

BOOK II. THE PERIOD FROM THE NORMAN CONQUEST TO THE DEATH OF KING JOHN.

CHAPTER THE FIRST. WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR.

BEFORE entering on our account of the reign of William the Conqueror, a bird's-eye view of the early biography of that illustrious person may be acceptable. He was born in 1024, of miscellaneous parents, and was a descendant of the illustrious Rollo, who wrested Normandy from Charles the Simple, whose simplicity consisted no doubt in his submitting to be done out of his possessions. William had been in his early days one of those intolerable nuisances, an infant prodigy, and at eight years old exhibited that ripeness of judgment and energy of action for which the birch is in our opinion the best remedy. He had quelled a disturbance in his own court, when very young; but a beadle in our own day can do as much as this, for a disturbance in a court is often quelled by that very humble officer. His marriage with Matilda, daughter of the Earl of Flanders, gave him the benefit of respectable connection, so useful to a young man starting in life; and after trying with all his might to acquire Maine, his success in obtaining it added to his influence. Such was the man whom we left in our last chapter on the field of Battle, and on our return to him we find him building Battle Abbey in memory of his victory. He caused a list or roll to be made of all the nobles and gentlemen who came over with him from Normandy, and many of them were men of mark, if we are to judge by their signatures. This earliest specimen in England of a genuine French roll was preserved for some time under the name of the roll of Battle Abbey, but the monks were in the habit of making it a medium for advertisement, by allowing the insertion of fresh names, to gratify that numerous

class who are desirous of being thought to have come in with the Conqueror. The roll of Battle Abbey was no longer confined to the thorough-bred, but degenerated into a paltry puff, made up in the usual way, with paste—and scissors. William, instead of going at once to London, put up for a few days at Hastings, expecting the people to come and ask for peace; but though he remained at home the greater part of the day, the callers were by no means numerous. He accordingly took his departure for Romney, which he savagely rummaged. He then went on to Dover, which Holinshed describes as the lock and key of all England, but the inhabitants, finding the lock and key in hostile hands, sagaciously made a bolt of it. William's soldiers had no sooner taken possession of Dover than they were all seized with severe illness, but whether they availed themselves of the celebrated Dover Powders is exceedingly dubious. The Conqueror at length went towards London, where the Witan had proclaimed as king a poor little boy of the name of Edgar Atheling, the son of Edmund Ironsides. William, however, nearly frightened the Witan out of its wits by burning Southwark, and a deputation started from town to Berkhamstead, to make submission to the Conqueror. Young Edgar made a formal renunciation of the throne, which was not his to renounce, and indeed, when he sat upon it the child fell so very far short, that for him to feel the ground under his feet was utterly impossible.

After these concessions, the day was fixed for William's coronation in Westminster Abbey, on the 26th of December, 1066, when the ceremony was performed amid enthusiastic cheering which lasted for several minutes.

The Normans outside not being accustomed to Saxon habits, mistook the applause for disapprobation, and thinking that their duke was being hooted, or perhaps pelted, with "apples, oranges, nuts, and pears," they began to avenge the fancied insult by taking it out in violence towards the populace. Houses were

burnt down in every direction, when the noise made without became audible to those within, who rushed forth to join in the row, and William, it is said, was left almost alone in the abbey, to finish his own coronation. He, however, went through the whole ceremony, and even added a few extemporaneous paragraphs to the usual coronation affidavit, by the introduction of an oath or two of his own, after the interruption of the ceremony.

The Conqueror having taken some extensive premises at Barking, went to reside there for a short time, and was visited by several English families, among whom that of the warrior Coxo—since abbreviated into Cox—was one of the most illustrious. William found considerable difficulty in satisfying the rapacity of his followers, who thought nothing of asking for a castle, a church, an abbey, or a trifle of that kind by way of remuneration for their services. He scattered those articles right and left, according to the chroniclers; but it would be difficult to say where he got them from, were it not that the chroniclers are so skilled in castle-building that they have always a stock on hand to devote to the purposes of history.

After six months' residence in England, William, having got his half-year's salary as king, was in funds to enable him to take a trip to Normandy. He took with him a complete sideboard of English—not British—plate, and with the treasures of this country dazzled the eyes of his continental friends and subjects. A party of Young England gents who accompanied him attracted also, by their long flowing hair, the admiration of foreigners. Odo, William's half-brother, who had been left at home to rule in the absence of the king, soon—as the reader may anticipate from the obvious pun that must ensue—rendered himself utterly odious. His treatment of the conquered people was cruel in the extreme; he filled the cup of misery not only to the brim, but degradation was kept continually on draft, every new blow being a fresh tap for the victims of tyranny. The very smallest beer will, however, ferment at last if kept continually bottled

up; and though the Entire of England had been for a time rendered flat, there was a good deal of genuine British stout at bottom. A general effervescence broke out on the departure of William, who had acted hitherto as a cork; but Odo evinced a disposition to play the screw, by drawing out whatever he could in the absence of his superior.

A general conspiracy seemed to be on the point of breaking out, when William, who had allowed letter after letter to remain unanswered which had been sent to entreat him to come home, started late one night for Dieppe, on his return to England. His first care was to assuage the discontent, and he had already learned the acknowledged trick, that the shortest way of stopping a British mouth, is by liberally feeding it. He accordingly gave a series of Christmas dinners, and he invited several Saxon earls, to meet a succession of bovine barons. If the banquets were intended as a bait, there is no doubt that the English very readily swallowed them. By way of further propitiating the people, he published a law in the Saxon tongue, decreeing "that every son should inherit from his father," or in other words, should take after him. If, however, he was liberal in his invitations to dinner, he took care that the people should pay the bill, for he had scarcely finished entertaining them, when he began taxing them most oppressively.

William did not acquire the title of Conqueror quite so speedily as has been generally imagined, for he was occupied at least seven years in running about the country from one place to the other, wiping out, by many severe wipes, the remaining traces of insubordination to his government. In the year 1068 he besieged Exeter, where Githa, the aged mother of Harold, was leading a quiet life, surrounded by a bevy of venerable gossips. The Conqueror routed them out, and they repaired to Bath, where their taste for tittle-tattle might have been indulged, but meeting with rudeness from the celebrated Bath chaps, they hastened to Flanders. William now sent for his wife Matilda,

whom he had not brought over until he could form some idea how long he was likely to remain in his new quarters. A cheap coronation was got up for her at Winchester, the contract having been taken by Aldred, Archbishop of York, who it is believed found all the materials for the ceremony, without extra charge; and as the queen was rather short, we may presume that everything was cut down to a low figure. A little after this event, Harold's two sons, Godwin and Edmund, with a little brother, facetiously called Magnus, came over from Ireland, and hovered about the coast of Cornwall, where young Magnus, being a minor, perhaps hoped for sympathy. They planted their standard, expecting that the inhabitants would fly to it, but they only flew at it, to tear it in pieces. Poor Magnus, with infantine tenderness, cried like a baby over the insulted bunting. Tired with their ill success, the three brothers eventually went over as suppliants to Denmark, where the unhappy beggars were received by Sweyn with amiable hospitality. In the ensuing year, William turned Somerset so completely upside down that it could not have known whether it stood on its head or its heels; and in every shire he took, he built a castle, by way of insuring the lives of himself and his followers in the county. According to Hollinshed, the greatest indignities were passed upon the conquered people. They were compelled even to regulate their beards in a particular fashion, from which the youngest shaver was not exempt. They were obliged to "round their hair," which probably means that they were obliged to keep it curled, and thus even in their coiffure they were ruled by a rod of iron. In addition to this, they were forced to "frame themselves in the Norman fashion," which must have made them the pictures of misery. William had, in one of his amiable moods, probably over a bottle of wine, promised Edwin, the brother-in-law of Harold, his daughter in marriage. When, however, the earl came to claim his fair prize, the Conqueror not only withdrew his consent,



but insulted the suitor, and a scene ensued very similar to the common incident in a farce, when a testy old father or guardian flies into a passion with the walking gentleman, exclaiming “Hoity-toity!” and calling him a young jackanapes.

Edwin, irritated at this treatment, collected an army in the north, and waited near the river Ouse; but the courage of his soldiers soon oozed out when the Conqueror made his appearance. William was victorious; but he had much to contend against during the first few years of his reign, and an invasion of the Danes, under Osborne, was a very troublesome business. The Normans, having shut themselves up in York, set fire to some of the houses outside the city, to check the approach of the foe; but the flames catching the minster, a “night wi’ Burns” seemed to be inevitable. Not wishing to remain to be roasted, they risked the minor inconvenience of being basted, and made a very lively sally out of the city. They were nearly all killed, and the Danes took possession of York; but the place being reduced to ashes, was little better than an extensive dust-hole. Osborne and his followers not wishing to winter among the cinders, retired to their ships, and William thus had time to make further arrangements.

The Conqueror was hunting in the Forest of Dean when he heard

of the catastrophe, and having his lance in his hand, he swore he would never put it down until he had exterminated the enemy. This must have been a somewhat inconsiderate vow, for though it may have been chivalrous to declare he would never put down his lance until a certain remote event, the weapon must have been at times a very inconvenient companion, as he did not commence his campaign until the spring; but as his vow came into operation immediately, the lance must have been a dead weight in his hand during the whole of the winter season. At length he mounted his horse, and rode rough-shod over the people of York, after which he took Durham, and ultimately repaired to Hexham, to which he administered a regular Hexham tanning.

Bobbery, under the less obnoxious name of confiscation, now became very general, and William commenced the wholesale subtraction of lands, with a view to their division among his Norman followers. The conquered English had nearly all their property seized, and those who had but little shared the lot of the wealthiest in the spoliation to which all were subjected. William de Percy profited largely in purse; and if in those days manners made the man, he must have been a made man indeed, for he got no less than eighty manors. Several other names will be found in Domesday Book, drawn up about fifteen years after the conquest, from which some of our oldest ancestors may learn full particulars of their early ancestors.

The title of Richmond had its origin from a Breton ruffian of the name of Allan, who having got a mount near York as his share of the plunder, gave it the name of Riche-Mont, or Rich-Mount; and the first Earl of Cumberland was a low fellow named Reuouf Meschines, the latter title being no doubt derived from mesquin, to express something mean and pitiful in this individual's character. The boast of having come in with the Normans is equivalent to a confession of belonging to a family whose founder was a thief, or at least a receiver of stolen articles.

The resistance to the Conqueror was, in many parts of England,

exceedingly obstinate, and Hereward of Lincoln, commonly called "England's Darling," or the Lincoln pet, was one of the most resolute of William's enemies. Such was the impetuosity of the pet, that the Normans imagined he must be a necromancer: and William, in order to turn the superstitions of the people to his own account, engaged a rival conjuror, or sorceress, who was placed with much solemnity on the top of a wooden tower, among the works that were proceeding for the defence of the invader's army. Hereward, however, seizing his opportunity, set fire to the wizard's temple, and the unfortunate conjuror being puzzled, terminated his career amidst a grand pyrotechnic display, which proved for Hereward and his party a blaze of triumph.

The English had established a camp of refuge at Ely, but the hungry monks, whose profession it was to fast, were the first, when provisions ran short, to grumble at the scarcity.

Their vows were evidently as empty as themselves, and though they had pledged themselves to abstinence, they began eating their own words with horrible voracity. They betrayed the isle to the Conqueror; but Hereward refusing to submit, plunged, like a true son of the soil, into the swamps and marshes, where the Normans would not venture to follow him. Protected to a certain extent in the bosom of his mother earth, he carried on a vexatious warfare, until William offered terms which took the hero out of the mud, and settled him in the estates of his ancestors. It has been customary with historians to cut the conquest exceedingly short, as if *Veni, vidi, vici*, had been the motto of William; and that, in fact, the Anglo-Saxons had surrendered at his nod, overcome by the waving of his plume—if he ever wore one; or in other words, knocked down with a feather. Such, however, was not the case; for it took seven years' apprenticeship to accustom the hardy natives of our isle to the subjection of a conqueror.

While William was in Normandy, whither he had been called to protect his possessions in Maine—for, as we are told by that mad wag, Matthew Paris, he never lost sight of the Main chance,

Philip of France offered some assistance to Edgar Atheling.

This individual accordingly set sail, but the unlucky dog had scarcely got his bark upon the sea, when the winds set up a dismal howl, and he was driven ashore near Northumberland. Edgar and a few friends escaped to Scotland, and at the advice of his brother-in-law, Malcolm sought a reconciliation with the Conqueror, who allowed the Atheling his lodging in the palace of Rouen, with a pound's worth of silver a day for his maintenance.

The king was soon recalled to England by an insurrection, got up by Roger Fitz Osborn, who, together with a large number of persons who were all subject to Fitz, determined on resisting the insolent oppression of the Conqueror. Young Roger, whose father, William Fitz Osborn, had been of great service to the Norman invader, was engaged to Emma de Gael, a daughter of the Duke of Norfolk, when the banns were most unreasonably forbidden by the sovereign. The young couple, however, determined not to be foiled, had made a match of it; and at the wedding feast, which was given at Norwich, some violent speeches were made, in the course of which William was denounced as a tyrant and a humbug, amid repeated shouts of "hear, hear," from the whole of the company.

The grand object of the Norman rebels was to bring round Earl Waltheof, and having taken care to heat him with wine, they did succeed in bringing him round in a most wonderful manner. He assented to every proposition, and his health was drunk with enthusiasm, followed, no doubt, by the usual complimentary chorus, attributing to him the festive virtues of jollity and good fellowship. The next morning, however, after "a consultation with his pillow," according to the Saxon chroniclers—from which we are to infer that he and his pillow laid their heads together, on the principle of goose to goose—he began to think he had acted very foolishly at the party of the previous night, and, jumping out of bed, packed off a communication to those with whom he had promised to co-operate.

After presenting his compliments, he “begged to say, that the evening’s amusement not having stood the test of the morning’s reflection, he was under the painful necessity of withdrawing any consent he might have given to any enterprise that might have been proposed at the meeting of the day preceding.”

The conspiracy, which had commenced in drinking, ended, very appropriately, in smoke; nearly all who took a part in the Norwich wedding were killed, and it has been well said by a modern writer that a share in the Norwich Union was not in those days a very profitable matter. It was about the year 1077 that William began to be wounded by that very sharp incisor—the tooth of filial disobedience. When preparing for the conquest of England he had promised, in the event of success, to resign Normandy to his son Robert, and had even taken an oath—clenched, probably, with the exclamation, “So help me, Bob!”—that if Robert assisted in his father’s absence the boy should have the Duchy.

Having conquered England, the Governor returned, and wanted Normandy back again, observing, with coarse quaintness, that he was “not going to throw off his clothes till he went to bed,” or, in other words, insisting that Robert, who had got into his father’s shoes, should instantly evacuate the paternal high-lows. Robert was brave, but by no means foppish in his dress, and had acquired the nickname of Robert Curt-hose or Short-stockings. He probably derived this appellation from a habit of wearing socks, and it is not unlikely that he was familiarly known as Bob Socks among his friends and acquaintances. Young Socks, who had always been irritable, was on one occasion roused to a pitch of passion by having the contents of a pitcher pitched upon his head by his two brothers, from the balcony of his own lodging. He became mad with rage, and, irritated by the water on the brain, he ran upstairs with a drawn sword in his hand, when the king, hearing the row among the three boys, rushed to the spot, and succeeded in quelling it in a

manner not very favourable to young Socks, who ran away from home towards Rouen. Through the intercession of his mother, he was persuaded to return home, and it is probable that “B. S.”—the initials of Bob Socks—was “entreated to return home to his disconsolate mother, when all would be arranged to his satisfaction.” Nevertheless, his pocket-money continued to be as short as his hose, and his companions declared it to be a shame that he never had a shilling to spend in anything. He accordingly went to his father, and demanded Normandy, but the monarch refused him, reprimanded him for his irregular habits, and recommended him to adopt “the society of serious old men,”—the “heavy fathers” of that early period. Robert declared irreverently that the old pumps were exceedingly dry companions, and reiterated his demand for Normandy. The king wrathfully refused, when young Socks announced his determination to take his valour to the foreign market, and place it at the service of any one who chose to pay him his price for it.

He visited various localities abroad, where he recounted his grievances, and borrowed money, making himself a sort of begging-letter impostor, and going about as if with a board round his neck, inscribed “Turned out of doors,” or “Totally destitute.” Though he collected a good round sum, he spent the whole of it in minstrels, jugglers, and parasites, so that he divided his time between the enjoyment of popular songs, conjuring tricks, and paid paragraphs, embodying the most outrageous puffs of his own character. After leading a vagabond life for some time, he was set up by Philip of France, in a castle on the confines of Normandy; but as he was only allowed lodging, he had to find his board as he could, by plundering his neighbours. One day he had sallied forth in search of a victim, when he found himself engaged in single combat with a tall gentlemanly man in a mail coat and a vizor, forming a sort of iron veil, which covered his countenance. The combatants had been for some time banging at each other with savage vehemence, when Robert delivered “one,

two, three," with such rapid succession on the head of his antagonist, that the latter, unable to resist so many plumpers coming at once to the pole, retired from the contest.

The stalwart knight being regularly knocked up, was glad to knock under, and fell to the earth with a piteous howl, in which Robert recognised the falsetto of his own father. Young Socks, who had a good heart, burst into tears, and instead of falling on his antagonist to finish him as he had designed, he fell upon his own knee to ask forgiveness of his parent. William, who would have been settled in one more crack, took advantage of his son's assistance, but went away muttering maledictions against Young Socks, who subsequently finding the vindictiveness of his father's character, declined any further communication with the "old gentleman," and never saw him again.

In the reign of William the Church was always disposed to be militant, and among the most pugnacious priests was Walcher de Lorraine, the Bishop of Durham, who, it is said, often turned his crozier into a lance, by having, we presume, a long movable hook at the end of it. He divided his time between preaching and plunder, correcting the morals of the people one day, and on the next picking their pockets. He was, in fact, alternately teaching and thrashing them, as if the only way to impress them with religious truth, was to beat it regularly into them.

At length, however, the right reverend robber having become very unpopular in his neighbourhood, agreed to attend a public meeting of the inhabitants at Gateshead, to offer explanations on the subject of the murder of one Liulf, a noble Englishman, and on other miscellaneous business. The attendance was far more numerous than select, and the old bishop becoming exceedingly nervous, ran away into the church with all his retinue. The people declared that if he did not come out they would smoke him out, by setting fire to the building; and they had proceeded to carry their threats into execution, when, half suffocated with the heat, the bishop came to the door with his

face muffled up in the skirts of his coat, and addressed a few words to the mob in so low a tone, that our reporters being at a considerable distance—almost eight centuries off—have not succeeded in catching them. The bishop, however, caught it at once, for he was slain after a short and rather irregular discussion. The words “Slay ye the bishop,” were distinctly heard to issue from a voice in the crowd, and the speaker,—whoever he was,—having put the question, the ayes and the bishop had it.



William selected one bishop to avenge another, and chose the furious Odo, who in spite of cries for mercy, and piteous exclamations of “O! don’t, Odo!” killed every one that came across his path, without judicial forms, or, familiarly speaking, without judge or jury. This ambitious butcher looked with a pope’s eye at the triple crown of Rome, and set out for Italy, with plenty of gold, to carry his election to the papal chair by corruption and bribery. The virtues of the cardinals might not have proved so strong as the cardinal virtues; but Odo, the bishop of Bayeux, had no chance of trying the experiment, for he was stopped in his expedition to Rome, at the Isle of Wight, by his brother-in-law, the Conqueror. William ordered his arrest; but no one volunteering to act as bailiff, the king seized the prelate by the robe, and took him into custody. “I am a clerk—a priest,”

cried Odo, endeavouring to get away. "I don't care what you are," exclaimed William, retaining his hold upon his prisoner.

"The pope alone has the right to try me," shrieked the bishop, getting away, and leaving a fragment of his robe in the king's hand. "But I've got you, and don't mean to part with you again in a hurry," muttered William, after darting forward and effecting the recapture of Odo, who was immediately committed to a dungeon in Normandy. The king soon after this incident lost his wife Matilda, and he became, after her decease, more cruel, avaricious, and jealous of his old companions-in-arms, than ever. One of the worst acts of his reign was the making of the New Forest in Hampshire, which he effected by driving away the inhabitants without the smallest compensation, from a space of nearly ninety miles in circumference. He appointed a bow-bearer, whose office still exists as a sinecure, with a salary of forty shillings a year, for which the gentleman who holds the appointment swears "to be of good behaviour towards the sovereign's wild beasts," and of course, in compliance with his oath, would feel bound to touch his hat to the British Lion. After founding the New Forest, the king enacted the most oppressive laws; placing on the killing of a hare such penalties as are enough to cause "each particular hair to stand on end," by their extreme barbarity.



Towards the end of the year 1086 William, who had grown exceedingly fat, started for France, to negotiate with Philip about some possessions, when the latter indulged in some small puns at the expense of the corpulency of the Conqueror.

By comparing him to a fillet of veal on castors, and suggesting his being exhibited at a prize monarch show, Philip so irritated William that the latter swore, with fearful oaths, to make his weight felt in France; and he kept his word, for falling upon Mantes, he succeeded in completely crushing it.

Having, however, gone out on horseback to see the ruins, the gigantic animal he was riding stepped on some hot ashes, which set the brute dancing so vigorously that the pummel of the saddle gave the Conqueror a fearful pummelling. He was so much shaken by this incident that he resolved never to ride the high horse, or indeed any other horse again; and he was soon after removed, at his own request, to the monastery of St. Gervas, just outside the walls of Rouen. Becoming rapidly worse, his heart softened to his enemies, most of whom he pardoned, and he then proceeded to make his will, by which he left Normandy to his son Robert, and bequeathed the crown of England to be fought for by William and Henry, with a significant wish, however, that the former might get it.

Henry exclaimed emphatically, "What are you going to give me?" and on receiving for his answer, "Five thousand pounds weight of silver out of my treasury," ungraciously demanded what he should do with such a paltry pittance. "Be patient," replied the king; "suffer thy elder brothers to precede thee—thy time will come after theirs;" but Henry, muttering "It's all very well to say 'be patient,'" hurried out of the room, drew the cash, weighed it carefully, and brought a strong box to put it in, For further particulars of Henry's conduct, vide Orderic, every prospect of the Conqueror being left in the city of Rouen to be buried by the parish, when a few of the clergy began to think of the funeral. The Archbishop ordered that it should take place at St. Stephen's, in Caen, and

none of the family being present, the undertaker actually came down upon a poor good-natured old knight, who had put himself rather prominently forward as a sort of provisional committee-man. How the affair was settled we are unable to state, but we have it on the authority of Oderic, that when the Bishop of Evreux had pronounced the panegyric, a man in the crowd jumped up, declaring the Conqueror was an old thief, and that he—the man in the crowd—claimed the ground on which they were then standing.

Many of the persons round cheered him in his address, and the bishops, for the sake of decency, paid out the execution from the Conqueror's grave for sixty shillings. To think of an iron chest at such a moment proved the possession of a heart of steel; and William, the elder son, was nearly as bad, for he hastened to England to look after the crown before his father had expired. It was on the 9th of September, 1087, that the Conqueror died, and his last faint sigh was the signal for a rush to the door, in which priests, doctors, and knights joined with furious eagerness. In vain did a diminutive bishop ask a stalwart warrior "where he was shoving to?" and the expostulations of a prim doctor to the crowd, entreating them to keep back, as there was "plenty of time," were utterly disregarded. The scene resembled that which may be witnessed occasionally at the pit door of the Opera, for the whole of William's attendants were eager to get home for the purpose of being early in securing either some place or plunder. The inferior servants of the royal robber like master, like man—commenced rifling the king's trunks and drawers of all the cash, jewels, and linen. There seemed scarcely more than it deserves, for there is no doubt that he was cruel, selfish, and unprincipled. It is, however, a curious fact, that what receives blacking from one age gets polished by the next: and this may account for the brilliance that has been shed in this country over the name of one who introduced the feudal system, the Game Laws, and other evils, the escape

from which has been the work of many centuries. Though a natural son, he was an unnatural father, and the result was, that being an indifferent parent, his children became also indifferent. He had a violent temper, and was such a brutal glutton that he aimed a blow at Fitz-Osborne, his steward, for sending to table an under-done crane, when Odo interfered to check his master's violence. Of his personal appearance we have an authentic record in a statue placed against one of the pillars of the church of St. Stephen, at Caen; but as the figure is without a head, we have tried in vain to form from it some idea of the Conqueror's countenance. From the absence of the face in the statue we can only infer that William wore an expression of vacancy.

CHAPTER THE SECOND. WILLIAM RUFUS.



WILLIAM, the son of the Conqueror, had obtained the nick-name of Rufus, from his red hair, and these jokes on personal peculiarities afford a lamentable proof of the rudeness

of our ancestors. Having left his father at the point of death, he hastened to England, where he pretended to be acting for the king; resorting to what, in puffing phraseology, is termed the untradesmanlike artifice of "It's the same concern," and doing business for himself in the name of the late sovereign. One of his first steps was, of course, towards the treasury, from which he drew sixty thousand pounds in gold and silver. Having received from his father a letter of introduction to Archbishop Lanfranc, he rushed, with the avidity of a man who has got a reference to a new tailor, and presenting it to the primate, requested that measures might be taken for putting the crown on his head as soon as possible. Lanfranc, having secured the place of Prime Minister for himself, issued cards to a few prelates and barons, inviting them to a coronation on Sunday, the 26th of September, 1087, when the event came off rather quietly.

When Curt-hose—whom the reader will recognise as our old friend Socks—first heard of his father's death, he was living on that limited but rather elastic income, his wits, at Abbeville, or in some part of Germany. He, however, repaired to Rouen, where he was very well received; while Henry, the youngest brother, stood like a donkey between two bundles of hay, not knowing whether he should have a bite at Britain or a nibble at Normandy.

Rufus had, at the commencement of his reign, to contend with a conspiracy got up by his uncle Odo, to place Robert on the throne of England as well as on that of Normandy; for the great experiment of sitting on two stools at once had not then been sufficiently carried out to prove the folly of attempting it, Odo took rapid strides, but as Robert, if he took any stride at all, must have attempted one from Rouen to Rochester, he remained in his Duchy, leaving his followers to follow their own inclination at their own convenience. They had fortified Rochester Castle, but being besieged, and a famine threatening, they were glad to find a loophole for escape, which they effected by capitulating on certain conditions, one of which, proposed by Odo, was a stipulation that

the band should not play as the vanquished party left the Castle. Rufus, feeling that a procession without music would go off flatly, refused his assent to this proposal, and the band accordingly struck up an appropriate air at each incident. As Odo left the Castle the "Rogue's March" resounded from tower to tower and battlement to battlement, while the people sang snatches of popular airs, among which "Go, Naughty Man," and "Down among the Dead Men," were perhaps the greatest favourites. Odo was eventually banished, and the insurrection was at an end, for Curt-hose had neither the money nor the inclination to carry on the war; and, like a defunct railway scheme, the plan took its place amongst the list of abandoned projects. In the year 1088 Lanfranc, the king's adviser, died, and was



succeeded by a Norman clergyman, named Ralph, who was called also Le Flambarde, or the Torch, from his being a political incendiary, who had been ever ready to light up the flame of discontent at a moment's notice. His nominal offices were treasurer and chaplain, but his real duty was to raise money for the king, extort for his majesty a large income, and help

him to live up to it. As a taxgatherer and a bon vivant he was unexceptionable; but we regret that we cannot say so much for him as a bishop and a gentleman.

This person, however, succeeded only to the political, not to the ecclesiastical dignities of Odo; for the king, finding the revenues of Canterbury very acceptable, determined on acting as his own archbishop. He professed a desire to improve the see by using his own eyes, but his real view was to get all he could for the indulgence of his pleasures. Ralph le Flambard seems to have possessed the talent of extortion to a wonderful degree, and he even set at nought the proverb as to the impossibility of making "a silk purse out of a sow's ear;" for he certainly extracted immense sums by getting hold of the ear of the swinish multitude.



William Rufus, having been successful against the friends of Robert in England, determined (a.d. 1089) on attacking the unfortunate and improvident Curt-hose on his own ground in Normandy. Socks had no money to carry on the war, for he had not only cleared out his coffers to the last farthing, but was up to his neck in promises which he never could hope to realise. His bills were flying like waste-paper about every Exchange in Europe, and the boldest discounters shook their heads when a

document with the familiar words "Accepted, R. Curt-hose," was shown to them. He applied, therefore, for aid to the king of the French, his feudal superior, who sent an army to the confines of Normandy, but sent a messenger at the same time to the English king, stating the terms on which the army might be bought off and induced to march back again.

Rufus willingly paid the money, and Socks, in a fit of desperation, applied to his brother Henry, who had already lent him three thousand pounds, taking care, however, to get a third of the duchy by way of security for his money. He accordingly came to Rouen, where he put down a large sum of money: and what was better still, he put down a conspiracy to deliver up the city to the enemy. One Conan, a burgess, who was to have handed over the keys, was condemned to imprisonment for life; but Henry taking him up to the top of a tower under the pretence of showing him the scenery, brutally threw him over. The unhappy captive was beginning to expatiate on the softness of the landscape below, when Henry, seizing him by the waist, savagely recommended him to test the reality of so much apparent softness, by throwing himself on the kind indulgence which the verdant landscape appeared to offer him. The burgess had no time to reply, before he found himself half-way on his down journey.

It is difficult in these days to fancy the brother of the sovereign visiting a condemned culprit in his prison, and taking a walk with him up to the top of the building, to point out to him the beauties of the surrounding prospect. That the royal visitor should suddenly turn executioner in the most barbarous manner, is still more unaccountable. Henry must surely have received a large quantity of the burgess's sauce before he could have been provoked to an act which redounds so much to his discredit in the pages of history.

In the year 1091, William and Robert settled their differences, after which they began to take advantage of their little brother Henry, whom they robbed of everything he possessed, until his

suite was reduced to one knight, three esquires, and one chaplain. His flight was a series of rapid movements, to which this miserable quintette formed a kind of running accompaniment; but Henry, in spite of every contretemps, behaved himself with dignity as the leader and conductor of his little band.

Rufus, on his return to England, found it overrun by Malcolm, the Scotch king, who, however, made a regular Scotch mull of his enterprise. After a peace as hollow as the “hollow beech tree” which the woodpecker keeps continually on tap, poor Malcolm was invited to Gloucester, where he fell into an ambush—a bush in which he was tom to pieces by the sharp thorns of treachery. Duke Robert having made repeated applications to his brother, William Rufus, for the settlement of his claims upon England, at length put the matter into the hands of his solicitor, Philip of France; who, after soliciting justice for Curt-hose, marched an army into Normandy. Rufus, knowing costs to be the only motive of Philip, who, on being handsomely paid, would certainly throw his client overboard, determined on raising a large sum; which he accomplished by levying twenty thousand men as soldiers, and allowing them to buy their discharge at ten shillings a head, an arrangement which nearly all of them gladly fell into. The proceeds of this transaction being handed over to Philip, that monarch shifted his forces from Normandy, leaving Robert to shift for himself; so that poor Socks was again driven to the most wretched extremities.

Rufus was now troubled by the Welsh, who had overrun Cheshire, probably on account of its cheeses, for the Welsh were attached to their rabbits even so early as the eleventh century. The Red King pursued them over hill and dale, but they daily obtained advantages over him, and on reaching Snowdon he saw that it would be the height of folly to proceed further. After a few ups and downs over the mountains, he retreated with shame, and found occupation at home, a.d. 1094—5, in quelling a conspiracy headed by Robert de Mowbray, Earl of Northumberland, aided by Richard

de Tunbridge, with a variety of Johns, Williams, and Thomases de What-d'ye-call-'em and So-and-So. Some of the conspirators were imprisoned, and some hanged; but a few, in anticipation of the fatal bolt, ran away for the purpose of avoiding it.

Immediately after these events, Robert, roused by the preaching of Peter the Hermit, familiarly known as Pietro L'Eremita, determined on giving up business as Duke of Normandy and starting as a crusader for Palestine. In order to raise money for his travelling expenses, and after having vainly entreated discount for his bills, he proposed to sell his dukedom to his brother for ten thousand pounds, including the good-will of the house of Normandy, the crown, which was not a fixture, the throne with its appropriate hangings, the sceptre the sign of royalty, and all the palace furniture. The unscrupulous Rufus agreed to purchase, but being without a penny of his own, he made a demand on the empty pockets of his subjects.

Several bishops and abbots having already sold all the treasures of their churches, told the king in plain terms they had nothing more to give him, when the sovereign replied, "Have you not, I beseech you, coffins of gold and silver full of dead men's bones?" thus insinuating, according to Holinshed, "that he would have the money out of their bones if they did not pay him otherwise." The bishops and abbots were induced to take the hint of the king; and the term "boning" may have had its origin from this species of robbery.

Having paid the ten thousand pounds, Rufus went to take possession of his new purchase, and met with no resistance except from one Helie, Lord of La Flèche, who professed to have a previous mortgage on part of the property. Rufus treated him as a mortgagee so far as to pay him off in the current coin of the age, though a year or two after (a.d. 1100) as the Bed King was hunting in the New Forest, he heard that Helie had surprised the town of Mans, and of course astonished the men of Mans very unpleasantly.

William turned his horse's head towards the nearest seaport,

which happened to be Dartmouth, plunged into the first vessel he found there, and ordered the sailors to start at once for Normandy. The crew suggested that it was a very odd start to think of setting off in a gale of wind; but his majesty began to storm with as much violence as the elements. He asked—if they ever knew of a king being drowned?—and if the adage applies to those who deserve hanging as well as to those who are born for that ceremony, Rufus might have relied on exemption from a watery terminus. He arrived safely at Harfleur, after one of the most boisterous passages in his life, which was one of considerable turbulence. The bare news of his arrival sufficed to frighten Helie, who first ordered his troops to fall in, and immediately ordered them to fall out, for he had no further use for them. Helie took to his heels, and William became sole master of Normandy. We now come to one of the most remarkable incidents in English history, and in our desire for accuracy we have grubbed about the records of the past with untiring energy. We have blown away the dust of ages with the bellows of research, and have, we think, succeeded in investing this portion of our annals with a plainness of which the very pike-staff itself might be fairly envious.

It was on the 1st of August, in the year 1100, that William was passing the night at Malwood Keep, a hunting-lodge in the New Forest. Had there been a Court Circular in existence in those days, it would have recorded the names of Henry, the king's brother, and a host of sporting fashionables who were present, to share the pleasures of their sovereign. His majesty was heard at midnight to be talking loudly in his sleep, and his light having gone out, he was crying lustily for candles. His attendants rushed to his room, and found him kicking and plunging under a nightmare, from which he was soon released, when he requested them to sit and talk to him. When their jokes were on the point of sending him to sleep, their songs kept him awake: and in the morning an artisan sent him six arrows as a specimen, with an intimation that there would be a large reduction on his taking a

whole quiver. The king took the half-dozen on trial, keeping four for himself, and giving two to Sir Walter Tyrrel, with a complimentary remark that “good weapons are due to the sportsman that knows how to make a good use of them.”

During a boisterous *déjeûner d la fourchette*, at which the Red King greatly increased his rubicundity by the quantity of wine he consumed, a postman arrived with a dream, from the Abbot of St. Peter’s, at Gloucester, done up in an envelope. “Read it out,” exclaimed Rufus, after having glanced at its contents; and on its being found to forbode a violent death to the king, he ordered a hundred pence to be given to the dreamer, which, supposing him to have been taking “forty winks,” would have been at the liberal rate of twopence-halfpenny a wink for his



rather disagreeable doze over the destiny of his sovereign. Rufus laughed at the prediction, and repaired to the chase, accompanied by Sir Walter Tyrrel, when a hart, in all its heart’s simplicity, came and stood between the illustrious sportsmen. The extraordinary hilarity of the bounding hart attracted the attention of Rufus, who drew his bow, but the string broke, and

Rufus not having two strings to his bow, called out to Tyrrel to shoot at the bald-faced brute for his bare-faced impudence. Sir Walter instantly obeyed; but the animal, bobbing down his head, allowed the arrow to go through his own branches towards those of a huge tree, when the dart, taking a somewhat circuitous route, avoided the body of the hart and went home to the heart of the sovereign. Tyrrel ran towards his master, and attempted to revive him; but though there was plenty of harts-horn in the forest, none could be made available. The unfortunate regicide, merely muttering to himself some incoherent expressions as to his having “done it now,” galloped to the sea coast, and tied to France taking French leave of his country, according to the usual custom of malefactors.



The royal remains were picked up soon after by one Mr. Purkess, a respectable charcoal-burner, whose descendants still reside upon the spot, and who carted Henry off on his own responsibility to Winchester, where the king was honoured by a decent funeral. Though there were plenty of lookers-on, there were very few mourners; and in a portrait of the tomb which has been preserved, we recognise

economy as the most prominent feature. Henry, the king's brother, made the usual rush to the treasury, where he filled his pockets with all the available assets; and the members of the hunting party, finding that the game was up, started off as fast as they could in pursuit of their own interests.

The tomb still stands in the middle of the choir of Winchester Cathedral. The character of Rufus is not one which the loyal historian will love to dwell upon. The philologist may endeavour to prove the brutal licentiousness of the king by deriving from Rufus the word ruffian; but the philologist will, however, be as much in error as the antiquarian who declared that Rufus, or Roofus, was so called from his being the builder of Westminster Hall, of which the roof was the most conspicuous ornament.

The Red King died a bachelor, at the age of forty-three, after a very extravagant life, in the course of which he exhibited strong symptoms of the royal complaint—which shows itself in a mania for constructing and altering palaces. He would erect new staircases, and indulge in the most extravagant flights; but if this had been accompanied by a few steps taken in the right direction, Posterity would not have judged very harshly what are, after all, the mere whims of royalty.

CHAPTER THE THIRD.

HENRY THE FIRST, SURNAMED BEAUCLERC.



ON returning to Henry, we find him at the porter's lodge, imperiously demanding the keys of the treasury. While he had just succeeded, by alternate bribery and bluster, in obtaining the desired bunch from the hesitating janitor, William de Breteuil, the treasurer, came running out of breath, and protested, as

energetically as the state of his wind would allow, against the money being carried away, when Robert, the elder brother, had a prior right to it. Henry, having tried a little argument, of which he got decidedly the worst, suddenly drew his sword, and threatened to perforate the treasurer, or any one else who should oppose his progress. A mob of barons having collected round the disputants, took part with the new king, in expectation, no doubt, of getting a share of the plunder. William de Breteuil was compelled therefore to look on at the pocketing of the cash and jewels by Henry and his supporters, the treasurer occasionally entering a protest by mildly observing "Mind, I've nothing to do

with it.” Having made use of the cash in buying the adherence of some of those mercenary weathercocks—from whom it is considered an honour, in these days, to be descended—Henry got himself crowned on the 5th of August, in the year 1100, at Westminster. Finding his throne rather rickety, he tried a little of the “soft sawder” which has always been found serviceable as a cement between the sovereign and the people. He mixed up a tolerably useful compound in the shape of a charter of liberties, and by laying it on rather thick to the Church, he obtained the support of that influential body. He restored ancient rights, and promised that when he had to draw money from his people he would always draw it as mild as possible.

Henry’s next “dodge” was to try the effect of an English marriage, and he therefore sent in a sealed tender for the hand of Miss Matilda Malcolm, or Maud, the daughter of the king of Scots, as she is commonly called in history. She had already refused as many offers as would have filled a moderate-sized bonnet-boxy and sent word back that she was “o’er young to marry yet,” in answer to the application of the English sovereign. She was, however, advised that it would be a capital thing for the two countries, if she would consent to the match; and as it is one of the penalties of royalty to wed for patriotism instead of from choice, she was soon persuaded to agree to the union.

Such instances of devotion are, however, only found among royal families; for we doubt whether a fair Jemima Jenkins, or a bewitching Beatina Brown, would consent to become the wife of young Johnson in an adjacent street, for the sake of healing a parochial feud, or curing the heartburn of an entire neighbourhood. The marriage between Maud and Henry was very nearly being prevented by a report that the young lady had formerly been a nun; but it was proved that her aunt had been in the habit of throwing over her head something in the shape of a veil or a pinafore, to prevent the Normans from staring at her when she went out walking. Miss Matilda had the candour to ac-

knowledge that she always took off the unbecoming covering directly she got a little way from home, and it is evident she was not unwilling to have a sly peep at the Normans, when her aunt was not watching her. Her marriage was celebrated on the 11th of November; but Anselm, the Archbishop of Canterbury, who officiated, came out of the Abbey before the ceremony, and in order to answer all false reports, stuck an enormous poster on the door, intimating that Maud was "No Nun," in tremendous capitals. Henry also obtained some popularity by expelling all the improper characters that his brother had patronised; but it does not seem that they were replaced by persons of a much more reputable order. Henry, however, affecting the estimable qualities of a new broom, began by sweeping clean, and scavenged the court of all his brother's minions.

Ralph le Flambard, the late king's tax-gatherer, was sent to the Tower, where he became one of the lions of the place, and by his wit captivated the keepers who were charged with his captivity. Henry on being urged to get rid of him, happened to say accidentally, "No, no, give the fellow sufficient rope and he will hang himself," upon which one of the courtiers taking his majesty at his word, sent an enormous quantity of stout cord to the prisoner. Flambard having reduced the guards to the state in which tipplers wish to be who love their bottles, took the rope, and hanging himself by the waist, lowered himself into the moat beneath, from which he escaped to Normandy.

Robert Curt-hose, who had turned crusader a year or two before, came back (a.d. 1101) with a perfect shrubbery of laurels from Palestine. The Normans, delighted at seeing their chief smothered in the evergreens of glory, were easily persuaded to join him in an attack upon England. The followers of Curt-hose, however, soon began to waver, and after having received several terrific stripes, their leader agreed to take 3000 marks, by way of annuity, as a compromise for all his claims upon England. Robert was true to his part of the engagement, but Henry,

under various pretexts, soon discontinued his payments to Socks, who nevertheless lived in a style of great extravagance. He filled his court with bad characters, who not only emptied his pockets, but sold or pawned his clothes; and he is represented as often lying in bed for want of the necessary articles of attire to enable him to get up to breakfast. With the crown on his toilet table, and the regal robe hanging across the back of a chair—for these insignia of royalty were always left to him—he was still without the minor but indispensable articles of dress; and he often observed to his minister, “I can’t very well go about with nothing on but that scanty robe and that hollow bauble.” We can imagine him being reduced to the necessity of offering to pledge his crown, and being met by the depreciatory observation, “that the article was second-hand, had been a good deal worn, and seemed very much tarnished.” At length, in the year 1105, Henry, taking advantage of Robert’s reduced circumstances, made an attack upon Normandy. The troops of Curt-hose were ill-paid, ill-clad, ill-conditioned, and ill-tempered. In vain did Curt-hose attempt to rally them; for they only rallied him on his poverty, and many of them deserted, leaving him to fight his own battles. His personal valour served him for a short time; he struck out right and left with enormous vigour, but his almost solitary efforts became at length absolutely absurd, and he was ultimately “removed in custody.” He was subsequently committed to Cardiff Castle, where he died, in the year 1134, at the advanced age of nearly eighty; and it was said by a wag of the day, that Curt-hose had such a facility of running into debt that he ran up four scores with Time before the debt of Nature was satisfied. Henry was now master of Normandy, whither he on one occasion took his son and heir, William, a lad of eighteen, to receive the homage of the barons. This was an idle ceremony, for the barons seldom kept their words; and homage, or hummage, was frequently a mere hum on the part of those who



promised it. The English king was about returning from the port of Barfleur, when Thomas Fitz-Stephen, a sailor, originated the disgraceful touting system, by thrusting his card into Henry's hands, and offering to take the royal party over cheap, in a well-appointed vessel. His majesty replied, "I have already taken my own passage in another ship, but the prince and his suite have to be conveyed, and I shall be happy to hear what you will undertake it for, per head, provisions, of course, included." The terms were soon arranged, and the dangerous practice of overcrowding having, even at that time, prevailed among mercenary speculators, three hundred people were packed into a craft which might have comfortably accommodated about twenty. The prince and his gay companions insisted on having a party on board the night previous to starting, and the crew, as well as the captain, were more than half-seas-over before they started from the shore of Normandy. Fitz-Stephen was in such a state at the wheel, that it seemed to him continually turning round, and the men employed in looking-out thought the Bas de Catte—a well-known rock—had been doubled, when in fact the vessel was driving rapidly on to it. This recklessness soon led to a wreck, and the sole survivor was one

Berold, a butcher of Rouen, who has reported the catastrophe with so much accurate minuteness as to have deserved, though he never got it until now, the proud title of the father of the penny-a-liners. When Henry heard the news he fainted away, and never “smiled as he was wont to smile” from that day to the present. Being deprived of his only legitimate son, he became anxious to secure the throne to his daughter, the widow Maud, or Matilda, relict of the Emperor Henry the Fifth; and on Christmas-day, 1126, the bishops, abbots and barons were assembled at Windsor Castle to swear to maintain her succession. These parties—the respectable families that “came in with the Conqueror”—were all guilty of the grossest perjury; which, a few years ago, would have rendered them all liable to the pillory, and would in the present day expose them to serious punishment. A quarrel arose between Stephen, Earl of Boulogne, the king’s legitimate nephew, and Robert, Earl of Gloucester, his illegitimate son, as to which was entitled to swear first; the real object being to decide which, upon breaking their oaths as they both fully intended to do—would take precedence as the successor of Henry. After a good deal of desultory discussion, a division settled the point in the nephew’s favour. Anxious to see his daughter settled in life, Henry got her married, rather against her will, to Geoffrey, Earl of Anjou; who, from an odd custom he had of wearing a piece of broom in his cap, instead of a feather, acquired the nickname of Plantagenet. The marriage was celebrated at Rouen, and Henry issued a proclamation ordering everybody to be merry. Long faces were thus entirely prohibited, there was a penalty on black looks, and persons unable to laugh on the right side of their mouths were made to laugh upon the other. Some anxiety was, however, occasioned to Henry by the existence of his nephew, William Fitz-Robert, the son of Curt-hose, who had pretensions to the throne through Matilda, his grandmother, which of course gave him a claim on the friendship of the

house of Baldwin, between whom and the grandmother there was a close relationship. The apprehensions of Henry were aroused by William Fitz-Henry being made Earl of Flanders, but the young man was unfortunately killed by receiving a poke from a pike; and though the wound was only in the finger, it grew worse from being placed in the hands of ignorant practitioners. Finding it did not get better, he observed that it was "really very mortifying," and so it was, for mortification ensued almost immediately.

He died at St. Omer, on the 27th of July, 1128, in the twenty-sixth year of his age; and if his epitaph had been written, it would have run thus: "Here lies a young prince, whose life was cut short By medical quacks overturning the sand of it; His finger was wounded, but who could have thought The doctors would make such a very bad hand of it?"

Henry's latter days were employed in listening to the quarrels of his daughter, Matilda, and her husband, who were never out of pickles, by reason of their family jars, which were very numerous. The king had resided four years abroad, and had been hunting, on the 25th of November, for the purpose of chasing sorrow as well as the game, when, on his return home, he insisted on eating a lamprey, against the orders of his physicians. The king did not agree with the doctors, and the lamprey did not agree with the king, who died on the 1st of December, 1135, at the age of sixty-seven.

Henry's chief merit was his love of learning, which had got him the name of Beau-clerc, or the pretty scholar. He loved the society of men of letters, and of wild beasts; but the literary lions were, perhaps, his greatest favourites. He nevertheless desired that these lions should only roar in his praise; for he punished Luke de Barré, a poet, very severely for having written some satirical verses, in which the king was made a laughing-stock. The poet, according to Orderic, burst from the executioners and dashed out his brains, which had been the cause of giving offence to his sovereign.

CHAPTER THE FOURTH.

STEPHEN.

IF the oaths of the bishops and barons had been worth even the ink expended in alluding to them, there might have been some chance of Matilda coming quietly to the throne on the death of Henry. The Anglo-Normans, however, had as little respect for truth as for property, and were even destitute of the humbler virtue of gallantry towards the fair, for they began to clamour loudly against the notion of a woman reigning over them.

Stephen, the late king's nephew, and Robert, Earl of Gloucester, the illegitimate son of Henry, were the two favourites in the race for the throne; but the betting was at least ten to one upon the former, in consequence of his having married Maud, the daughter and heir of Eustace, Count of Boulogne.

On the arrival of Stephen in England, he made at once for the treasury, which he cleared completely out, and he devoted the proceeds to purchasing the fidelity, or rather the mercenary adherence, of the barons, prelates, and people. Having bribed a sufficiently numerous party, he procured a decent attendance at his coronation, which took place on St. Stephen's day, December 22, 1135, at Westminster. He sent a good round sum to the pope, Innocent the Second, whose innocence seems to have been chiefly nominal, for he was guilty of accepting a bribe to give a testimonial in favour of Stephen's title. As long as the money lasted the barons were tolerably faithful; but "no plunder no allegiance" was the ordinary motto of the founders of those families whose present representatives trace themselves up, or rather bring themselves down, to the days of the Conquest.

The Norman nobles complained that their perjury had not had its price, and began seizing various castles belonging to Stephen, who, by purchasing the services of other mercenaries, got his property back again. At length, however, a coalition was

effected between Robert, Earl of Gloucester, and Matilda, his half-sister, who landed in England on the 1st of September, 1139, with a retinue of one hundred and forty knights, an empty purse, and very little credit. Several Normans ran to meet Matilda on her arrival; but these high-minded founders of our very first families, hearing that there was no cash, returned to the side of Stephen.

Matilda went on a visit to the Queen Dowager, Adelais, or Alice, at Arundel Castle, which was besieged by the king, who, however, respected the property on account of its owner, and sent Matilda in safety to join her half-brother Robert, at Bristol, whither he had gone with twelve followers in search of Bristol board—and lodging. Stephen, having exhausted the materials for making the golden links which had hitherto bound the Normans to his side, found them rapidly adhering to Matilda, whose expectations were not bad, though her present means were limited. On the 2nd of February, 1141, the king was besieging Lincoln when the whole of his cavalry wheeled round to the side of the enemy. Relying on his infantry, he put himself at their head, but treachery was on foot as well as on horseback. He nevertheless fought desperately, breaking his sword and battle-axe over the backs of his foes, till he was left fighting with the hilt of one weapon and the handle of the other. Having lost the use of his arms, he was surrounded by the enemy, but he continued alive and kicking till the last, when he was taken prisoner. He was cruelly thrown into a dungeon at Bristol, and in order that his muscular activity might be checked, he was loaded with irons. He still retained his cheerfulness, and may probably have been the original composer of the celebrated “hornpipe in fetters,” which is occasionally danced by dramatic prisoners.

Matilda now scraped together all the money she could, to purchase that very marketable commodity, the allegiance of the Norman nobles and prelates.

Among the latter was Stephen’s own brother, the Bishop of Winchester, who renounced his unfortunate relative, swore fi



delity to Matilda, cursed all her enemies, and, as the price of all this swearing and cursing, received a large amount of church patronage. Not only did he crown his new mistress at Winchester, but he crowned his own baseness by a slashing speech against his own brother, winding up with a fulsome puff for the new queen, whom he hailed as “the sovereign lady of England and Normandy.” Matilda was by no means successful in handling the sceptre, which required a stronger arm and more dexterity than she was mistress of. The Londoners, in particular, showed symptoms of revolt, and the Bishop of Winchester having got all he could from the queen, turned round once more in favour of his brother. This episcopal roundabout was the first to set the example, so frequently followed in the present day, of blocking up the city; and it is an odd fact that paving was his pretext, for he stopped up the London thoroughfares in order to pave the way for the return of his brother to power.

Matilda, who was in town—probably for the season—contrived to make her escape by the western suburb, with a small retinue. Some of her knights quitted her at the bridge which still retains their name; an earl or two followed her as far as Earl’s Court; some turned off at Turaham Green; but by the time she had reached the little Wick of Chis, her party had dwindled down

into absolute insignificance. Her brother Robert was taken prisoner, and Stephen being also in captivity, the two parties were brought to a deadlock for want of leaders. By negotiating a sort of Bill of Exchange, Robert was released, and Stephen was paid over, in the shape of "value received," to his own party.



The Bishop of Winchester, who appears to have been an exceedingly plausible mob orator, now made another speech, in which he showed a wonderful amount of face by regularly turning his back upon himself, and unsaying all that he had said in favour of Maud, and against his brother on a former occasion. He swore and cursed as before, merely altering the name of the objects of his oaths and execrations, for he now swore allegiance to his brother instead of to Maud, and cursed the former's, instead of the latter's enemies.

Stephen was accordingly raised, by the crane of circumstances, from the depth of his dungeon, and lifted on to his throne; but he found a new rival in the person of Matilda's son, Prince Henry, so that he had now a woman and a boy, instead of a mere woman to fight against. Henry, in a spirit of calculation far beyond his years, married Eleanor, the divorced wife of Louis the Seventh; but it was only for the sake of her money, which he expended in getting together an army for an attack upon England. The opposing forces met, but having already received their pay, they evinced a disposition to shirk their duty, and—

like gentlemen of the bar, who having got their fees, propose that the matter should be referred to arbitration—the soldiers of Stephen and Henry recommended a quiet compromise.

Theobald, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Stephen, Bishop of Winchester, were appointed referees, and it was agreed that Stephen should wear the crown with remainder over to Henry. A good deal of homage was interchanged, for Henry swore fealty to Stephen, and the son of the latter swore ditto to Henry. The king in fact cut off his own tail for the benefit of his former enemy, and Henry took a kind of post obit as a consideration for his not pressing his claims to abbots, also exchanged affidavits, and swore in direct opposition to what they had sworn before, making altogether a mass of perjury that would have kept the Central Criminal Court occupied for half-a-dozen entire sessions. Stephen, however, died at Dover, on the 25th of October, 1154, so that he did not live long under the new arrangement.

The historian often finds himself awkwardly situated when called upon to give a character to a king, and there being a natural objection to written characters, the difficulty is greater on that account. It maybe said for Stephen, that he was sober and industrious, tolerably honest, not addicted to gluttony, or given to drink like many of his predecessors, and of course, therefore not so much accustomed to wait at table. He had a pleasing manner, and a good address, except while confined in prison, when his address was none of the pleasanter. On the whole, when we look at him as the paid servant of the public, we think him ill adapted for a steward, since England was always in confusion while under his care; and as a coachman he was even worse, for he was quite unfitted to hold the reins of power.