instigator of the war, and to submit entirely to the Saxons. In order more effectually to appease the victor, they struck off their own king's head and sent it to Harold, together with the gilded stern of Griffith's barge. The people of the county swore obedience to the English and their conqueror, and Harold returned, with his popularity and renown greatly increased. A more painful task was before him; but if no facts of importance have been kept back by historians, the result shows a high and generous sense of what was right, which places his character in the finest point of view.

Up to this period, his brother Tosti and himself had lived on terms of the greatest amity, and the former owed to Harold's influence the Earldom of Northumberland. But Tosti was a violent, cruel, and tyrannical man, with few of Harold's good quali-

ties. His rule over the Northumbrians had been so severe, and he had committed so many acts of injustice and oppression, that the people broke out into actual revolt towards the end of the year 1064, killed a number of Tosti's retainers, and drove him out of Northumberland. Tosti hastened to the king, told his own story, and induced Edward at once to uphold his cause. Harold was commanded to lead all the forces he could raise into Northumberland to chastise the people of that district, and to restore his brother to power. Harold showed every readiness to obey; but on the frontiers of the province, he was met by a peaceable deputation from the Northumbrians, who laid before him a clear statement of the evils they had suffered under his brother, assured him of their fidelity and obedience to the king, and besought him to lay aside the interests of his family, and in-

cercde for them with their monarch. But at the same time they intimated that they would not again receive Tosti on any terms, and rather die in arms than submit to one who had so cruelly oppressed them. Harold paused in his advance, and, convinced of the justice of their complaint, sent more accurate information of the facts to Edward, with an entreaty that he would pardon the Northumbrians, and name Morcar—the son of Alfgar, Duke of Mercia—whom the Northumbrians had already chosen as their leader, to be Earl of Northumberland in Tosti's place. A favourable answer was immediately received, and while Tosti fled, enraged, into Flanders, Harold returned, having acquired a new hold upon the affections of the people, by his equitable dealings in a case where the interests of his own family were concerned.

Shortly after this transaction, Harold

married Edgiva, the sister of Earl Moroar, and thus strengthened himself, by a near alliance with the rulers of Mercia and Northumberland. But, in the meantime, Edward, who had sown the fatal seeds of dissension in regard to the succession, to bear bitter fruit after his death, seemed to have given up all care of the important question, which he had only troubled, and to busy himself with nothing but the completion of the church and monastery of St. Peter, which he was building in a low piece of swampy ground, called the Isle of Thorney, about two miles to the west of London. This Isle of Thorney is now called Westminster, and you have all seen the fine abbey erected there; but you must remark that the present building is not that erected by Edward, which was pulled down in the reign of Henry III. Edward lived to see the church of St. Peter completed, and he invited all the

great nobility of the realm, together with the bishops, monks, and abbots, to be present at the dedication. Scarcely had they assembled, however, when the king was taken suddenly ill, and died a few days afterwards, on the 5th of January, 1066. During his illness, efforts were made to induce him to name Harold as his successor; and Harold afterwards pretended that he had done so; but of this there is no proof. However that may be, the nobles, people, and clergy, with one consent, immediately raised Harold to the throne, passing over in silence the claims of Edgar Atheling, who had neither power, talents, nor courage, to assert his own right. On the day after his death, Edward was buried with great pomp in the church which he had built, and on the same day Harold was crowned King of England in the church of St. Paul's, of London.

Edward received the name of the Con-

fessor, and was many years after made a saint by the pope, although the acts which procured him this distinction might seem, in our eyes, either crimes or follies. The greater part of his history would lead us to look upon him as a weak, good-natured, timid prince, very indolent and careless. But at other times he showed himself violent, vindictive, and avaricious, and his conduct to both his wife and his mother deprives him of all claim to the character of a pious or a good man.

END OF VOL. I.

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