

CHAPTER THE FIFTH. HENRY THE SECOND, SURNAMED PLANTAGENET.



ENRY, who was amusing himself with besieging a castle in Normandy when he heard of Stephen's death, soon repaired to England with his middle-aged wife, Eleanor.

They were crowned on the 19th of December, 1154; but he had no sooner got the crown on his head, than he went to business, and commenced a series of sweeping reforms.

Finding the coinage reduced to a state of almost unutterable baseness, he issued a good supply of new money, and thus gave a fearful smash to the smashers. He drove out a quantity of foreign scamps, who had been made earls and barons in the reign of Stephen. After having enjoyed the fee-simple of castles and estates, they were sent back to take possession of the plough in tail, and to till as serfs the earth's surface. Finding the royal income very much reduced, Henry restored it by taking back what his predecessors had given away; an operation he performed with so much impartiality, that he deprived his friends and his foes indiscriminately of all their possessions.



The policy of Henry the Second, on coming to the throne, seems to have differed from that of most of his predecessors; for while they had usually bought the allegiance of all the knaves and rogues about the court, he preferred the less costly process of rendering them perfectly powerless. He demolished many of the castles which had been erected by the barons, as fences rather than defences, for they were little better than receptacles for stolen property. Nor was he less vigorous in his measures against the clergy, for, like a skilful chess-player, he felt that it is better for the king that the bishops and the castles should be got out of the way when they are likely to prove troublesome. So far, therefore, from encouraging the exactions of the priesthood, he seems to have kept a supply of industrious fleas, for the purpose of putting one now and then into the ear of such of the clergy as came to make unreasonable requests to him. It is said that, on one occasion, the prior and monks of St. Swithin's threw themselves prostrate before the king imploring his protection against the Bishop of Winchester, who had cut off three meals a day from the ravenous fraternity. Henry perceiving that the monks were in tolerable condition, inquired how many meals were still left to them. "Only ten!" roared the prior, in recitative, while the rest of the party took up the words in dismal chorus.

How they could have contrived to demolish thirteen meals a day is an enigma to us; but the fact is a wondrous proof of monkish ingenuity. In the days of ignorance all classes were prepared, no doubt, to swallow a great deal, but thirteen meals must have required a power of digestion and a force of appetite that throw into the shade even the aldermanic attainments of a more civilised period. Henry, who took nothing but his breakfast, dinner, and tea, was shocked and startled by the awful avowal of gluttony on the part of the monks of St. Swithin, whom he placed at once on a diet similar to his own, by reducing them to three meals per diem. It is probable that the monks crammed into three repasts the quantity they had consumed in thirteen, and thus eluded the force of the royal order.

By a rigorous determination to “stand no nonsense,” either with the clergy or the nobles, and by ordering the Flemish mercenaries of the army to the “right about,” Henry seemed to commence his reign under very encouraging auspices.

Not content with his successes at home, he sought to increase his influence abroad by taking Nantes, and he sent Thomas à Becket to Paris to bamboozle the French court, lest his encroachments should excite jealousy in that quarter, Thomas à Becket was the son of Mr. Gilbert à Becket, a respectable tradesman of the city of London; and as his appears to be the first mercantile name on record, we are justified in calling him the Father of British Commerce. The chronicles of the Times—and we are justified in relying on the united evidence of the Times and Chronicle—relate that Gilbert à Becket, in the way of business, followed the army to Palestine. What his business could have been we are unable to guess, but as it took him to the camp, he may perhaps have been a dealer in camp stools, or tent bedsteads. Mr. Gilbert à Becket unfortunately became a prisoner, and being sold to a rich Mussulman, fell in love with a young Mussul girl, his master’s daughter.

The affection was mutual, and the child of the Mussulman strained

every muscle, or, at all events, every nerve to effect the escape of Gilbert à Becket, who, in the hurry of his departure, forgot to take the lady away with him. It is not unlikely that he had got half-way to London before he missed the faithful girl, and it would then have been the height of imprudence to return for the purpose of repairing the oversight. His innamorata made the best of her way after him, and arriving in London, ran about the streets, exclaiming, "Gilbert! Gilbert!" thus acting as her own crier, instead of putting the matter into the hands of the regular bellman.

The fact of a young woman continually traversing the great metropolis with Gilbert in her mouth, soon reached the ears of Mr. à Becket, who found the female in distress and his own Saracen maid to be the same individual. One of those frantic recognitions occurred, in which a rapid dialogue of "No!" "Yes!" "It can't be!" "It is!" "My long-lost Sara—!" "My Gil—!" is spasmodically were through, and the couple having rushed into each other's arms, gone soon bound together by that firmest of locks familiarly known as wedlock. The fruit of their union was the celebrated Thomas, of whose career we are enabled from peculiar sources to furnish some interesting particulars.

Gilbert was determined to give his boy Tom a good education, and sent him to school at Merton Abbey, where a limited number of young gentlemen from three to eight were lodged, boarded, and birched—when necessary—at a moderate stipend. Young Tom was removed from Merton to a classical and commercial academy in London, which he quitted for Oxford, and he was ultimately sent to Paris to undergo the process of French polishing. While yet a young man, he got a situation in the office of the sheriff, and became, of course, a sheriff's officer; in which capacity he arrested, among other things, the attention of Theobald, Archbishop of Canterbury. His patron took young à Becket from the *ad captandum* pursuits in which he had been engaged, put him into the Church, gave him rapid preferment, and introduced him to the parties at the palace,

which had, in those days, sufficient accommodation for the family and friends of royalty. Mr. à Becket became chancellor of the kingdom, though he never held a brief, or had even been called to the bar; and he was appointed tutor to the Royal Family, in which office he no doubt had the assistance of the Usher of the Black Rod. Of course, with his multiplicity of offices and occupations, it may be presumed that Mr. à Becket made a very excellent thing of it. His house was a palace, he drank nothing but the best wine, employed none but the best tailors, and when he went to Paris he took four-and-twenty changes of apparel—which may, perhaps, have been after all nothing more than two dozen shirts so that he had a different costume for every hour of the day. In his progress through France he was preceded by two hundred and fifty boys, or charity children, singing national songs. These were followed by his dogs, in couples, who no doubt gave tongue, and made a sort of barking accompaniment to the music that went before.

Eight waggons came next, carrying his clothes and his crockery, his cooking apparatus, his bed and bedding, and his suite; when after a few led horses, some knights with their esquires, and some monkeys à cheval with a groom behind, on his knees, came à Becket himself and his familiar friends.

* His entry into a town was more like that of an equestrian troop about to establish a circus than that of the Chancellor of England travelling in his master's behalf. He lived on terms of the closest intimacy with the king, who made him Archbishop of Canterbury, but not until thirteen months after the death of Theobald the First, for Henry always kept a good appointment open as long as he could, that he might put the revenues into his own pocket.

Vide Fitz-Stephen, Secretary and Biographer of Thomas à Becket, From the time of his promotion to the see of Canterbury, à Becket became an altered man.

He cut his gay companions, discharged his chef de cuisine,

discontinued his dealings with his West-End tailor, and took to a kind of cheap blouse made of the coarsest sackcloth. He abandoned his sumptuous mode of living and drank water made unsavoury by herbs, victimising himself probably with cups of camomile tea, and copious doses of senna. But the most serious change in à Becket's conduct, was his altered behaviour to the king, whom he had previously backed in all his attacks on the Church revenues. The new archbishop stood up for all the privileges of the clergy, and a difference of opinion between à Becket and the king, as to the right to try a delinquent clergyman in the civil courts, led to the summoning of a council of nobles and prelates (a.d. 1164) at Clarendon. Some rules were drawn up, called the "Constitutions of Clarendon," which à Becket reluctantly agreed to sign; but Pope Alexander having rejected them, the archbishop withdrew his name from the list of subscribers.



Finding the vengeance of the king likely to prove too much for him, à Becket quitted the kingdom, and was very hospitably entertained during his stay on the Continent.

After an absence of about seven years, he returned in consequence of the king of France and others having persuaded Henry to make it up, though the reconciliation was never very

cordial. Though à Becket was received with shouts of approbation by the mob, he was greeted, on his arrival, with menacing signs and abusive language from the aristocracy.

There was a strong party against him at court, and one evening, at about tea-time, Henry and a few nobles were sitting round the palace fire, gossiping over the subject of à Becket's awful insolence. The king burst into a furious diatribe, stigmatising the archbishop as a beggar, and winding up with the suggestive observation that, "Not one of the cowards I nourish at my table—not one will deliver me from this turbulent priest." Four knights who were present took the royal hint, and gave the archbishop a call at his house in Canterbury, where

having seated themselves unceremoniously on the floor, they got to high words very speedily.

The archbishop refused to yield to low abuse, and went in the evening to vespers as usual. The feelings of the historian will not allow him to dwell much upon the dénouement of the drama in which à Becket had played the principal character. Suffice it to say, he was murdered in Canterbury Cathedral by four assassins, of whom Fitzurse—the son of a bear—was one, and Mireville, a name suggestive of mire and villainy was another. The two remaining butchers were Britto, of Saxon descent, a low fellow, familiarly termed the Brick, and Tracey, who is not worth the trouble of tracing.

When Henry heard of this dreadful deed, he went without his dinner for three days, during which period he shut himself up in his own room, and refused to be "at home" to anyone.

By way of diverting his melancholy, he determined on joining in an Irish row, and finding the chiefs of the five principalities into which Ireland was divided at cross purposes, he espoused the cause of Dermot Mc Murrough, who seems to have been what the Milesians would term the "biggest blackguard" amongst them. Henry gave him a letter authorising him to employ any of the subjects of

England that happened to be disengaged; and three ruined barons, with damaged reputations, chancing to be out of work in the neighbourhood of Bristol, were offered terms by Dermot. This precious trio consisted of two brothers, named Robert Fitz-Stephen and Maurice Fitz-Gerald, and Richard de Clare, Earl of Pembroke, surnamed Strongbow, though, as he was greatly addicted to falsehood, Longbow would have been a more appropriate name for him.

After talking the matter over for some time without any arrangement being come to, Strongbow cut the matter short by exclaiming, "I'll tell you what it is.

If I'm to fight for your kingdom, I must have it myself when you have done with it. You must make me your heir, and, as a security that you will perform your part of the agreement, I must marry your daughter.

"Dermot, though rather taken aback by this proposal, invited Strongbow to a quiet chop, over which the latter's terms were acceded to; and the ruined baron, feeling that it was "neck or nothing" with him, succeeded in making it "neck" by the ardour with which he entered into the contest. Though he set to work in the spring of the year, his vengeance was truly summary, and in a few months he had restored everything to Dermot, who happened conveniently to die, and Strongbow came in for all that he had been fighting for.

Henry having become jealous, Strongbow thought it good policy not to overshoot the mark, and came to England to offer allegiance. The king at first refused to see him, and on calling at Newnham, in Gloucestershire, where Henry was staying, he was kept for some time eating humble-pie in the passage with the hall-porter, Strongbow having been sufficiently bent by this treatment, was at length asked to step up, and it was arranged that he should accompany the king to Ireland, surrender his possessions, and consent to hold them as the vassal of the English sovereign.

On his return to England, Henry, who had four sons, began to find "the boys" exceedingly troublesome. Their mother, once

the middleaged, but now the ancient Eleanor, had grown cross as well as venerable; and being exceedingly jealous of her husband, encouraged his own sons to worry him. Her jealousy had become a perfect nuisance; and jealousy is unfortunately one of those nuisances which never get abated.

A story is told of a certain Fair Rosamond; and, though there is no doubt of its being a story from beginning to end, it is impossible to pass it over in an English History. Henry, it is alleged, was enamoured of a certain Miss Clifford—if she can be called a certain Miss Clifford, who was really a very doubtful character. She had been the daughter of a baron on the banks of the Wye, when, without a why or a wherefore, the king took her away, and transplanted the Flower of Hereford, as she well deserved to be called, to the Bower of Woodstock. In this Bower he constructed a labyrinth, something like the maze at Rosher-ville; and as there was no man stationed on an elevation in the centre to direct the sovereign with a pole which way to go, nor exclaim, “Right, if you please!” “Straight on!”

“You’re right now, sir!” “Left!” “Right again!” etc. etc., his majesty had adopted the plan of dragging one of Rosamond’s reels of silk along with him when he left the spot, so that it formed a guide to him on his way back again.

This tale of the silk is indeed a most precious piece of entanglement; but it was perhaps necessary for the winding up of the story. While we cannot receive it as part of the thread of history, we accept it as a means of accounting for Eleanor having got a clue to the retreat of Rosamond.

The queen, hearing of the silk, resolved naturally enough to unravel it.

She accordingly started for Woodstock one afternoon, and, suspecting something wrong, took a large bowl of poison in one hand, and a stout dagger in the other. Having found Fair Rosamond, she held the poignard to the heart, and the bowl to the lips of that unfortunate young person, who, it is said, preferred the black draught to the steel medicine.



That such a person as Fair Rosamond existed is perfectly true, for she was buried at Godstow, near Oxford. The sensitive heart, which is ever anxious to inundate the page of sorrow with a regular Niagara of tears, is however earnestly requested to turn off the rising supply from the main of pity, for it is agreed on all hands that the death of Rosamond was perfectly natural. It has been convenient for the ro-mancists to cut short her existence by drowning it in the bowl; but truth compels us to add, that there is no ground for such a conclusion.

Henry devoted the remainder of his life to quarrelling, first with one of his children, then the other, and every now and then with all of them. He fully intended to divide his possessions among them; but they most unreasonably required to be let into possession before the death of the governor. The eldest ran away to France, and Eleanor had actually put on male attire, with the intention of abandoning Henry, when, unfortunately for him, he was silly enough to have her imprisoned for the purpose of stopping her. "Why didn't you let her go?" was the frequent exclamation of his intimate friends to the king, and a melancholy "Ha! I wish I had," was the only reply he was able to make them. Finding himself threatened on all sides, and when he had

exhausted every other expedient, he resolved on trying what penitence could do for him. His conscience no doubt often reminded him of the murder of poor à Becket, to whose shrine the king determined on making a pilgrimage. Purchasing some split peas, he put about a pint in each of his stockings, and started for Canterbury, where he threw himself madly upon à Becket's tomb, sobbing, yelling and shrieking in the most pitiable manner. Nor was this enough, for he threw off his robe, and insisted on receiving the lash from about eighty ecclesiastics. Though they administered the punishment so lightly that the cat caused only a few scratches, the peculiar circumstances attending it cause it to stand out in history as par excellence "the great flogging case." The ecclesiastical authorities at Canterbury taking advantage of Henry's softened heart, which seems to have been accompanied by a sad softness of head, succeeded in extracting from him a promissory note to pay forty pounds a year for keeping lights constantly burning on the tomb of à Becket. There can be no doubt that the contract for lighting was taken cheaply enough by some tradesman of the town, and that the surplus went into the clerical coffers. Posterity regards with disgust the effrontery of the monks in making—for the sake of a few dips—such an enormous dip into the purse of the sovereign. From this time affairs began to mend; and it would seem that the whipping his majesty had suffered had whipped his misfortunes completely out of him. If the king had been an old carpet the beating he received could not have proved more beneficial than it did, for it seemed to revive the brighter colours of his existence. He employed the peace he now enjoyed in carrying out some political reforms, divided England into six circuits, so that Justice might be brought home to every man's door; though, like everything else that is brought home to one's door, it must be paid for—sometimes after a little credit, but sometimes on delivery. He abolished the criminal tariff, by which it had been allowable for the rich to commute their offences, ac-

ording to a certain scale of charges. Family quarrels unfortunately called him away from these wholesome pursuits, and his eldest son died of a fever brought on in consequence of a disagreement with his younger brother, Richard. Prince Henry expired on the 11th of June, 1183, in the twenty-seventh year of his age. Such was his remorse, that, according to Roger Hoveden, he insisted on his attendants tying a rope to his foot and taking him in tow, until they dragged him out of his bed, in order to deposit him on a bed of ashes. This particular desire to die in a dusthole was accompanied by a request for a reconciliation with his father, who sent a ring as a token of forgiveness, with a message that he hoped the invalid might come, like the ring, completely round.

On the death of their elder brother, Richard and Geoffrey still continued to show fight against their father; who at length got so much the worst of it, that he was obliged to make the best of it by coming to a compromise. By one of the conditions he was to pardon all the insurgent barons, and having called for a list of them, found at the bottom of it the name of his favourite son John. This was too much for the persecuted parent, who flew into a furious passion, which he vented in the customary manner of royalty at that period, by pouring out a volley of execrations with frightful fluency. He jumped on to his bed, and, falling back upon it, turned round to the wall, exclaiming "Now then, let everything go—— as it will." Several ministers, priests, bishops, prelates, and barons were in attendance, under pretence of receiving his last sigh, but really with the intention of robbing him of his last shilling, for they rifled his pockets directly life was extinct.

The reign of Henry, though not very comfortable to himself, was undoubtedly beneficial to his country. He introduced many improvements into the law, and was the first to levy a tax on the goods of nobles as well as commoners, for the service of the state. He died at the Castle of Chinon, near Saumur, on the 6th of July, 1189, in the fifty-sixth year of his age.

He left behind him a good name, which those who stole his

purse were fortunately not able to filch from him. His wife caused all the quarrels in his family, showing that a firebrand may grow out of a very bad match. Eleanor was indeed a female Lucifer, lighting up the flame of discord between parent and children, until death gave her husband the benefit of a divorce.

CHAPTER THE SIXTH. RICHARD THE FIRST, SURNAMED COUR DE LION.



RICHARD having secured the crown began to look after the cash, and pounced upon an unhappy old man named Stephen, of Tours, who had acted as treasurer to Henry the Second. The new king, not satisfied with cashiering the cashier, arrested him and threw him into prison, until he had given up not only all the late king's money, but had parted with every penny of his own, which was extracted in the shape of costs from the unfortunate victim. Richard, on arriving in England, made for Winchester, where the sovereigns were in the habit of keeping their plate and jewels, all of which were turned at once into ready money in

order to enable him to carry on the war, which he was very anxious to do, as a crusader in Palestine. It would seem that the treasury was regularly emptied at the commencement of every new reign, and filled again as speedily as possible by exactions on the people.

The coronation of Richard, which took place on the 3rd of September, 1189, was disgraced by an attack upon the Jews, who came to offer presents, which were eagerly received; but the donors were kicked out of Westminster Hall with the most ruthless violence. Nearly all the Jews in London were savagely murdered, all their houses were burnt and all their property stolen; when Richard issued a proclamation, in which he stated that he took them under his gracious protection: an act which would have been more gracious if it had come before instead of after the extermination of the ill-used Israelites.

How to go to Palestine was, however, the king's sole care; and to raise the funds for this trip he sold everything he possessed, as well as a great deal that rightfully belonged to others. He put up towns, castles, and fortresses to public auction, knocking down not only the property itself but those also who offered any remonstrance, or put in any claim to the goods he was disposing of. Such was his determination to clear off everything without reserve, that he swore he would put up London itself if he could find a bidder—an assertion that was very likely to put up the citizens. Some of the castles he sold two or three times over, leaving the purchasers to settle among themselves which should be the possessor of the property that had been paid for by every one of them. It is not unlikely that he caused glowing advertisements to be prepared, of "Little Paradises," standing "in their own fortifications;" and that he would have described a dead wall with a moat before it as "Elysium on a small scale," entrenched behind its own battlements.

There can be little doubt that he would also have dilated in glowing terms upon the wealth of the neighbourhood offering unlimited pillage to an enterprising purchaser.

Richard's presence-chamber was, according to Sir Francis Palgrave, a regular market-overt, in which prerogatives and bounties were to be purchased by any one coming with the money to pay for them. We can fancy a table laid out with a number of patents of nobility, labelled with a large ticket, announcing, "All these titles at an enormous sacrifice." We can imagine a row of velvet robes and coronets hanging up under a placard inscribed "Dukedoms at a considerable reduction;" while we can contemplate a quantity of knights' helmets lying in the window, marked at a very low figure, after the manner of the five thousand straw bonnets offered to the public by some dashing haberdasher at the commencement of the spring season. Richard even went so far as to announce the stock of vacant bishoprics as "selling off;" and it is not improbable that he may have caused tasteful arrangements of mitres and lawn sleeves to be arranged in different parts of the presence-chamber, to tempt the ambition of ecclesiastical purchasers. He likewise sold his own good-will for three thousand marks to his half-brother Geoffrey, who had been elected Archbishop of York; and wherever there was a penny to be turned, Richard had the knack of turning it.

Having left the regency in the hands of one Hugh Pudsey, the king repaired to France to meet Philip, who was to be his companion to Palestine. Their united forces amounted to a hundred thousand men; but Richard and Philip did not travel together farther than Lyons, and indeed it was as well they did not, for they were almost continually quarrelling. Numerous adventures befel Richard on his way; but the most awkward was his being dunned by the cardinal bishop of Ostia—where he had put in to repair—for a debt due to the see of Rome, on account of bulls and other papal articles.

Cour de Lion, instead of discharging the bill, abused and ill-treated the applicant, and made the best of his way to Naples, before there was time for ulterior proceedings. He went thence

to Sicily, where his quarrel with Philip was renewed, and the latter demanded an explanation of Richard's refusal to marry the princess Aliz, the French king's sister. Cour de Lion, who had really formed another attachment, excused himself by blackening the character of the lady to whom he had been engaged, and her chivalrous brother agreed to take two thousand marks a year, as a compromise for the breach of promise of marriage which Richard had committed. "Such," exclaims Hume—and well he may—"were the heroes of this pious enterprise, The Princess Aliz or Alice, having been regularly thrown overboard by the bargain between her own brother and her late lover, the latter was at liberty to follow his inclination by marrying Berengaria, daughter of the king of Navarre, with whom he had had a flirtation as early as during his residence at Guienne. Taking with him his latest affianced, he set sail for Palestine; but his ship being cast ashore at Cyprus, and plundered by the natives, he waited to chastise the people, and imprison an elderly person named Isaac, who called himself the emperor. He then ran off with the old man's only daughter, in addition to the princess of Navarre, whom he had the coolness to marry on the very spot from which he had seized this new addition to the female part of his establishment. The only reparation offered to the father was a set of silver fetters to wear instead of the common iron he had at first been thrown into, Richard at length arrived in Palestine, and was not long in getting to work against the forces of Saladin, who, leading forth his battalions, mounted on their real Jerusalem ponies, proved exceedingly harassing. Among the events of the crusade undertaken for the promotion of Christianity, on the side of the Lion Heart, his beheading of five thousand Turkish prisoners stands conspicuous. This act of barbarity arose out of some misunderstanding on the subject of a truce, and Saladin, by way of making matters square, slaughtered about an equal number of captive Christians. Such were the heroic defenders of the Cross on one side and the Crescent on the other. It is generally a libel to compare a human being to a brute, but in giving the title of Lion Heart to



Richard, the noble beast is the party scandalised.

It is surprising that the British lion has never cited this as one of his numerous grievances, for he would certainly have a capital action for defamation if he were to sue by his next friend or in forma pauperis for this malicious imputation on his noble character, On the 7th of September, 1191, the two chiefs came to a general engagement, near Azotus, about nine miles from Ascalon. Richard's prowess was tremendous; but, after himself, the most striking object was his battle-axe. This wondrous weapon had been forged in England by the very best Smiths, and there were twenty pounds of steel in the head, formed into a tremendous nob, which fell with fearful force on the nobs of his enemies. His battle-axe divided with him the attention of all beholders, and he divided the turbans of the foe with his battle-axe.

The weapons of the Crusaders were certainly better adapted for havoc than those of the Saracens, who seem to have fought with an instrument less calculated for milling men than for milling chocolate.

The armour of the knights was also more effective than that of their adversaries; for while the former had their heads comfortably secured in articles made on the

principle of rushlight shades, with holes for seeing and breathing through, the partisans of the Crescent wore little more upon their heads than might have been supplied by the folding of a sheet or tablecloth into the form of a turban. The result was that Baladin was compelled to fly, with a loss of seven thousand men and thirty-two emirs, which so diminished his stock of officers that he was almost reduced, according to an old chronicler, to his very last emir-gency.

Richard went on to Jaffa, where he was delayed by an artful proposition to negotiate until the rainy weather set in; and he had to start off during November, in the midst of incessant showers. The Crusaders got regularly soaked; and being caught in the middle of the plain of Sharon with no place, not even a doorway, they could stand up under, they tried to pitch a tent, which was instantly pitched down by the fury of the elements. Their arms became perfectly rusty, and their horses, not liking the wet, got rusty also. Their provisions were all turned into water souchet, and indeed the spirit of the Crusaders became weakened by excessive dilution in the pelting showers. The energies of Richard and his companions were of course considerably damped; but a positive inundation would scarcely have quenched the fire of chivalry. Cour de Lion retreated to Ascalon, the fortifications of which he found had been dismantled; but he worked to restore them like a common mason, mixing mortar on his shield for want of a hod, and using his axe as a substitute for a trowel. All the men of rank followed his example, except the Duke of Austria, who declared that he had not been brought up to it; upon which Cour de Lion kicked him literally through the breach in the fortification he had refused to repair, and turned him out of the town with all his vassals. After a most uncomfortable sojourn in Palestine, Richard opened a negotiation with Saladin; and the ardour of both having been rather cooled, a truce was concluded. It was to last three years, three months, three weeks, and three

days, the discussion on the subject occupying about three hours, the writing out the agreement three minutes, and the signing three seconds.

Taking advantage of the truce, Richard quitted Palestine for England; but sending the ladies home in a ship, he started to walk in the disguise of a pilgrim by way of Germany. Though his costume was humble his expenditure was lavish; and having sent a boy into the market-place of Vienna to buy some provisions, the splendid livery of the page, and his abundance of cash, excited suspicion as to the rank of his master. The secret of the Lion Heart was kept for some time by the faithful tiger, but he was at length forced into a confession, and Richard was arrested on the 20th of December, 1193, by the very Duke of Austria whom he had some time before kicked unceremoniously out of Ascalon.

The Emperor Henry the Sixth claimed the royal captive as a prize, and Richard was locked up in a German dungeon with German shutters, and fed alternately on German rolls and German sausages, while his enemies were doing their worst at home and abroad to deprive him of his sovereignty.



There is a legend attached to the incident of Richard's captivity: which has the slight disadvantage of being altogether fabulous,

and We therefore insert it—under protest—in the pages of our faithful history. The story runs that the Lion Heart, who was fond of music, and had a tolerable voice, used to amuse himself and his gaolers by singing some of the most popular ballads of the period. It happened that Blondel, one of his favourite minstrels, of whom he had probably taken lessons in happier hours, was on an ambulatory tour, for professional purposes, when he chanced to tune his clarionet and clear his throat, with the intention of “striking up” under the walls of Richard’s prison. At that moment the Lion Heart had just been called upon for a song, and his voice issued in a large octavo volume from the window of his dungeon. The tones seemed familiar to the minstrel, but when there came a tremendous trill on the low G, followed by a succession of roulades on A flat, with an abrupt modulation from the minor to the major key, Professor Blondel instantly recognised the voice of his royal pupil. The wandering minstrel, without waiting for the song to terminate, broke out into a magnificent sol fa, and the king at once remembering the style of his old master, responded by going through some exercises for the voice which he had been in the habit of practising. Blondel having ascertained the place of his sovereign’s confinement, had the prudence to “copy the address,” and went away, determining to do his utmost for the release of Richard. “I wish,” thought the professor, as he retired from the spot, “that those iron bars were bars of music, for then I could show him how they are to be got through; or would that any of the keys of which I am master would unlock the door of his prison!” With these two melancholy puns, induced by the sadness of his reflections, Blondel hastened from the spot, and repaired to England with tidings of the missing monarch. Such is the romantic little story that is told by those greatest of story-tellers, the writers of history.

Richard was at length brought up for examination before the Diet of Worms; and though several charges were alleged against him,

he pleaded his own cause with so much address, that he was discharged on payment of a fine of one hundred and fifty thousand marks, being about three hundred thousand pounds of our money. He at once put down thirteen and fourpence in the pound, giving good bills and hostages for the remainder; but the amount was soon raised by taxes and voluntary contributions from the English people. Churches melted down their plate, people born with silver spoons in their mouths came forward with zeal, whether the article happened to be a gravy, a table, a dessert, or a tea; and the requisite sum was raised to release him from captivity. He arrived in England on the 20th of March, 1194, and was enthusiastically welcomed home, where he got up another coronation of himself, by way of furnishing an outlet for the overflowing loyalty of the people. As if desirous of taming it down a little, he made some heavy demands upon their pockets; but nothing seemed capable of damping the ardour of the nation, which appeared ready to give all it possessed in change for this single sovereign.

About the middle of May, 1194, Richard revisited Barfleür, with the intention of chastising his brother John—who had shown symptoms of usurpation in his absence—and the French king, Philip. John, like a coward, flew to his mamma—the venerable Eleanor—requesting her to intercede for him. The old lady wrote a curt epistle, consisting of the words, “Dear Dick—Forgive Jack. Yours ever, Nell;” and John having fallen at the feet of Richard, was contemptuously kicked aside with a free pardon. Against the French king, however, several battles were fought, with fluctuating success, though Richard’s fortunes now and then received a fillip which caused Philip to get the worst of it. A truce was concluded on the 23rd of July, 1194, but London beginning to rebel, cut out fresh work for Lion Heart. The discontented cockneys had for their leader one William Fitz-Osbert, commonly called Longbeard, who complained of the citizens having been so closely shaved by taxation; and Longbeard even dared to beard the sovereign

himself, by going to the Continent to remonstrate with Richard. The patriot made one of those clap-trap speeches (or which mob-orators have in all ages been famous), and demanded for the poor that general consideration which really amounts to nothing particular. Richard promised that the matter should be looked into, but nothing was done—except the people and their advocate. In the year 1196 Longbeard originated the practice of forming political associations, and got together no less than fifty-two thousand members, who swore to stand by him as the advocate and saviour of the poor; an oath which ended in heir literally standing by him and seeing him savagely butchered by his enemies. He was taking a quiet walk with only nine adherents, when he was dodged by a couple of citizens, who had been watching him for several days, and who pretended to be enjoying a stroll, until they got near enough to enable them to seize the throat of Longbeard. This movement instantly raised his choler, and drawing his knife, he succeeded in cutting completely away. He sought refuge in the church of St.

Mary of Arches, which he barricaded for four days, but he was at last taken, stabbed, dragged at a horse's tail to the Tower, and forwarded by the same conveyance to Smithfield, where he was hanged on a gibbet, with the nine unfortunates who had been the companions of his promenade.

The mob, who had stood by him while he was thus cruelly treated, pretended to look upon him as a martyr directly he was dead. This, however, seems to have been the result of interested motives, for they stole the gibbet, and cut it up into relics, which were sold at most exorbitant prices; so that, by making a saint of him, they gave a value to the gallows which they purloined. It is possible that they were not particular as to the genuineness of the article, so long as there was any demand for little bits of Longbeard's gibbet.

Richard was now engaged in almost continual quarrels with Philip, which were only suspended by occasional want of

money to pay the respective barons, who always struck, or rather, refused to strike at all, when they could not get their wages. In the year 1198, hostilities were renewed with great vigour, and a battle was fought near Gisors, where Philip was nearly drowned by the breaking of a bridge, in consequence of the enormous weight of the fugitives. In his bulletin, Richard insultingly alluded to the quantity of the river the French king had been compelled to drink, and hinted, that as he was full of water it was quite fair to make a butt of him.

This was Cour de Lion's "positively last appearance" in any combat. A truce was concluded, and Richard quitted Normandy for the Limousin, where it was said in one of the popular ballads of the day, that the point of the arrow was being forged for the death of the tyrant. Many dispute the point, and believe the story to be forged; but certain it is, that Henry, the father of Richard, had frequently been shot at by an arrow, and had had, according to a lame pun of the period, many a-n-arrow escape from the hands of his secret enemies.

According to the usual version of Cour de Lion's death, it seems that he went with an armed force to demand of Vidomar, Viscount of Limoges, a treasure, said to have been found in the domains of the latter.

The viscount claimed halves, which Richard refused, and with a loud cry of "All or none," threatened to hang every man of the garrison. The king was surveying the walls to ascertain an eligible place for the assault, and had just raised his eyes, exclaiming—"Here's a weak point," when the point of an arrow came whizzing along and stuck in his left shoulder. Richard making some passing allusion to this novel mode of shouldering arms, took little notice of the wound, but went on with the assault, and soon seized the Castle.

The business of the the day being concluded, he sent for a surgeon, who took out the point of the arrow somewhat clumsily, causing Richard to remark, in allusion to the

bungling manner in which the operation had been performed, that it could not be called a very elegant “extract.”

The wound, though slight, became worse from ill-treatment; and the king, feeling that there were no hopes of his recovery, would only reply to the encouraging remarks of his attendants by pointing mournfully yet significantly over his left shoulder.



It is said that he sent for Bertrand de Gourdon, the youth that inflicted the wound, and let him off for letting off the bow; but it is impossible to say what truth there is in this anecdote.

The MS. chronicle of Winchester says that Richard's sister Joan expressed a truly female wish to have the prisoner given to her, that she might “tear his eyes out,” and that she literally put in force this threat which so many women are heard to make, but which not one of the sex was ever known to execute. Richard died on Tuesday, the 6th of April, 1199, after a reign of ten years, not one of which had been passed in England, for he had led the life of a royal vagabond.

He died at forty-two, and it is a remarkable fact, says one of the chroniclers—whom for the sake of his reputation we will not name—that, though Richard lived to be forty-two, forti-tude

was the only virtue he had ever exhibited. He loved the name of Lion Heart, and he certainly deserved a title that indicated his possession of brutish qualities.

The British lion might, in justice to his own character, repudiate all connection with this contemptible Cour de Lion, who had at least as much cruelty as courage, and who had murdered many more in cold blood when prisoners than he had ever killed on the field of battle.

His slaughter of the three thousand Saracen captives must be regarded as a proof, that, whatever of the lion he might have, had in his disposition, he had not much of the heart.

This, however, such as it was, he never gave to England in his lifetime, and he left it to Rouen at his death, being certainly the very smallest and most valueless legacy he could possibly have bequeathed.



CHAPTER THE SEVENTH. JOHN, SURNAMED SANSTERRE, OR LACKLAND.



JOHN, who was in Normandy when Richard died, made every effort to secure that gang of humbugs, the mercenaries, by sending over to offer them an increase of salary, with the view of preventing them from taking engagements in the cause of his nephew, Arthur, the child of his elder brother, Geoffrey. Hubert Walter, the Archbishop of Canterbury, was despatched to England, to obtain the services of the barons by the usual means; and John himself repaired to Chinon, to ransack the castle where Richard had kept his treasures.

Having chastised a few citizens for supporting Arthur, he repaired to Rouen, where on Sunday, the 25th of April, 1199, he was bedizened with the sword and coronal of the duchy. The English were not much disposed to favour the claims of John, but Archbishop Hubert purchased a few oaths of allegiance from the barons and prelates, who for the usual consideration were always ready to swear fealty to anyone.

John landed at Shoreham on the 25th of May, and on the 27th he

knocked at the church door of St. Peter's, Westminster, to claim the crown. He seems to have encountered a tolerably numerous congregation, whom he endeavoured to convince by pulling out of his pocket an alleged will made in his favour by his brother Richard, and some other documents, which, backed by a speech from Archbishop Hubert, set everybody shouting «Long live the king!» Poor little Arthur was completely overlooked in this arrangement, for he had scarcely anyone to take his part but a noisy scolding mother, who bore the name of Constance, probably on account of her shameful inconstancy.

She had married a third husband while her second was still living; and it is even said that she contemplated adding trigamy to bigamy, for which purpose she sent her son to be out of the way at Paris, with Philip, the French king.

The poor child had his interests fearfully sacrificed on all sides, for a treaty was agreed upon between John and Philip, according to which there would be nothing at all left for the unfortunate boy when the two sovereigns had helped themselves to their respective shares of the booty.

In the summer of the year 1200, John made a royal progress into France where he evinced a familiar and festive humour, which made him a favourite with a few of the «jolly dogs,» but did not win the respect of the more sober classes of the community. He did not at all improve upon acquaintance; and he completed his unpopularity by running away with Isabella, the wife of the Count of La Marche, whom he married and brought to England, in spite of his having already a wife at home, and the lady's having also a husband abroad.

A second coronation was performed in honour of his second marriage; but he seems to have soon got tired of his new match, for he marched into Aquitaine without his wife, under the pretence that he had business to attend to, but he really did no business at all. Little did he anticipate when he started en garçon on his tour, that the historian nearly seven centuries

afterwards would be recording the manner in which he passed his time, and proving the hollowness of the excuse for leaving his wife behind him when he took his trip to Aquitaine.



Young Arthur, who was but fifteen years of age, was advised by Philip (a.d. 1202) to try his hand in a military expedition. «You know your rights,» said Philip to the youth, «and would you not be a king?» «Oh! wouldn't I, just?» was the boy-like reply, and the French king counting off two hundred knights, as if they were so many bundles of wood, handed them over to the prince, telling him to go and make an attack upon some of the provinces. Arthur was recommended to march against Mirabeau, the residence of his grandmother, Eleanor, a violent old lady who had always been unfavourable to his claims. Arthur took the town, but not his grandmother, who, on hearing of the lad's intentions, exclaimed, «Hoity toity! would the urchin teach his grandmother to suck eggs, I wonder?» «No, but I would teach my grandmother to sue cumb,» was the dignified reply of the prince, when the message of his venerable relative was brought to him. The sturdy old female, who was rather corpulent, made, literally, a stout resistance, having thrown herself into a strong tower, which set rather tight upon her, like a cor-

sage, and in this position she for some time defied the assaults of the enemy. Encased in this substantial breastwork, she awaited the threatened lacing at the hands of her grandson, when John came to her rescue. In the night between the 31st of July and the 1st of August, he took the town, dragged Arthur out of his bed, as well as some two hundred nobles who were «hanging out» at the different lodgings in the city. After cruelly beating them, he literally loaded them with irons, giving them cuffs first, and hand-cuffs immediately afterwards. Twenty-two noblemen were thrown into the damp dungeons of Corfe Castle, where they caught severe colds, of which they soon died, and they were buried under the walls of Corfe without coffins. * Young Arthur's tragical end has been the subject of various conjectures. Several historians have tried their hands at an interesting version of the young prince's death, but Shakspeare has given the most effective, and not the least probable, account of the fate of Arthur. The monks of Margan believe that John, in a fit of intoxication, slew his nephew; but we have no proof that Lackland was often in that disgraceful state, which in these days would have rendered him liable to the loss of a crown—in the shape of the five-shilling fine for drunkenness.

Matthew Paris. It is to be regretted that the statement of a fact sometimes involves the necessity for a pun, as in the present instance.

The faithful historian has, however, on such an occasion, no alternative.

Fidelity must not be sacrificed even to a desire for solemnity.

Ralph, the abbot of Coggeshall, who agrees with Shakspeare in many particulars, says that Arthur had been removed to Rouen, where his uncle called for him on the night of the 3rd of April, 1203, in a boat, to take a row on the river. It being time for all good little children to be in bed and asleep, Arthur was both at the moment of the avuncular visit. Boy-like, he made no objection to the absurd and ill-timed excursion, for it is a curious fact, that infants are always ready to get up at the most unseasonable hours, if anything in the shape of pleasure is

proposed to them. Arthur was soon in the boat for a row up the Seine with his uncle John and Peter de Maulac, Esquire, one of the unprincipled «men about town» at that disreputable period. They had not proceeded far when either John or Mr. de Maulac seized the boy, as if he were so much superfluous ballast, and cruelly pitched him overboard. Some say that the squire was the sole executioner, while others hint that he turned squeamish at the last moment, and left the disgraceful business to John; but they doubtless shared the guilt, as they were both rowing in the same boat, and were in point of private character «much of a muchness.» Shak-speare, as everybody knows, makes the young prince meet his death more than half-way by leaping on to the stones below his prison window, with a hope that they might prove softer than the heart of his uncle. It is not improbable that a child so young may have been foolish enough to jump to such a conclusion.

The rumour of the murder naturally occasioned the greatest excitement; and if we are to believe the immortal bard, five moons came mooning out upon the occasion, which may account for the moonstruck condition of the populace.

The Britons, amongst whom Arthur had been educated, were furious at the murder of their youthful prince, whose eldest sister, Eleanor, was in the hands of her uncle John.

This lady was called by some, the Pearl of Brittany; but if she was really a gem, she must have been an antique, for she spent forty years of her life in captivity.

The Britons, therefore, rallied round a younger heroine, her half-sister, Alice, and appointed her father, Guy de Thouars, the regent and general of their confederacy.

De Thouars was a Guy only in name, for he was extremely handsome, and had attracted the attention of the lady Constance, whose third and last husband he had become. Guy went as the head of a deputation to the French king, who summoned John to a trial; but that individual instead of attending the summons,

allowed judgment to go by default, and was sentenced to a forfeiture of his dominions.

John for some time treated the steps taken against him with contempt, and remained at Rouen, until he thought it advisable to go over to England, to prepare for his defence by collecting money, for it was always by sucking dry the public purse, that tyrants in those days were accustomed to look for succour.

It was by his efforts to extract cash from his people that he excited among his nobles the discontent which has rendered the discontented barons of his reign, par excellence, the discontented barons of English history. He continued to mulct them every day, and his reign was a long game of forfeits, in which the barons were always the sufferers. Still they refused to quit the country for the defence of their tyrant's foreign possessions.

By dint of threats and bribery he at last contrived (a.d. 1206) to land an army at Rochelle, and a contest was about to commence, when John proposed a parley.

Without waiting for the answer, he ran away, leaving a notice on the door of his tent, stating that he had gone to England, and would return immediately, which, in accordance with the modern «chamber-practice,» was equivalent to an announcement that he had no intention of coming back again.

John, who could agree with nobody, now began to quarrel with the pope by starting a candidate for the see of Canterbury, in opposition to Stephen Langton, the nominee of old Innocent. His holiness desired three English bishops to go and remonstrate with the king, who flew into a violent passion, and used the coarsest language, winding up with a threat to «cut off their noses,» which caused the venerable deputation to «cut off» themselves with prompt King John threatens to cut off the Noses of the Bishops.

The bishops, however, soon recovered from the effects of their ill-treatment, and determined by the aid of the people to punish with papal bulls the royal bully.



On Monday, the 23rd of March, 1208, they pronounced an interdiction against all John's dominions; but, like children setting fire to a train of gunpowder and running away, the bishops quitted the kingdom, as if afraid of the result of their own boldness. This was soon followed by a bull of excommunication against John, but the wary tyrant, by watching the ports, prevented the entrance of this bull, which would have made it a mere toss up whether he could keep possession of his throne. John employed the year 1210 in raising money, by stealing it wherever he could lay his hands upon it; for, says the chronicler, «as long as there was a sum he could bone, he thought it the summum bonum to get hold of it.» With the cash he had collected he repaired to Ireland, and at Dublin was joined by twenty robust chieftains, who might have been called the Dublin stout of the thirteenth century.

Returning to England in three months with an empty pocket, he became alarmed at hearing of a conspiracy among his barons. He shut himself up for fifteen days in the castle of Nottingham, seeing no one but the servants, and not permitting the door to be opened even to take in the milk, lest the cream of the British nobility should flow in with it.

At length, in the year 1213, Innocent hurled his last thunderbolt at John's head, with the intention of knocking off his crown. The pope pronounced the deposition of the English king, and declared the throne open to competition, with a hint to Philip of France that he might find it an eligible investment. He prepared a fleet of seventeen hundred vessels at Boulogne, but some of the vessels must have been little bigger than butter-boats if seventeen hundred of them were crammed into this insignificant harbour. John, by a desperate effort, got together sixty thousand men, but they were by no means staunch, and he was as much afraid of his own troops as of those belonging to the enemy. Pandulph, the pope's legate, knowing his character, came to Dover, and frightened him by fearful pictures of the enemy's strength, while Peter the Hermit, * who was rather more plague than prophet, bored the tyrant with predictions of his death. John, who was exceedingly superstitious, was so worked upon by his fears that he agreed to Pandulph's terms, and on the 15th of May, 1213, he signed a sort of cognovit, acknowledging himself the vassal of the pope, and agreeing to pay a thousand marks a year, in token of which he set his own mark at the end of the document.

* Some writers have called Peter the Hermit a hare-brained recluse. As his head was closely shaved the epithet «hair-brained» seems to have been sadly misapplied.

He next offered Pandulph something for his trouble, but the legate raising his leg, trampled the money under his foot. The next day was that on which Peter the Hermit had prophesied that John would die, and the tyrant remained from morning till night watching the clock with intense anxiety. Finding himself alive at bedtime, he grew furious against Peter for having caused him so much needless alarm, and the Hermit was hanged for the want of foresight he had exhibited. He died, exclaiming that the king should have been grateful that the prediction had not been fulfilled; «but,» added he, as he placed his head through the fa-

tal noose, «some folks are never satisfied.» The French king was exceedingly disgusted at the shabby treatment he had received; but Philip expended his rage in a few philippics against Pandulph, who merely expressed his regret, and added peremptorily, that England being now under the dominion of the pope, must henceforth be let alone. Philip alluded to the money he was out of pocket, but the nuncio politely observing that he was not happy at questions of account, withdrew while repeating his prohibition. John, who had so lately eaten humble pie, soon began to regard his promises as the pie-crust, which he commenced breaking very rapidly. Wishing, however, to carry the war into France, he required the services of his barons, who were very reluctant to aid him, and he had got as far as Jersey, when happening to look behind him, he perceived that he had scarcely any followers. He had started with a tolerable number, but they turned back sulkily by degrees, without his being aware of it until he arrived at Jersey, when he was preparing to turn himself round, and perceived that his suite had dwindled down to a few mercenaries, who hung on to his skirts merely for the sake of what he had got in his pockets. Becoming exceedingly angry, he wheeled suddenly back, and vented his spite in burning and ravaging everything that crossed his path.

He was in a flaming passion, for he set fire to all the buildings on the road till he reached Northampton, where Langton overtook him, and taxed him with the violation of his oath. «Mind your own business,» roared the king, «and leave me to manage mine;» but Langton would not take an answer of that kind, and stuck to him all the way to Nottingham, where the prelate, according to his own quaint phraseology, «went at him again» with more success than formerly. John issued summonses to the barons, and Langton hastened to see them in London, where he drew up a strong affidavit by which they all swore to be true to each other, and to their liberties.

John was still apprehensive of the hostility of the pope, which might have been fatal at this juncture, had not Cardinal Nicholas arrived in the nick of time, namely, on the 12th of Septem-

ber, 1213, to take off the interdict. The court of Rome thus executed a sort of *chassez-croisez*, by going over to the side of John, but Langton did not desert his old partner, liberty. In the following year the English king was defeated at the battle of Bouvines, one of the most tremendous affrays recorded in history. Salisbury, surnamed Longsword, was captured by that early specimen of the church militant, the Bishop of Beauvais, who, because it was contrary to the canons of the Church for him to shed blood, fought with a ponderous club, by which he knocked the enemy on the head, and acquired the name of the stunning bishop.

He banged about him in such style, that he might have been eligible for the see of Bangor, had his ambition pointed in that direction. John obtained a truce; but the discontented barons had already placed a rod in pickle for him, and on the 20th day of November, they held a crowded meeting at St. Edmund's Bury, which was adjourned until Christmas.

At that festive season, John found himself eating his roast beef entirely alone, for nobody called to wish him joy, or partake his pudding.



After dining by himself, at Worcester, he started for London, making sure of a little-gaiety at boxing-time, in the great metropolis.

Nobody, however, took the slightest notice of him until one day the whole of the barons came to him in a body, to pay him a morning visit. Surprised at the largeness of the party, he was somewhat cool, but on hearing that they had come for liberty, he declared that he would not allow any liberty to be taken while he continued king of England.

The party remained firm with one or two exceptions, when John began to shiver as if attacked with ague, and he went on blowing hot and cold as long as he could, until pressed by the barons for an answer to their petition. He then replied evasively, «Why yes no; let me see—ha! exactly stop! Well, I don't know, perhaps so »pon honour;» and ultimately obtained time until Easter, to consider the proposals that were made to him.

The confederated barons had no sooner got outside the street-door than John began to think over the means of circumventing them. As they separated on the threshold, to go to their respective homes, it was evident from the gestures and countenances of the group that there had been a difference of opinion as to the policy of granting John the time he had requested.

A bishop and two barons, who had turned recreants at the interview, and receded from their claims, were of course severely bullied by the rest of the confederates, on quitting the royal presence. At length the day arrived, in Easter week, when the barons were to go for an answer to the little Bill—of Rights—which they had left with John at the preceding Christmas. They met at Stamford, where they got up a grand military spectacle, including two thousand knights and an enormous troop of auxiliaries.

The king, who was at Oxford, sent off Cardinal Langton, with the Earls of Pembroke and Warrenne, as a deputation, who soon returned with a schedule of terrific length, containing a catalogue of grievances, which the barons declared they would have remedied.

John flew into one of his usual passions, tearing his long hair, and rapidly pacing his chamber with the skirt of his robe thrown



over his left arm, while, with his right hand, he shook his fist at vacancy. The deputation could merely observe calmly, «We have done our part of the business: that is what the barons want;» and a roll of parchment was instantly allowed to run out to its full length at the foot of the enraged sovereign. John took up the document and pretended to inspect it with much minuteness, muttering to himself, «No, I don't see it down,» upon which Langton asked the sovereign what he was looking for.

«I was searching,» sarcastically roared the tyrant, «for the crown, which I fully expected to find scheduled as one of the items I am called upon to surrender.» This led to some desultory conversation, in the course of which the king made some evasive offers, which the barons would not accept, and the latter, appointing Robert Fitz-Walter as their general, at once commenced hostilities.

They first marched upon the castle of Northampton, but when they got under the walls they discovered that they had got no battering-rams, and after sitting looking at the castle for fifteen days, they marched off again.

At Bedford, where they went next, the same farce might have been enacted, had not the inhabitants opened the gates for them. Here they received an invitation from London, and stop-

ping to rest for the night at Ware—on account, perhaps, of the accommodation afforded by the Great Bed—they arrived on Sunday, the 24th of May, 1215, in the City.

Here they were joined by the whole nobility of England, while John was abandoned by all but seven knights, who remained near his person, the seven knights forming a weak protection, to the sovereign. His heart at first failed him, but he was a capital actor, and soon assumed a sort of easy cheerfulness. He presented his compliments to the barons, and assured them he should be most happy to meet them, if they would appoint a time and place for an interview. The barons instantly fixed the 19th of June at Runny-Mead, when John intimated that he should have much pleasure in accepting the polite invitation.

At length the eventful morning arrived, when John cantered quietly down from Windsor Castle, attended by eight bishops and a party of about twenty gentlemen. These, however, were not his friends, but had been lent by the other side, «for the look of the thing,» lest the king should seem to be wholly without attendants. The barons, who had been stopping at Staines, were of course punctual, and had got the pen and ink all laid out upon the table, with a Windsor chair brought expressly from the town of Windsor for John to sit down upon. It had been expected that he would have raised some futile objections to sign; but the crafty sovereign, knowing it was a sine qua non, made but one plunge into the inkstand, and affixed his autograph. It is said that he dropped a dip of ink accidentally on the parchment, and that he mentally ejaculated «Ha! this affair will be a blot upon my name for ever.» The facility with which the king attached his signature to Magna Charta—the great charter of England's liberties—naturally excited suspicion; for it is a remark founded on a long acquaintance with human nature, that the man who never means to take up a bill is always foremost in accepting one. Had John contemplated adhering to the provisions of the document he would have probably discussed the

various clauses, but a swindler seldom disputes the items of an account, when he has not the remotest intention of paying it.

Though Magna Charta has been practically superseded by subsequent statutes, it must always be venerated as one of the great foundations of our liberties. It established the «beautiful principle» that taxation shall only take place by the consent of those taxed—a principle the beauty of which has been its chief advantage, for it has proved less an article for use than for ornament. The agreeable figure that everyone who pays a tax does so with his own full concurrence, and simply because he likes it, is a pleasing delusion, which all have not the happiness to labour under. It was also provided that «the king should sell, delay, or deny justice to none,» a condition that can scarcely be considered fulfilled when we look at some of the bills of costs that generally follow a long suit in that game of chance which has obtained the singularly appropriate title of Chancery.

It may be perhaps argued, that the article delayed and sold is law, whereas Magna Charta alludes only to Justice. This, we must admit, establishes a distinction—not without a difference. Though John had kept his temper tolerably well at the meeting with the barons, he had no sooner got back to Windsor Castle, than he called a few foreign adventurers around him, and indulged in a good hearty swearing fit against the charter.

He grew so frantic, according to the chroniclers, that he «gnashed his teeth, rolled his eyes, and gnawed sticks and straws,» though he could scarcely have done all this without sending for the umbrella-stand, and having a good bite at its contents, or ordering in a few wisps from the stable.

That John was exceedingly mad with the barons for what they had made him do, is perfectly true, but we do not go the length of those who look upon a truss of straw as essential to a person labouring under mental aberration.

John now went to reside in the Isle of Wight, and tried to captivate the fishermen by adopting their manners. There is nothing

very captivating in the manners of the fishermen of the Isle of Wight at the present day, whatever may have been the case formerly; but it is probable that the king became popular by a sort of hail-fellow-well-met-ishness, to which his dreadful habit of swearing no doubt greatly contributed. Having imported a lot of mercenaries from the Continent, he posted off to Dover to land the disgraceful cargo, and with them he marched against Rochester Castle, which had been seized by William D'Albiny. The larder was wretchedly low when D'Albiny first took possession, and the garrison was soon reduced to its last mouthful of provisions.

This consisted of a piece of rind of cheese, which everybody had refused in daintier days, when provisions were plentiful. D'Albiny bolted the morsel and unbolted the gate nearly at the same moment, when John, rushing in, butchered all the supernumeraries and sent the principal characters to Corfe Castle.

John, who always grew bold when there was no opposition, committed all sorts of atrocities upon places without defence, and the barons shut up in Lincoln, held numerous meetings, which terminated in a resolution to offer the crown to Louis, the son of Philip of France, provided the young gentleman and his papa would come over and fight for it. Louis left Calais with six hundred and eighty vessels, but he had a terribly bad passage across to Sandwich, where the «flats,» as usual, permitted the landing of an enemy. John, who had run round to Dover with a numerous army, fled before the French landed, and committed arson on an extensive scale all over the country. Every night was a «night wi» Burns,» and the royal incendiary seems to have put himself under the especial protection of Blaise, as the only saint with whom the tyrant felt the smallest sympathy. John ultimately put up at Bristol, and the neighbourhood of Bath seems to have quenched for a time his flaming impetuosity.

Louis having besieged Rochester Castle, which seems in those days to have been very like a copy of the Times newspaper,

which some one was always anxious to take directly it was out of hand, marched on to London. He arrived there on the 2nd of June, 1216, where he was received with that enthusiasm which the hospitable cockneys have ever been ready to bestow on foreigners of distinction. Nearly all the few followers that had hitherto adhered to John now abandoned him, and he was left almost alone with Gualo, the pope's legate, who did all he could to revive the drooping spirits of the tyrant. Vainly however did Gualo slap the sovereign on the back, inviting him to «cheer up,» and ply him with cider, his favourite beverage. «Come! drown it in the bowl,» was the constant cry of Gualo. «Talk not of bowls,» was the reply of John; «what is life but a game at bowls, in which the king is too frequently knocked over?»

Louis, in the meantime, growing arrogant with success, commenced insulting, the English and granting their property to his foreign followers. The barons began to think they had made a false step with reference to their own country by allowing the French prince to put his foot in it. This for a moment brightened the prospects of John, who started off and went blazing away as far as Lynn, where he had got a dépôt of provisions, and of course a change of linen. Hence he made for Wisbeach, and put up at a place called the «Cross Keys,» intending to cross the Wash, which is a very passable place at low water.

John was nearly across when he heard the tide beginning to roar with fearful fury. Knowing that tide and time wait for no man, he felt he was tied to time, and hurried to the opposite shore with tremendous rapidity. He succeeded in reaching land; but his horses, with his plate, linen, and money were not so fortunate, for he had the mortification of seeing all his clothes lost in the Wash, and the utter sinking of the whole of his capital.

Venting his sorrow in cursory remarks and discursive curses, he went on to Swineshead Abbey, where he passed the night in eating peaches and pears, and drinking new cider.

The cider of course added to the fermentation that was going

on in his fevered frame; and even without the peaches and pears, the efforts of his physicians might have proved fruitless.

He went to bed, but could not sleep, for his conscience continued to impeach him in a series of frightful dreams, to which the peaches no doubt contributed.

He nevertheless made an effort to get up the next morning, and mounted his horse on the 15th of October; but he was too ill to keep his seat, and his attendants, putting him into a horse-box, got him as far as Sleaford. Here he passed another shocking night, but the next day they again moved him into the horse-box, and dragged him to Newark, where he requested that a confessor might be sent for. The abbot of Crocton, who was a doctor as well as a divine, immediately attended, and this leech was employed in drawing a confession from the lips of the tyrant. He named his eldest son, Henry, his successor, and dictated a begging-letter to the new pope, imploring protection for his small and helpless children.

He died on the 18th of October, 1216, in the forty-ninth year of his age, and the seventeenth of one of the most uncomfortable reigns recorded in English history. From first to last he seems to have been cut by his subjects, for we find him eating his Christmas dinner alone in the very middle of his sovereignty, and dragged about the country in a horse-box within a day of his death, when such active treatment could not have been beneficial to the royal patient in an advanced stage of fever.

Matthew Parin, point of accommodation than the humblest gentleman. His case reminds us of an individual, who, finding himself in a sedan with neither top nor bottom to it, came to the conclusion that he might as well have walked but for «the look of the thing.» So it may be said of John, that deprived of all the substantial advantages of a throne, he might but «for

the name of the thing» have just as well been a private individual.

The character of John has been so fully developed in the account of his reign that it is quite unnecessary to sum him up on the present occasion.

If he harassed the barons, they certainly succeeded in returning the compliment; for he seems to have had a most unpleasant time of it, He had the title of king, but was often worse off.



**BOOK III. THE PERIOD FROM THE ACCES-
SION OF HENRY THE THIRD, TO THE END
OF THE REIGN OF RICHARD
THE SECOND. A.D. 1216—1399.**

**CHAPTER THE FIRST.
HENRY THE THIRD, SURNAMED OF WIN-
CHESTER.**



HENRY, the eldest son of John, was a child under ten years of age at the time of his father's death, but his brother-in-law, the Earl of Pembroke, brought him to Gloucester and got him crowned by Gualo, who had always acted as a friend of the family.

The coronation, which took place on the 28th of October, 1216, was very indifferently got up, for the crown had not come from the Wash, where it had been lying in soak ever since John's unfortunate expedition across the water from Wisbeach. Gualo therefore took a ring from his finger, and put it on the young king's head, as a substitute for the missing diadem. The coronation party consisted of three earls, three bishops, and four barons, with a sprinkling of abbots and priors, comprising al-

together a retinue of about thirty individuals.

The clergy of Westminster and Canterbury complained bitterly of the ceremony having been «scamped,» by which their rights had been invaded, or, in other words, by which they had been done out of their perquisites. The first coronation was therefore treated as a mere rehearsal, and a more regular performance afterwards took place, with new machinery, dresses, decorations, and all the usual properties.

On the 11th of the following November, Pembroke was appointed *Regis et Regni*—ruler of the king and kingdom—so that Henry the Third was sovereign *de jure* with a *de facto* viceroy over him. This arrangement was made at a great council held at Bristol, where *Magna Charta* was revised with a view to the publication of a new and improved edition.

Louis, on hearing of John's death, puffed himself up with a certainty of success, but he only realised the old fable of the French frog and the British bull; for, becoming inflated with pride, he was not long in bursting like an empty bubble.

As Christmas, 1216, was close at hand, a truce was arranged, to enable each party to enjoy the holidays. Louis took advantage of the vacation to go to Paris to consult his father Philip, who, like a modern French king of the same name, was remarkable for his tact in doing the best for his own family.

On his return to England, Louis encountered some hostility from the hardy mariners of the Cinque Ports—the Deal and Dover boatmen of that day—but reaching Sandwich, he got over the flats with the usual facility. He however spitefully burned the town to the ground, merely because it was one of the Cinque Ports, which had turned crusty at his approach, though it was hardly fair of him to mull the only port that did not prove too strong for him. Hostilities were continued on both sides with varying success, until the Count de la Perche, a French general, flushed with a recent triumph at Mount Sorel, in Leicester, determined to attack the Castle of Lincoln.

He would probably have succeeded, but for the resistance of a woman, the widow of the late keeper of the castle, who, with the obstinacy of her sex, refused to surrender.

The Count de la Perche, ashamed of being beaten by one of the gentler sex, continued the attack, and refusing to quit the town, found himself involved in a series of street rows of the most alarming character.

Pembroke having collected a large force, sent part of it into the castle by the back garden gate, and the other part into the town, so that poor de la Perche found it impossible to move either one way or the other. The English literally gave it him right and left till he died; and after falling upon the almost defenceless French, they gave the name of «the fair of Lincoln» to a battle about as unfair as any recorded in the pages of history. This event, which came off on the 20th of May, 1217, was followed in June by a conference which, like Panton Square, led to nothing. Louis made one more attempt upon Dover, but he had no means to carry on the war, and he was obliged to raise the siege, as he could not raise the money.

He hastened to London, which he had no sooner entered than the English shut the gates and locked him in; while the pope sent a tremendous bull down upon him, to add to his annoyances. Louis began to feel that he had had quite enough of it, and being anxious for a little peace, he proposed one to Pembroke. The terms were soon agreed upon, but Louis was detained in town some little time for want of the money to pay his debts and his journey home again. The citizens of London forming themselves into a loan society, advanced a few pounds to the French prince, who deserves some credit for not having taken French leave of his creditors. By the terms of the treaty he surrendered all his claims upon the English crown, which seems to have been rather a superfluous sacrifice, as he had been trying it on for some time, and found that the cap never fitted.

As Louis went out of London at the East End, to embark for

France, Henry, who had been at Kingston, came in at Hyde Park Corner. Pembroke, the regent, made him exceedingly popular by advising him to confirm Magna Charta, and to add a clause or two for the purpose of freshening it up, so that the new edition might repay perusal. Unfortunately for the prospects of the kingdom, Pembroke died, in May, 1219, and was buried in the Temple Church, where his tomb is still to be seen by anyone who can obtain a benchers' order. The regent's authority was now divided between Hubert de Burgh and Peter—or, as Rapin christens him—William des Roches, the Bishop of Winchester.

These two individuals, though jealous of each other, agreed in the propriety of another coronation, probably on account of the patronage it gave to those who happened to be in power; and as the couple in question had just taken office, they were anxious to realise some of the profits at the earliest opportunity. In the quarrels between these two worthies, Des Roches was getting rather the upper hand, when Hubert de Burgh, in 1223, got the pope to declare that the king, who was only sixteen years of age, had attained his majority. Thus, like the dog in the manger, Hubert determined that no one else should enjoy a position which he himself was unable to profit by. This was an «artful dodge» of the cunning Hubert, to get the game into his own hands, for Henry on being pronounced «of age,» having received a surrender of various castles and fortified places from the barons, gave back those which he had no occasion for to the wily minister.

The barons, finding themselves bamboozled, became exceedingly angry with the king and Hubert, but the latter went on, alternately hanging and excommunicating, until he had settled the obstreperous and quelled the turbulent.

The year 1225 must ever be remarkable for the refusal of Parliament—a name that was then coming into use—to grant supplies without asking any questions. This had formerly been the usual practice, but when Hubert coolly proposed a grant of a fifteenth of all the movable property in the kingdom for the

use of the king, the Parliament said it was all very well, but if the money was given there ought to be something to show for it. Henry accordingly gave another ratification of Magna Charta, which was a good deal like the old superfluous process of putting butter upon bacon, for he had already twice ratified that important document. In those days, however, there was no objection to giving the lily an extra coat of paint, or treating the refined gold to an additional layer of gilding.

In the year 1228, Henry had collected an army at Portsmouth to sail for France, but Hubert de Burgh, who seems to have held the place of First Lord of the Admiralty as well as his other offices, had not provided a sufficient number of vessels.

When the troops were about to embark it was found impossible to stow them away even with the closest packing.

Henry flew into a violent passion with Hubert, accusing him of pocketing the money he ought to have laid Goode out in ships, and the king had drawn his sword, intending to run the minister through, when the Earl of Chester ran between them, exclaiming «Hold!» with intense significance.

This fine dramatic situation told exceedingly well; for Hubert de Burgh got off, though the king did not, and the expedition was postponed until the year following.

He passed over into Normandy, a.d. 1229, but he preferred feasting to fighting, and the only advance he made was by continually running away, which kept him constantly ahead of the enemy. He, however, threw all the blame of the failure on Hubert, whose shoulders must have been tolerably broad to have borne all that his master chose to cast on to them.

The king returned to England very much out of pocket and completely out of spirits.

He applied to his old paymaster, the Parliament, but his conduct had excited so much disgust, that instead of money, or as it was then called, blunt, he got a blunt refusal.



His majesty, whose tone had hitherto been that of command, now assumed the humble air of the mendicant, and he adopted the degraded clap-trap of his being «a real case of distress,» in order to obtain a subsidy.

He declared his inability to pay his way, but as his way was never to pay at all, this argument availed him very little.

He was, however, getting rapidly shorter and shorter every day, when fearing that he would perhaps compromise the dignity of the crown by pawning it, or sell the regalia for the purpose of regaling himself, the Parliament agreed to let him have a trifle for current expenses. This consisted of three marks for every fief held immediately of the crown, * which was little enough to give him an excuse for not paying his debts, and yet sufficient to allow him to rush into fresh extravagances.

In the year 1232, Henry, having of course spent every shilling of his small supply, renewed his application to Parliament, alleging that he was desirous of discharging the liabilities incurred in his expedition to France, but the barons firmly, and not very respectfully, refused any further pecuniary assistance. They urged in effect, that they had already been doubly robbed of their services and their cash, for they had never been paid for the one, and had been almost drained of the other. The no-

bles, who had derived nearly all they possessed from plunder, could not see the justice of the principle, that as they had done to others they deserved to be done, and they peremptorily refused to comply with the attempted exactions of the sovereign.

* Rapin's *Histoire d'Angleterre*, tome ii., p. 386 of the second edition where he turned in to the priory.

The king at first determined to have him out, dead or alive, and a mob of upwards of twenty thousand people, says Rapin, were about to start with the Mayor of London to take the ex-minister into custody. How such a crowd was got together in those days out of the mere superfluous idlers of the city, is not known, and we are equally in the dark how it happened that this mob continued doing nothing, while the king listened to remonstrances from various quarters against the violence of his measures.

Having failed in his attack on the pockets of his Parliament, Henry looked with an envious eye on the comfortably lined coffers of his minister. Hubert de Burgh, though he enjoyed the reputation of a trusty servant, had taken care to feather his nest, nor did the feathers lie very heavily on his conscience, for in those days the greatest weight that could be placed upon the mind was always portable. The tonnage of Hubert's conscience appears to have been considerable, for though he carried a good cargo of peculation, he seems never to have evinced any disposition to sink under his burden. Henry became jealous of the good fortune of his minister, and resolved, for the purpose of getting his savings, to effect his ruin. Presuming Hubert to have been a dishonest man, and granting that there is policy in the recommendation to «set a thief to catch a thief,» the king could not have done better than to send for Des Boches, the Bishop of Winchester, to assist in cleaning out the favourite.

Poor De Burgh was in the first instance charged with magic and enchantment; which may be considered equivalent to an impeachment of the minister of the present day for phantasmagoria and thimble-rig.

In these enlightened times we cannot conceive the Premier being sent to the Tower on a suspicion of jack-a-lantern and blind hookey, though it was for offences of this class that Hubert was at first arraigned on the prosecution of his sovereign. These frivolous charges having fallen to the ground, the king called upon him for an account of all the money that had passed through his hands; when the minister having kept no books and being wholly without vouchers, cut a very pretty figure.

As he had been in the habit of cutting figures all through his career, this result was not to be wondered at.

He, however, rummaged among his papers and found an old patent, given him by John, absolving him from the necessity of rendering any account, but his enemies replied, that this was only a receipt in full up to the time of Henry's accession. Hubert finding he could not get out of the scrape, determined, if possible, to get out of the country; but he proceeded no further on the road than Merton, London mobs must have been rather more tractable in the thirteenth than in the nineteenth century, for the twenty thousand people dispersed when it was understood, after considerable negotiation, that their services would not be required. Indeed, according to a more recent historian, they had actually started when a king's messenger was despatched to call them back again.

Hubert, who had found the priory at Merton exceedingly slow, started off to St. Edmund's Bury to see his wife, who resided there. He had got as far as Brentwood, and had gone to bed, when he was roused by a loud knocking at the door, which caused him to put his head out of the window and inquire who or what was wanted. «Is there a person of the name of Hubert de Burgh stopping here?» exclaimed the captain of the troop; but the wily minister, for the sake of gaining time, pretended to misunderstand the question. «Hubert de What?» he exclaimed, as he slipped on a portion of his dress; but the soldier repeated the name with a tremendous emphasis on the syllable Burgh,

which caused a shudder in the frame of Hubert.

He, however, had the presence of mind to direct them to the second door round the corner. Having got them away from the front of the cottage by this manouvre, he ran downstairs into the street, and made his way to the chapel. Here he was seized by his pursuers, who placed him on a horse, and tied his feet together under the animal's stomach. Hubert must have had legs of a most extraordinary length, or the horse must have been a very genteel figure to have permitted this arrangement, which we find recorded in all the histories.

It is possible that the brute upon which De Burgh was secured may have been a donkey, in which case the legs of the ex-favourite might have been long enough to admit of their being tied in a double knot—and perhaps even in a bow—under the animal's stomach. In this uncomfortable position he was trotted off to the Tower; but the clergy being incensed at the violation of sanctuary, Hubert was remounted in the same style, and trotted back again. He was placed in the church as before, but all communication with it was cut off, a trench dug round it, and Hubert was left without any food but that which is always so plentiful under similar circumstances—namely, food for reflection.

After «chewing the bitter cud» until there was nothing left to masticate, he intimated from the steeple his desire to surrender. He had remained forty days shut up without food, fire, or any other clothing but the wrapper in which he had made his escape from his lodgings at Brentwood. The once burly De Burgh had, of course, become dreadfully thin, and the thread of existence seemed to be inclosed in a mere thread-paper.

In this state he was taken to the Tower; but he was soon released to take his trial before his peers, who would have condemned him to death, but the king, looking on the minister as a golden goose, merely seized the accumulated eggs, and sent him to prison at the Castle of Devizes, until some other means were devised of getting hold of the remainder of his property.

Hubert had scarcely been in prison a year, when he took advantage of a dark night to drop himself over one of the battlements. He however found that one good drop deserved another, for he had fallen into a ditch containing a good drop of water, in which he remained absorbed for several seconds.

Having crawled out, he commenced wringing his hands and his clothes, but feeling there was no time to be lost, he made his way to a country church, whither he was traced by the drippings of his garments, which had left a mark something like that of a water-cart, along the path he had taken. Though captured by one party, he was set at liberty by another, with whom the king had become very unpopular, and Hubert was carried off to Wales, where a sect of discontents, who, had they lived in these days, would have been called the Welsh Whigs, had long been gathering. Hubert in about a year and a half, obtained a return of part of his estates, and was even restored to his honours; but the king still kept him as a sort of nest-egg to plunder as occasion required.

Hubert finally compromised the claims of the sovereign by surrendering four castles, in which Hollinshed is disposed to believe that Jack Straw's and the Elephant could not have been included.

The Bishop of Winchester, or as he is termed in history, the Poictevin bishop, succeeded to power on the downfall of Hubert, and Des Boches soon filled the court with foreign adventurers. Two of a trade never agree; and the nobility, who had originally been foreign adventurers themselves, objected to the importation of any more scamps from abroad, on the principle, perhaps, that England had got plenty of that sort already. The Poictevin bishop was particularly hostile to the son of the late regent, the young Earl of Pembroke, who inherited some of his father's virtues, and what was far more interesting to old Des Boches, the whole of his father's property, Young P. was in Ireland, where he had large estates, which the Poictevin bishop desired the governors of that country to confiscate. He promised them a slice, and the governors being—as Rapin

has it—*avides d'un si bon morceau*—(ravenous for such a tit-bit) determined on getting hold of it, Treachery was accordingly resorted to, and Pembroke was basely stabbed in the back whilst sitting unsuspectingly at his own Pembroke table.

This was more than the barons could bear; and they told Henry very plainly, through Edmund, the new Archbishop of Canterbury, that if Des Roches was not dismissed, the sovereign himself would be sent forthwith about his business, The Poictevin was ordered off to Winchester, with directions to limit his views to his own see; and the patriotic Canterbury, who had of course only been anxious for the good of his country, obtained the power from which his predecessor had been cleverly ousted.

The Bishop of Winchester was soon afterwards called to Rome by the pope, who pretended to require his advice, but really had an eye to his money. Des Boches imagined that he was invited for protection, but he was in fact wanted for pillage.

The Poictevin was glad to escape from English surveillance, and was quite content to eat his mutton under the pope's eye, though he was hardly prepared for the process of picking to which he was subjected.

The predecessor of Urban *was, however, all urbanity, and thus made some amends to Des Boches, who, like the majority of mankind, found victimisation a comparatively painless operation when performed by the gentle or light-fingered hands of an accomplished swindler, According to some authorities Celestine was pope at this period, and Urban did not reach the papal dignity till some time afterwards.

In the year 1236, Henry married Eleanor of Provence, with immense pomp and another coronation—a ceremony the frequent repetition of which in former times was a proof of the uncertainty of regal power, for the crown could not be very firm that so often required re-soldering, the king's marriage formed, perhaps, a reasonable excuse for placing an extra hod of cement between the monarch's poll and the hollow diadem.

The marriage festivities were followed by the summoning of a Parliament at Merton, where Henry passed a series of statutes that became famous under the name of the Statutes of Merton; and where he also pocketed, in the shape of subsidies, a considerable sum of money.



Eleanor, the new queen, brought with her to England a quantity of needy and seedy foreigners, most of whom were immediately promoted. One of her uncles, «named Boniface,» says Matthew Paris, «from his extraordinary quantity of cheek,» was raised to the see of Canterbury. She invited over from Provence a quantity of demoiselles a marier, whom she got off by palming them upon rich young nobles, of whom her husband held the wardship.

The court was turned into a kind of matrimonial bazaar, where the wealthy scions of English aristocracy were hooked by the portionless but sometimes pretty spinsters of Provence.

Nor was this all, for Isabella, the queen mother, sent over her four boys, Guy, William, Geoffrey, and Aymer, her sons, by the Count de la Marche, to be provided for. England was in fact regarded as an enormous common, upon which any foreign goose or jackass might be turned out to grass, provided he

was patronised by a member of the reigning family. Henry, who was the victim of his poor relations, soon found himself short of cash, and he was obliged to get money in dribbles from the Parliament, who never allowed him much at a time, and always exacted conditions which were invariably broken as soon as the cash was granted.

Henry had been married about a year, when he had the coolness to ask the nation for the expenses of his wedding.

The barons declared that they had never been consulted about the match, and that the king up to the last hour of his remaining a single man had acted with great duplicity. Finding it useless to command, he resorted to the old plan of humbug, and fell back upon his old friend Magna Charta, which he confirmed once more, for about the fifth or sixth time, and of course got the money he required. This great Bill of Rights was to him a sort of stereotyped bill of exchange, upon which he could always raise a sum of money by going through the formality of a fresh acceptance.

The history of this reign for the next few years would furnish fitter materials for the accountant than the historian, and Henry's career would be better told in a balance-sheet than in the form of narrative. Had his schedule been regularly filed it would have disclosed a series of insolvencies, from which he was only relieved by taking the benefit of some act of generosity and credulity on the part of his Parliament.

At one moment he was so fearfully hard up that he was advised to sell all his plate and jewels. * «Who will buy them?» he exclaimed;—»though,» he added, glancing at his four awkward half-brothers, «if anyone would give me anything for that set of spoons, I should be glad to take the offer.» He was told that the citizens of London would purchase plate to any amount, at which he burst into violent invectives against «the clowns,» as he termed them, probably on account of the presumed capacity of their breeches pockets. He made every effort to annoy the citizens, and showed his appreciation of their superfluous cash by

helping himself to ten thousand pounds of it by open violence. Matthew Paris, Mat. West. Chron. Duncl.

In the year 1253, Henry was once more in a fix, and again the Parliament had the folly to promise him a supply if he would go through another confirmation of Magna Charta. On the 3rd of May he attended a general meeting of the nobility at Westminster Hall where he found the ecclesiastical dignitaries holding each a burning taper in his hand, intending probably that the melting wax should make a deep impression on the sovereign. Some are of opinion that this process was illustrative of the necessity sometimes said to exist for holding a candle to a certain individual. Henry took the usual quantity of oaths, and the priests dashed to the ground their tapers, which went out in smoke, and were so far typical of the king's promises. On receiving the money he went to Guienne, from which he soon came back—as a popular vocalist used to say by way of cue to his song—»without sixpence in his pocket, just like—Love among the roses.»

The pope now brought in a heavy bill of £100,000 for money lent, of which Henry declared he had never enjoyed the benefit. The pope merely observed, that he was clearing his books and must have the matter settled. The king turned upon the clergy, upon whom he drew bills, one of which was addressed to the Bishop of Worcester, who declared they might take his mitre in execution for the amount, and the Bishop of Gloucester said they might serve his the same; but if they did he would wear a helmet. Richard, the king's brother, who was very wealthy, hearing that the German empire was in the market for sale, made a bold bid for it. There was another competitor for the lot in the person of Alphonso, king of Castile, but Richard put down £700,000 and was declared the purchaser.

This liberality was of course at the expense of poor England, which was so completely drained of cash that when Henry met his Parliament on the 2nd of May, 1258, he found the barons in full armour, rattling their swords, as much as to say, that these

must furnish a substitute for the precious metals.

Henry was alarmed at the menacing aspect of the assembly, but one of his foreign half-brothers began vapouring, in a mixed patois of bad French, to the bent down, but not yet broken, English. The king himself resorted to his old trick of promising, and pledged his word once more with his usual success, though it was already pawned over and over again for a hundred times its value. The barons, however, were still ready to take it in; though they had got by them already an enormous stock of similar articles, all unredeemed, and daily losing their interest.

The leader of the country party was at this time Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, a Frenchman, who had married Eleanor, the king's sister. He had quarrelled and made it up with Henry once or twice, and the following conversation is recorded to have taken place, in 1252, between the earl and his sovereign:— «You are a traitor,» said the king. «You are a liar!» replied the courtier. After this brief and decisive dialogue Leicester went to France, but his royal brother-in-law soon invited him back again.

On the 11th of June, 1258, there met, at Oxford, an assembly to which the Royalists gave the name of the Mad Parliament. There was a good deal of method in the madness of the members, for they appointed twenty-four barons and bishops as a committee of government.

There was some insanity in the proposition to hold three sessions in a year, but it is doubtful whether Dr. Winslow, or any other eminent physician would have found, in the statutes passed at the time sufficient to form the foundation of a statute of lunacy. Henry seems to have been most in want of Dr. Winslow's care, for his majesty was exceedingly mad at the decisive measures of the barons, and would have been glad of an asylum where he would have been safe from their influence.

The Oxford Parliament, which was certainly an odd compound of good and bad, or light and dark—the regular Oxford mixture—passed some measures of a very miscellaneous character.

The annual election of a new sheriff, and the sending to Parliament of four knights, chosen by the freeholders in each county, were judicious steps; but in some other respects the barons abused their power, and got a good deal of abuse themselves in consequence. The queen's relations and the king's half-brothers were literally scared out of the kingdom; but only to make way for the advancement of the friends and relatives of the Mad Parliament. Soon after it met, Richard, who had emptied his pockets in Germany, wanted to come to England to replenish them. He was met at St. Omer by a messenger, stating that there would be no admittance unless he complied with the new regulations made by the barons. To this he reluctantly consented, and he joined his brother the king, with the full intention of organising an opposition, which he found already commenced by the Earl of Gloucester, who had grown jealous of Leicester's influence. Even at that early period the struggles between the «Ins and the Outs,» which form the chief business of political life, had already commenced, and there was the same sort of shuffling from side to side, and principle to principle, which the observer of statesmanship at the present day cannot fail to recognise. There was among all parties a vast protestation of regard for Magna Charta, which served the same purpose then as has since been answered by the British Constitution and the British lion. Henry, seeing with delight the divisions of the barons, got a bull from the pope to serve as a piece of india-rubber for his conscience, by rubbing out all the oaths he had taken at Oxford. On the 2nd of February, 1261, he announced his intention of governing without the aid of the committee, and immediately went to the Tower, of which he took possession. He then dropped in at the Mint, where he emptied every till, and even waited, according to some, while a shilling, which was in the course of manufacture, got cool in the crucible. The Mint authorities were of course exceedingly obsequious, and may probably have offered to send him home a batch of

new pennies that were not quite done, if his majesty desired it. «No, thank you,» would have been Henry's reply, «I'll take what you've got;» and so he did, for off he marched with the whole of it. The arbitrary conduct of the barons had somewhat disgusted the people, many of whom had discovered that one tyrant was not quite so bad as four-and-twenty. London declared for Henry, and Leicester ran away; but the vacillating cockneys soon declared for Leicester, which brought him back again. The king, who had been at such pains to secure the Tower, had the mortification to find it secured him, for he was safely locked up in it. Prince Edward, his son, flew to Windsor Castle, and the queen, his mother, was going down to the stairs at London Bridge to take a boat to follow him. She had shouted «Hi!» to the jack-in-the-water, and was stepping into a wherry, when she was recognised by the mob, who called after her as a witch, and pelted her with mud and missiles.

The Lord Mayor, who happened to be passing, gallantly offered her his arm, walked with her to St. Paul's, and left her in the care of the doorkeeper.

This anecdote is circumstantially given by all the chroniclers, among whom we need only mention Wykes, West, and Trivet—the correctness of the last being so remarkable that «right as a Trivet» is to this day a proverb.

After a prodigious quantity of quarrelling between Henry and Son on one part, and Leicester and Co. on the other, the matters in dispute were referred to the arbitration of the French king, Louis the Ninth, who made an award in favour of Henry, which the barons of course refused to abide by.

A civil war broke out with great fury, in which the Jews were victimised by both parties, though opposed to neither.

They were slaughtered by the barons for being attached to the king, and were also slaughtered by the king's party for being attached to the barons. If they were attached to either it certain-

ly was one of the most unfortunate attachments we ever heard of, and the strength of the attachment must have been great which could have survived such horrible treatment.

On the 14th of May, 1264, the king's party and that of Leicester met in battle. His majesty was at Lewes, in a hollow, where he thought himself deep enough to have got into a position of safety. The earl was upon the Downs, which Wykes calls a «downy move,» for the spot was raised and commanded a view of the movements of the sovereign.

Leicester commenced the attack, which soon became general. Prince Edward charged the London militia, who could have charged pretty well in return if they been behind their counters; but they had no idea of selling their lives at any price.

They accordingly fled in all directions and the prince paid them off all he owed them for the manner in which they had served his mother. Leicester concentrated his force upon the king to whom he gave personally a sound thrashing.

Having cudgelled the king to his heart's content, he took him into custody. Prince Edward was seized, but the latter escaped on the Thursday in Whitsun week, 1265, and raised a powerful force, with which he marched to Evesham against his father's enemies. Leicester had formed a camp near Kenilworth, and having got the king still in his possession, he encased the poor old man in armour, put him on a horse, and turned him into the field on the morning of the battle.

The veteran was soon dismounted, and was on the point of being killed, when he roared out «Hollo! stop! I am Henry of Winchester!» His son recognising his voice, seized him and literally bundled him into a place of safety. «What do you do here?» muttered Edward, somewhat annoyed, but the aged Henry could not explain a circumstance which might have played old Harry with the cause of the Royalists. Leicester's horse fell under him, but the earl bounding to his feet, continued to fight, until finding the matter getting serious, he paused

to inquire whether the Royalists gave quarter.

«There is no quarter for traitors,» was the only reply he received, followed by a poke in the shape of a home-thrust from the sword of one of the enemy. Deprived of their leader, Leicester's followers had nothing to follow, and the Royalists obtained a victory. The king was now restored to power, but there were still a few rebels in the forest of Hampshire, one of whom, named Adam Gourdon, came to a personal contest with Prince Edward, who got him down, placed his foot on his chest, and generously restored him to liberty. Gourdon was introduced to the queen the same night as a sort of prize rebel, and became a faithful adherent to the royal family.

Henry was now left at home all by himself, his son Edward having gone to Palestine. The old man often wrote to request the prince to return, for his majesty found himself unequal to the bother of ruling a people still disposed to be occasionally turbulent. A sedition had broken out at Norwich, which Henry had gone to quell, and he was on his way back to London, when he was laid up at St. Edmund's Bury by indisposition. Being considered a slight illness, it was at first slighted, but the royal patient became worse, and he died on the 16th of November, 1272, at the respectable age of sixty-eight, according to one historian, * sixty-four according to a second, ** and sixty-six according to a third. *** The last seems to be the nearest to the truth, for Henry had been a king about fifty-six years, and he was about ten when he came to the throne. He was buried at Westminster Abbey, where for nothing on Sundays and for twopence on week days, posterity may see his tomb.

* Macfarlane. ** Hume. ***Rapin.

The character of Henry the Third was an odd compound, a species of physiological grog, a mixture of generous spirit and weak water, the latter predominating over the former in a very considerable degree, He was exceedingly fond of money, of which he extracted such enormous quantities from his sub-

jects, that if the heart and the pocket were synonymous, as they have sometimes been called, Henry would have had the fullest possession of the hearts of his people.

His manner must have been rather persuasive; for if the Parliament refused a subsidy at first they were always talked over by his majesty, and made to relax their purse-strings before the sitting closed. Some gratitude may perhaps be due to him on account of his patronage of literature, for he started the practice of keeping a poet, in an age when poets found considerable difficulty in keeping themselves.

The bard alluded to was one Master Henry, who received on one occasion a hundred shillings, * and was subsequently «ordered ten pounds;» but, considering the unpunctuality of the king in money matters, it was doubtful whether the order for ten pounds was ever honoured. The persecution of the Jews was among the most remarkable features of the career of the king, who used to demand enormous sums of them, and threatened to hang them if they refused compliance. In this he only followed the example of his father, John, who, it is said, demanded ten thousand marks of an unfortunate Jew, one of whose teeth was pulled out every day, until he paid the money. It is said by Matthew Paris that seven were extracted before the cash was forthcoming.

This was undoubtedly the fact, but it is not generally known, that, with the cunning of his race, the Jew contrived to get some advantage out of the treatment to which he was subjected. It is said that he exclaimed, after the last operation had been performed, «They don't know it, but them teeth was all decayed.

There's not a shound von among the lot, so I've done *em* nicely;» and with this piece of consolation, he paid the money. Madox,

To his reign has also been attributed the origin of the custom of sending deputies to Parliament to represent the commons, a practice that we find from looking over the list of the lower house, is liable to be in some cases greatly abused.

«Take him for all in all,» as the poet says, «we shall never» that is to say, we hope we shall never—»look up on his like again