

YONGE CHARLOTTE MARY

YOUNG FOLKS' HISTORY
OF ENGLAND

Charlotte Yonge
Young Folks' History of England

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Young Folks' History of England:

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History of England

CHAPTER I

JULIUS CÆSAR

B.C. 55

Nearly two thousand years ago there was a brave captain whose name was Julius Cæsar. The soldiers he led to battle were very strong, and conquered the people wherever they went. They had no gun or gunpowder then; but they had swords and spears, and, to prevent themselves from being hurt, they had helmets or brazen caps on their heads, with long tufts of horse-hair upon them, by way of ornament, and breast-plates of brass on their breasts, and on their arms they carried a sort of screen, made of strong leather. One of them carried a little brass figure of an eagle on a long pole, with a scarlet flag flying below, and wherever the eagle was seen, they all followed, and fought so bravely that nothing could long stand against them.

When Julius Cæsar rode at their head, with his keen, pale hook-nosed face, and the scarlet cloak that the general always

wore, they were so proud of him, and so fond of him, that there was nothing they would not do for him.

Julius Cæsar heard that a little way off there was a country nobody knew anything about, except that the people were very fierce and savage, and that a sort of pearl was found in the shells of mussels which lived in the rivers. He could not bear that there should be any place that his own people, the Romans, did not know and subdue. So he commanded the ships to be prepared, and he and his soldiers embarked, watching the white cliffs on the other side of the sea grow higher and higher as he came nearer and nearer.

When he came quite up to them, he found the savages were there in earnest. They were tall men, with long red streaming hair, and such clothes as they had were woollen, checked like plaid; but many had their arms and breasts naked, and painted all over in blue patterns. They yelled and brandished their darts, to make Julius Cæsar and his Roman soldiers keep away; but he only went on to a place where the shore was not quite so steep, and there commanded his soldiers to land. The savages had run along the shore too, and there was a terrible fight; but at last the man who carried the eagle jumped down into the middle of the natives, calling out to his fellows that they must come after him, or they would lose their eagle. They all came rushing and leaping down, and thus they managed to force back the savages, and make their way to the shore.

There was not much worth having when they had made their

way there. Though they came again the next year, and forced their way a good deal farther into the country, they saw chiefly bare downs, or heaths, or thick woods. The few houses were little more than piles of stones, and the people were rough and wild, and could do very little. The men hunted wild boars, and wolves and stags, and the women dug the ground, and raised a little corn, which they ground to flour between two stones to make bread; and they spun the wool of their sheep, dyed it with bright colors, and wove it into dresses. They had some strong places in the woods, with trunks of trees, cut down to shut them in from the enemy, with all their flocks and cattle; but Caelig;sar did not get into any of these. He only made the natives give him some of their pearls, and call the Romans their masters, and then he went back to his ships, and none of the set of savages who were alive when he came saw him or his Romans any more.

Do you know who these savages were who fought with Julius Cæsar? They were called Britons. And the country he came to see? That was our very own island, England, only it was not called so then. And the place where Julius Cæsar landed is called Deal, and, if you look at the map where England and France most nearly touch one another, I think you will see the name Deal, and remember it was there Julius Cæsar landed, and fought with the Britons.

It was fifty-five years before our blessed Saviour was born that the Romans came. So at the top of this chapter stands B.C. (Before Christ) 55.

CHAPTER II

THE ROMANS IN BRITAIN

A.D. 41—418

It was nearly a hundred years before any more of the Romans came to Britain; but they were people who could not hear of a place without wanting to conquer it, and they never left off trying till they had done what they undertook.

One of their emperors, named Claudius, sent his soldiers to conquer the island, and then came to see it himself, and called himself Brittanicus in honor of the victory, just as if he had done it himself, instead of his generals. One British chief, whose name was Caractacus, who had fought very bravely against the Romans, was brought to Rome, with chains on his hands and feet, and set before them emperor. As he stood there, he said that, when he looked at all the grand buildings of stone and marble in the streets, he could not think why the Romans should want to take away the poor rough-stone huts of the Britons. The wife of Caractacus, who had also been brought a prisoner to Rome, fell upon her knees imploring for pity, but the conquered chief asked for nothing and exhibited no signs of fear. Claudius was kind to Caractacus; but the Romans went on conquering Britain till they had won all the part of it that lies south of the river Tweed; and, as the people beyond that point were more fierce and savage still,

a very strong wall, with a bank of earth and deep ditch was made to keep them out, and always watched by Roman soldiers.

The Romans made beautiful straight roads all over the country, and they built towns. Almost all the towns whose names end in *chester* were begun by the Romans, and bits of their walls are to be seen still, built of very small bricks. Sometimes people dig up a bit of the beautiful pavement of colored tiles, in patterns, which used to be the floors of their houses, or a piece of their money, or one of their ornaments.

For the Romans held Britain for four hundred years, and tamed the wild people in the south, and taught them to speak and dress, and read and write like themselves, so that they could hardly be known from the Romans. Only the wild ones beyond the wall, and in the mountains, were as savage as ever, and, now and then, used to come and steal the cattle, and burn the houses of their neighbors who had learnt better.

Another set of wild people used to come over in boats across the North Sea and German Ocean. These people had their home in the country that is called Holstein and Jutland. They were tall men, and had blue eyes and fair hair, and they were very strong, and good-natured in a rough sort of way, though they were fierce to their enemies. There was a great deal more fighting than any one has told us about; but the end of it all was that the Roman soldiers were wanted at home, and though the great British chief we call King Arthur fought very bravely, he could not drive back the blue-eyed men in the ships; but more and more came, till, at

last, they got all the country, and drove the Britons, some up into the North, some into the mountains that rise along the West of the island, and some into its west point.

The Britons used to call the blue-eyed men Saxons; but they called themselves Angles, and the country was called after them Angle-land. Don't you know what it is called now? England itself, and the people English. They spoke much the same language as we do, only more as untaught country people, and they had not so many words, because they had not so many things to see and talk about.

As to the Britons, the English went on driving them back till they only kept their mountains. There they have gone on living ever since, and talking their own old language. The English called them Welsh, a name that meant strangers, and we call them Welsh still, and their country Wales. They made a great many grand stories about their last brave chief, Arthur, till, at last, they turned into a sort of fairy tale. It was said that, when King Arthur lay badly wounded after his last battle, he bade his friend fling his sword into the river, and that then three lovely ladies came in a boat, and carried him away to a secret island. The Welsh kept on saying, for years and years, that one day king Arthur would wake up again, and give them back all Britain, which used to be their own before the English got it for themselves; but the English have had England now for thirteen hundred years, and we cannot doubt they will keep it as long as the world lasts.

It was about 400 years after our Lord was born that the

Romans were going and the English coming.

CHAPTER III

THE ANGLE CHILDREN

A.D. 597

The old English who had come to Britain were heathen, and believed in many false gods: the Sun, to whom they made Sunday sacred, as Monday was to the moon, Wednesday to a great terrible god, named Woden, and Thursday to a god named Thor, or Thunder. They thought a clap of thunder was the sound of the great hammer he carried in his hand. They thought their gods cared for people being brave, and that the souls of those who died fighting gallantly in battle were the happiest of all; but they did not care for kindness or gentleness.

Thus they often did very cruel things, and one of the worst that they did was the stealing of men, women, and children from their homes, and selling them to strangers, who made slaves of them. All England had not one king. There were generally about seven kings, each with a different part of the island and as they were often at war with one another, they used to steal one another's subjects, and sell them to merchants who came from Italy and Greece for them.

Some English children were made slaves, and carried to Rome, where they were set in the market-place to be sold. A good priest, named Gregory, was walking by. He saw their fair faces,

blue eyes, and long light hair, and, stopping, he asked who they were. "Angles," he was told, "from the isle of Britain." "Angles?" he said, "they have angel faces, and they ought to be heirs with the angels in heaven." From that time this good man tried to find means to send teachers to teach the English the Christian faith. He had to wait for many years, and, in that time, he was made Pope, namely, Father-Bishop of Rome. At last he heard that one of the chief English kings, Ethelbert of Kent, had married Bertha, the daughter of the King of Paris, who was a Christian, and that she was to be allowed to bring a priest with her, and have a church to worship in.

Gregory thought this would make a beginning: so he sent a priest, whose name was Augustine, with a letter to King Ethelbert and Queen Bertha, and asked the King to listen to him. Ethelbert met Augustine in the open air, under a tree at Canterbury, and heard him tell about the true God, and JESUS CHRIST, whom He sent; and, after some time, and a great deal of teaching, Ethelbert gave up worshiping Woden and Thor, and believed in the true God, and was baptized, and many of his people with him. Then Augustine was made Archbishop of Canterbury; and, one after another, in the course of the next hundred years, all the English kingdoms learnt to know God, and broke down their idols, and became Christian.

Bishops were appointed, and churches were built, and parishes were marked off—a great many of them the very same that we have now. Here and there, when men and women wanted

to be very good indeed, and to give their whole lives to doing nothing but serving God, without any of the fighting and feasting, the buying and selling of the outer world, they built houses, where they might live apart, and churches, where there might be services seven times a day. These houses were named abbeys. Those for men were, sometimes, also called monasteries, and the men in them were termed monks, while the women were called nuns, and their homes convents of nunneries. They had plain dark dresses, and hoods, and the women always had veils. The monks used to promise that they would work as well as pray, so they used to build their abbeys by some forest or marsh, and bring it all into order, turning the wild place into fields, full of wheat. Others used to copy out the Holy Scriptures and other good books upon parchment—because there was no paper in those days, nor any printing—drawing beautiful painted pictures at the beginning of the chapters, which were called illuminations. The nun did needlework and embroidery, as hangings for the altar, and garments for the priests, all bright with beautiful colors, and stiff with gold. The English nuns' work was the most beautiful to be seen anywhere.

There were schools in the abbeys, where boys were taught reading, writing, singing, and Latin, to prepare them for being clergymen; but not many others thought it needful to have anything to do with books. Even the great men thought they could farm and feast, advise the king, and consent to the laws, hunt or fight, quite as well without reading, and they did not care for

much besides; for, though they were Christians, they were still rude, rough, ignorant men, who liked nothing so well as a hunt or a feast, and slept away all the evening, especially when they could get a harper to sing to them.

The English men used to wear a long dress like a carter's frock, and their legs were wound round with strips of cloth by way of stockings. Their houses were only one story, and had no chimneys—only a hole at the top for the smoke to go out at; and no glass in the windows. The only glass there was at all had been brought from Italy to put into York Cathedral, and it was thought a great wonder. So the windows had shutters to keep out the rain and wind, and the fire was in the middle of the room. At dinner-time, about twelve o'clock, the lord and lady of the house sat upon cross-legged stools, and their children and servants sat on benches; and square bits of wood called trenchers, were put before them for plates, while the servants carried round the meat on spits, and everybody cut off a piece with his own knife and ate it without a fork. They drank out of cows' horns, if they had not silver cups. But though they were so rough they were often good, brave people.

CHAPTER IV

THE NORTHMEN

A.D. 858—958

There were many more of the light-haired, blue-eyed people on the further side of the North Sea who worshiped Thor and Woden still, and thought that their kindred in England had fallen from the old ways. Besides, they liked to make their fortunes by getting what they could from their neighbors. Nobody was thought brave or worthy, in Norway or Denmark, who had not made some voyages in a "long keel," as a ship was called, and fought bravely, and brought home gold cups and chains or jewels to show where he had been. Their captains were called Sea Kings, and some them went a great way, even into the Mediterranean Sea, and robbed the beautiful shores of Italy. So dreadful was it to see the fleet of long ships coming up to the shore, with a serpent for the figure-head, and a raven as the flag, and crowds of fierce warriors with axes in their hands longing for prey and bloodshed, that where we pray in church that God would deliver us from lightning and tempest, and battle and murder, our forefathers used to add, "From the fury of the Northmen, good Lord deliver us."

To England these Northmen came in great swarms, and chiefly from Denmark, so that they were generally call "the

Danes." They burnt the houses, drove off the cows and sheep, killed the men, and took away the women and children to be slaves; and they were always most cruel of all where they found an Abbey with any monks or nuns, because they hated the Christian faith. By this time those seven English kingdoms I told you of had all fallen into the hands of one king. Egbert, King of the West Saxons, who reigned at Winchester, is counted as the first king of all England. His four grandsons had dreadful battles with the Danes all their lives, and the three eldest all died quite young. The youngest was the greatest and best king England ever had—Alfred the Truth-teller. As a child Alfred excited the hopes and admiration of all who saw him, and while his brothers were busy with their sports, it was his delight to kneel at his mother's knee, and recite to her the Saxon ballads which his tutor had read to him, inspiring him, at that early age, with the ardent patriotism and the passionate love of literature which rendered his character so illustrious. He was only twenty-two years old when he came to the throne, and the kingdom was overrun everywhere with the Danes. In the northern part some had even settled down and made themselves at home, as the English had done four hundred years before, and more and more kept coming in their ships: so that, though Alfred beat them in battle again and again, there was no such thing as driving them away. At last he had so very few faithful men left him, that he thought it wise to send them away, and hide himself in the Somersetshire marsh country. There is a pretty story told of him that he was hidden in the hut of a poor

herdsman, whose wife, thinking he was a poor wandering soldier as he sat by the fire mending his bow and arrows, desired him to turn the cakes she had set to bake upon the hearth. Presently she found them burning, and cried out angrily, "Lazy rogue! you can't turn the cakes, though you can eat them fast enough."

However, that same spring, the brave English gained more victories; Alfred came out of his hiding place and gathered them all together, and beat the Danes, so that they asked for peace. He said he would allow those who had settled in the North of England to stay there, provided they would become Christians; and he stood godfather to their chief, and gave him the name of Ethelstane. After this, Alfred had stout ships built to meet the Danes at sea before they could come and land in England; and thus he kept them off, so that for all the rest of his reign, and that of his son and grandsons, they could do very little mischief, and for a time left off coming at all, but went to rob other countries that were not so well guarded by brave kings.

But Alfred was not only a brave warrior. He was a most good and holy man, who feared God above all things, and tried to do his very best for his people. He made good laws for them, and took care that every one should be justly treated, and that nobody should do his neighbor wrong without being punished. So many Abbeys had been burnt and the monks killed by the Danes, that there were hardly any books to be had, or scholars to read them. He invited learned men from abroad, and wrote and translated books himself for them; and he had a school in his house, where

he made the young nobles learn with his own sons. He built up the churches, and gave alms to the poor; and he was always ready to hear the troubles of any poor man. Though he was always working so hard, he had a disease that used to cause him terrible pain almost every day. His last years were less peaceful than the middle ones of his reign, for the Danes tried to come again; but he beat them off by his ships at sea, and when he died at fifty-two years old, in the year 901, he left England at rest and quiet, and we always think of him as one of the greatest and best kings who ever reigned in England, or in any other country. As long as his children after him and his people went on in the good way he had taught them, all prospered with them, and no enemies hurt them; and this was all through the reigns of his son, his grandson, and great-grandsons. Their council of great men was called by a long word that is in our English, "Wise Men's Meeting," and there they settled the affairs of the kingdom. The king's wife was not called queen, but lady; and what do you think lady means? It means "loaf-giver"—giver of bread to her household and the poor. so a lady's great work is to be charitable.

CHAPTER V

THE DANISH CONQUEST

A.D. 958—1035

The last very prosperous king was Alfred's great-grandson, Edgar, who was owned as their over-lord by all the kings of the remains of the Britons in Wales and Scotland. Once, eight of these kings came to meet him at Chester, and rowed him in his barge along the river Dee. It was the grandest day a king of England enjoyed for many years. Edgar was called the peaceable, because there were no attacks by the Danes at all through his reign. In fact, the Northmen and Danes had been fighting among themselves at home, and these fights generally ended in some one going off as a Sea-King, with all his friends, and trying to gain a new home in some fresh country. One great party of Northmen under a very tall and mighty chief named Rollo, had some time before, thus gone to France, and forced the King to give them a great piece of his country, just opposite to England, which was called after them Normandy. There they learned to talk French, and grew like Frenchmen, though they remained a great deal braver, and more spirited than any of their neighbors.

There were continually fleets of Danish ships coming to England; and the son of Edgar, whose name was Ethelred, was a helpless, cowardly sort of man, so slow and tardy, that his people

called him Ethelred the Unready. Instead of fitting out ships to fight against the Danes, he took the money the ships ought to have cost to pay them to go away without plundering; and as to those who had come into the country without his leave, he called them his guard, took them into his pay, and let them live in the houses of the English, where they were very rude, and gave themselves great airs, making the English feed them on all their best meat, and bread, and beer, and always call them Lord Danes. He made friends himself with the Northmen, or Normans, who had settled in France, and married Emma, the daughter of their duke; but none of his plans prospered: things grew worse and worse, and his mind and his people's grew so bitter against the Danes, that at last it was agreed that all over the South of England every Englishman should rise up in one night and murder the Dane who lodged in his house.

Among those Danes who were thus wickedly killed was the sister of the King of Denmark. Of course he was furious when he heard of it, and came over to England determined to punish the cruel, treacherous king and people, and take the whole island for his own. He did punish the people, killing, burning, and plundering wherever he went; but he could never get the king into his hands, for Ethelred went off in the height of the danger to Normandy, where he had before sent his wife Emma, and her children, leaving his eldest son(child of his first wife), Edmund Ironside, to fight for the kingdom as best he might.

The King of Denmark died in the midst of his English war;

but his son Cnut went on with the conquest he had begun, and before long Ethelred, the Unready died, and Edmund Ironside was murdered, and Cnut became King of England, as well as of Denmark. He became a Christian, and married Emma, Ethelred's widow, though she was much older than himself. He had been a hard and cruel man, but he now laid aside his evil ways, and became a noble and wise and just king, a lover of churches and good men; and the English seem to have been as well off under him as if he had been one of their own kings. There is no king of whom more pleasant stories are told. One is of his wanting to go to church at Ely Abbey one cold Candlemas Day. Ely was on a hill in the middle of a great marsh. The marsh was frozen over; not strong enough to bear, and they all stood looking at it. Then out stepped a stout countryman, who was so fat, that his nickname was The Pudding. "Are you all afraid?" he said. "I will go over at once before the king." "Will you," said the king, "then I will come after you, for whatever bears you will bear me." Cnut was a little, slight man, and he got easily over, and Pudding got a piece of land for his reward.

These servants of the king used to flatter him. They told him he was lord of land and sea, and that every thing would obey him. "Let us try," said Cnut, who wished to show them how foolish and profane they were; "bring out my chair to the sea-side." He was at Southampton at the time, close to the sea, and the tide was coming in. "Now sea," he said, as he sat down, "I am thy lord, dare not to come near, nor wet my feet." Of course the waves

rolled on, and splashed over him; and he turned to his servants, and bade them never say words that took away from the honor due to the only Lord of heaven and earth. He never put on his crown again after this, but hung it up in Winchester Cathedral. He was a thorough good king, and there was much grief when he died, stranger though he was.

A great many Danes had made their homes in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, ever since Alfred's time, and some of their customs are still left there, and some of their words. The worst of them was that they were great drunkards, and the English learnt this bad custom of them.

CHAPTER VI

THE NORMAN CONQUEST

A.D. 1035—1066

Cnut left three sons; but one was content to be only King of Denmark, and the other two died very soon. So a great English nobleman, called Earl Godwin, set up as king, Edward, one of those sons of Ethelred the Unready who had been sent away to Normandy. He was a very kind, good, pious man, who loved to do good. He began the building of our grand church at Westminster Abbey, and he was so holy that he was called the Confessor, which is a word for good men not great enough to be called saints. He was too good-natured, as you will say when you hear that one day, when he was in bed, he saw a thief come cautiously into his room, open the chest where his treasure was, and take out the money-bags. Instead of calling anyone, or seizing the man, the king only said, sleepily, "Take care, you rogue, or my chancellor will catch you and give you a good whipping."

You can fancy that nobody much minded such a king as this, and so there were many disturbances in his time. Some of them rose out of the king—who had been brought up in Normandy—liking the Normans better than the English. They really were much cleverer and more sensible, for they had learnt a great deal

in France, while the English had forgotten much of what Alfred and his sons had taught them, and all through the long, sad reign of Ethelred had been getting more dull, and clumsy and rude. Moreover, they had learnt of the Danes to be sad drunkards; but both they and the Danes thought the Norman French fine gentlemen, and could not bear the sight of them.

Think, then, how angry they all were when it began to be said that King Edward wanted to leave his kingdom of England to his mother's Norman nephew, Duke William, because all his own near relations were still little boys, not likely to be grown up by the time the old king died. Many of the English wished for Harold, the son of Earl Godwin, a brave, spirited man; but Edward sent him to Normandy, and there Duke William made him swear an oath not to do anything to hinder the kingdom from being given to Duke William.

Old King Edward died soon after, and Harold said at once that his promise had been forced and cheated from him, so that he need not keep it, and he was crowned King of England. This filled William with anger. He called all his fighting Normans together, fitted out ships, and sailed across the English Channel to Dover. The figure-head of his own ship was a likeness of his second little boy, named William. He landed at Pevensey, in Sussex, and set up his camp while Harold was away in the North, fighting with a runaway brother of his own, who had brought the Norwegians to attack Yorkshire. Harold had just won a great battle over these enemies when he heard that William and his

Normans had landed, and he had to hurry the whole length of England to meet them.

Many of the English would not join him, because they did not want him for their king. But though his army was not large, it was very brave. When he reached Sussex, he placed all his men on the top of a low hill, near Hastings, and caused them to make a fence all round, with a ditch before it, and in the middle was his own standard, with a fighting man embroidered upon it. Then the Normans rode up on their war-horses to attack him, one brave knight going first, singing. The war-horses stumbled in the ditch, and the long spears of the English killed both men and horses. Then William ordered his archers to shoot their arrows high in the air. They came down like hail into the faces and on the heads of the English. Harold himself was pierced by one in the eye. The Normans charged the fence again, and broke through; and, by the time night came on, Harold himself and all his brave Englishmen were dead. They did not flee away; they all staid, and were killed, fighting to the last; and only then was Harold's standard of the fighting man rooted up, and William's standard—a cross, which had been blessed by the Pope—planted instead of it. So ended the battle of Hastings, in the year 1066.

The land has had a great many "conquests" hitherto—the Roman conquest, the English conquest, and now the Norman conquest. But there have been no more since; and the kings and queens have gone on in one long line ever since, from William of Normandy down to Queen Victoria.

CHAPTER VII

WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR

A.D. 1066—1087

The king who had conquered England was a brave, strong man, who had been used to fighting and struggling ever since he was a young child.

He really feared God, and was in many ways a good man; but it had not been right of him to come and take another people's country by force; and the having done one wrong thing often makes people grow worse and worse. Many of the English were unwilling to have William as their king, and his Norman friends were angry that he would not let them have more of the English lands, nor break the English laws. So they were often rising up against him; and each time he had to put them down he grew more harsh and stern. He did not want to be cruel; but he did many cruel things, because it was the only way to keep England.

When the people of Northumberland rose against him, and tried to get back the old set of kings, he had the whole country wasted with fire and sword, till hardly a town or village was left standing. He did this to punish the Northumbrians, and frighten the rest. But he did another thing that was worse, because it was only for his own amusement. In Hampshire, near his castle of Winchester, there was a great space of heathy ground, and holly

copse and beeches and oaks above it, with deer and boars running wild in the glades—a beautiful place for hunting, only that there were so many villages in it that the creatures were disturbed and killed. William liked hunting more than anything else—his people said he loved the high deer as if he was their father,—and to keep the place clear for them, he turned out all the inhabitants, and pulled down their houses, and made laws against any one killing his game. The place he thus cleared is still called the New Forest, though it is a thousand years old.

An old Norman law that the English grumbled about very much was, that as soon as a bell was rung, at eight o'clock every evening, everyone was to put out candle and fire, and go to bed. The bell was called the curfew, and many old churches ring it still.

William caused a great list to be made of all the lands in the country, and who held them. We have this list still, and it is called Domesday Book. It shows that a great deal had been taken from the English and given to the Normans. The king built castles, with immensely thick, strong walls, and loop-hole windows, whence to shoot arrows; and here he placed his Normans to keep the English down. But the Normans were even more unruly than the English, and only his strong hand kept them in order. They rode about in armor—helmets on their heads, a shirt of mail, made of iron linked together, over their bodies, gloves and boots of iron, swords by their sides, and lances in their hands—and thus they could bear down all before them. They called themselves knights,

and were always made to take an oath to befriend the weak, and poor, and helpless; but they did not often keep it towards the poor English.

William had four sons—Robert, who was called Court-hose or Short-legs; William, called Rufus, because he had red hair; Henry, called Beau-clerc or the fine scholar; and Richard, who was still a lad when he was killed by a stag in the New Forest.

Robert, the eldest, was a wild, rude, thoughtless youth; but he fancied himself fit to govern Normandy, and asked his father to give it up to him. King William answered, "I never take my clothes off before I go to bed," meaning that Robert must wait for his death. Robert could not bear to be laughed at, and was very angry. Soon after, when he was in the castle court, his two brothers, William and Henry, grew riotous, and poured water down from the upper windows on him and his friends. He flew into a passion, dashed up-stairs with his sword in his hand, and might have killed his brothers if their father had not come in to protect them. Then he threw himself on his horse and galloped away, persuaded some friends to join him, and actually fought a battle with his own father, in which the old king was thrown off his horse, and hurt in the hand; but we must do the prince the justice to say that when he recognized his father in the knight whom he had unseated, he was filled with grief and horror, and eagerly sought his pardon, and tenderly raised him from the ground. Then Robert wandered about, living on money that his mother, Queen Matilda, sent him, though his father was angry

with her for doing so, and this made the first quarrel the husband and wife had ever had.

Not long after, William went to war with the King of France. He had caused a city to be burnt down, and was riding through the ruins, when his horse trod on some hot ashes, and began to plunge. The king was thrown forward on the saddle, and, being a very heavy, stout man, was so much hurt, that, after a few weeks, in the year 1087, he died at a little monastery, a short way from Rouen, the chief city of his dukedom of Normandy.

He was the greatest man of his time, and he had much good in him; and when he lay on his death-bed he grieved much for all the evil he had brought upon the English; but that could not undo it. He had been a great church-builder, and so were his Norman bishops and barons. You always know their work, because it has round pillars, and round arches, with broad borders of zigzags, and all manner of patterns round them.

In the end, the coming of the Normans did the English much good, by brightening them up and making them less dull and heavy; but they did not like having a king and court who talked French, and cared more for Normandy than for England.

CHAPTER VIII

WILLIAM II., RUFUS

A.D. 1087-1100

William the Conqueror was obliged to let Normandy fall to Robert, his eldest son; but he thought he could do as he pleased about England, which he had won for himself. He had sent off his second son, William, to England, with his ring to Westminster, giving him a message that he hoped the English people would have him for their king. And they did take him, though they would hardly have done so if they had known what he would be like when he was left to himself. But while he was kept under by his father, they only knew that he had red hair and a ruddy face, and had more sense than his brother Robert. He is sometimes called the Red King, but more commonly William Rufus. Things went worse than ever with the poor English in his time; for at least William the Conqueror had made everybody mind the law, but now William Rufus let his cruel soldiers do just as they pleased, and spoil what they did not want. It was of no use to complain, for the king would only laugh and make jokes. He did not care for God or man; only for being powerful, for feasting, and for hunting.

Just at this time there was a great stir in Europe. Jerusalem—that holy city, where our blessed Lord had taught, where he

had been crucified, and where he had risen from the dead—was a place where everyone wished to go and worship, and this they called going on pilgrimage. A beautiful church had once been built over the sepulchre where our Lord had lain, and enriched with gifts. But for a long time past Jerusalem had been in the hands of an Eastern people, who think their false prophet, Mahommed, greater than our blessed Lord. These Mahommedans used to rob and ill-treat the pilgrims, and make them pay great sums of money for leave to come into Jerusalem. At last a pilgrim, named Peter the Hermit, came home, and got leave from the Pope to try to go to the Holy Land, and fight to get the Holy Sepulchre back into Christian hands again. He used to preach in the open air, and the people who heard him were so stirred up that they all shouted out, "It is God's will! It is God's will!" And each who undertook to go and fight in the East received a cross cut out into cloth, red or white, to wear on his shoulder. Many thousands promised to go on this crusade, as they called it, among them was Robert, Duke of Normandy. But he had wasted his money, so that he could not fit out an army to take with him. So he offered to give up Normandy to his brother William while he was gone, if William would let him have the money he wanted. The Red King was very ready to make such a bargain, and he laughed at the Crusaders, and thought that they were wasting their time and trouble.

They had a very good man to lead them, named Geoffrey de Buillon; and, after many toils and troubles, they did gain

Jerusalem, and could kneel, weeping, at the Holy Sepulchre. It was proposed to make Robert King of Jerusalem, but he would not accept the offer, and Godfrey was made king instead, and staid to guard the holy places, while Duke Robert set out on his return home.

In the meantime, the Red King had gone on in as fierce and ungodly a way as ever, laughing good advice to scorn, and driving away the good Archbishop of Canterbury, St. Anselm, and everyone else who tried to warn him or withstand his wickedness. One day, in the year 1100, he went out to hunt deer in the New Forest, which his father had wasted, laughing and jesting in his rough way. By and by he was found under an oak tree, with an arrow through his heart; and a wood-cutter took up his body in his cart, and carried it to Winchester Cathedral, where is was buried.

Who shot the arrow nobody knew, and nobody ever will know. Some thought it must be a knight, named Walter Tyrrell, to whom the king had given three long good arrows that morning. He rode straight away to Southampton, and went off to the Holy Land; so it is likely that he knew something about the king's death. But he never seems to have told any one, whether it was only an accident, or a murder, or who did it. Anyway, it was a fearful end, for a bad man to die in his sin, without a moment to repent and pray.

CHAPTER IX

HENRY I., BEAU-CLERC

A.D. 1100—1135

Henry, the brother of William Rufus, was one of the hunting party; and as soon as the cry spread through the forest that the king was dead, he rode off at full speed to Winchester, and took possession of all his brother's treasure. William Rufus had never been married, and left no children, and Henry was much the least violent and most sensible of the brothers; and, as he promised to govern according to the old laws of England, he did not find it difficult to persuade the people to let him be crowned king.

He was not really a good man, and he could be very cruel sometimes, as well as false and cunning; but he kept good order, and would not allow such horrible things to be done as in his brother's time. So the English were better off than they had been, and used to say the king would let no one break the laws but himself. They were pleased, too, that Henry married a lady who was half English—Maude, the daughter of Malcolm Greathead, King of Scotland, and of a lady of the old English royal line. They loved her greatly, and called her good Queen Maude.

Robert came back to Normandy, and tried to make himself King of England; but Henry soon drove him back. The brothers went on quarreling for some years, and Robert managed

Normandy miserably, and wasted his money, so that he sometimes had no clothes to wear, and lay in bed for want of them.

Some of the Normans could not bear this any longer, and invited Henry to come and take the dukedom. He came with an army, many of whom were English, and fought a battle with Robert and his faithful Normans at Trenchebury, in Normandy. They gained a great victory, and the English thought it made up for Hastings. Poor Robert was made prisoner by his brother, who sent him off to Cardiff Castle, in Wales, where he lived for twenty-eight years, and then died, and was buried in Gloucester Cathedral, with his figure made in bog oak over his monument.

Henry had two children—William and Maude. The girl was married to the Emperor of Germany and the boy was to be the husband of Alice, daughter to the Count of Anjou, a great French Prince, whose lands were near Normandy. It was the custom to marry children very young then, before they were old enough to leave their parents and make a home for themselves. So William was taken by his father to Anjou, and there married to the little girl, and then she was left behind, while he was to return to England with his father. Just as he was going to embark, a man came to the king, and begged to have the honor of taking him across in his new vessel, called the White Ship. Henry could not change his own plans; but, as the man begged so hard, he said his son, the young bridegroom, and his friends might go in the White Ship. They sailed in the evening, and there was a great

merry-making on board, till the sailors grew so drunk that they did not know how to guide the ship, and ran her against a rock. She filled with water and began to sink. A boat was lowered, and William safely placed in it; but, just as he was rowed off he heard the cries of the ladies who were left behind, and caused the oarsmen to turn back for them. So many drowning wretches crowded into it, as soon as it came near, that it sank with their weight, and all were lost. Only the top-mast of the ship remained above water, and to it clung a butcher and the owner of the ship all night long. When daylight came, and the owner knew that the king's son was really dead, and by his fault, he lost heart, let go the mast and was drowned. Only the butcher was taken off alive; and for a long time no one durst tell the king what had happened. At last a boy was sent to fall at his feet, and tell him his son was dead. He was a broken-hearted man, and never knew gladness again all the rest of his life.

His daughter Maude had lost her German husband, and came home. He made her marry Geoffrey of Anjou, the brother of his son's wife, and called upon all his chief noblemen to swear that they would take her for their queen in England and their duchess in Normandy after his own death. He did not live much longer. His death was caused, in the year 1135, by eating too much of the fish called lamprey, and he was buried in Reading Abbey.

CHAPTER X

STEPHEN

A.D. 1135—1154

Neither English nor Normans had ever been ruled by a woman, and the Empress Maude, as she still called herself, was a proud, disagreeable, ill-tempered woman, whom nobody liked. So her cousin, Stephen de Blois—whose mother, Adela, had been daughter of William the Conqueror—thought to obtain the crown of England by promising to give everyone what they wished. It was very wrong of him; for he, like all the other barons, had sworn that Maude should reign. But the people knew he was a kindly, gracious sort of person, and greatly preferred him to her. So he was crowned; and at once all the Norman barons, whom King Henry had kept down, began to think they could have their own way. They built strong castles, and hired men, with whom they made war upon each other, robbed one another's tenants, and, when they saw a peaceable traveler on his way, they would dash down upon him, drag him into the castle, take away all the jewels or money he had about him, or, if he had none, they would shut him up and torment him till he could get his friends to pay them a sum to let him loose.

Stephen, who was a kind-hearted man himself, tried to stop these cruelties; but then the barons turned round on him, told

him he was not their proper king, and invited Maude to come and be crowned in his stead. She came very willingly; and her uncle, King David of Scotland, set out with an army to fight for her; but all the English in the north came out to drive him back; and they beat him and his Scots at what they call the Battle of the Standard, because the English had a holy standard, which was kept in Durham Cathedral. Soon after, Stephen was taken prisoner at a battle at Lincoln, and there was nothing to prevent Maude from being queen but her own bad temper. She went to Winchester, and was there proclaimed; but she would not speak kindly or gently to the people; and when her friends entreated her to reply more kindly, she flew into a passion, and it is even said that she gave a box on the ear to her uncle—the good King of Scotland, who had come to help her—for reproving her for her harsh answers. When Stephen's wife came to beg her to set him free, promising that he should go away beyond the seas, and never interfere with her again, she would not listen, and drove her away. But she soon found how foolish she had been. Stephen's friends would have been willing that he should give up trying to be king, but they could not leave him in prison for life; and so they went on fighting for him, while more and more of the English joined them, as they felt how bad and unkind a queen they had in the Empress. Indeed, she was so proud and violent, that her husband would not come over to England to help her, but staid to govern Normandy. She was soon in great distress, and had to flee from Winchester, riding through the midst of the

enemy, and losing almost all her friends by the way as they were slain or made prisoners. Her best helper of all—Earl Robert of Gloucester—was taken while guarding her; and she could only get to his town of Gloucester by lying down in a coffin, with holes for air, and being thus carried through all the country, where she had made everyone hate her.

Stephen's wife offered to set the Earl free, if the other side would release her husband; and this exchange was brought about. Robert then went to Normandy, to fetch Maude's little son Henry, who was ten years old, leaving her, as he thought, safe in Oxford Castle; but no sooner was he gone than Stephen brought his army, and besieged the Castle—that is, he brought his men round it, tried to climb up the walls, or beat them down with heavy beams, and hindered any food from being brought in. Everything in the castle that could be eaten was gone; but Maude was determined not to fall into her enemy's hands. It was the depth of winter; the river below the walls was frozen over, and snow was on the ground. One night, Maude dressed herself and three of her knights all in white, and they were, one by one, let down by ropes from the walls. No one saw them in the snow. They crossed the river on the ice, walked a great part of the night, and at last came to Abingdon, where horses were waiting for them, and thence they rode to Wallingford, where Maude met her little son.

There was not much more fighting after this. Stephen kept all the eastern part of the kingdom, and Henry was brought up at

Gloucester till his father sent for him, to take leave of him before going on a crusade. Geoffrey died during this crusade. He was fond of hunting, and was generally seen with a spray of broom blossom in his cap. The French name for this plant is *genet*; and thus his nickname was "Plantagenet;" and this became a kind of surname to the kings of England.

Henry, called Fitz-empress—or "the Empress's son"—came to England again as soon as he was grown up; but instead of going to war, he made an agreement with Stephen. Henry would not attack Stephen any more, but leave him to reign all the days of his life, provided Stephen engaged that Henry should reign instead of his own son after his death. This made Stephen's son, Eustace, very angry, and he went away in a rage to raise troops to maintain his cause; but he died suddenly in the midst of his wild doings, and the king, his father, did not live long after him, but died in 1154.

Maude had learnt wisdom by her misfortunes. She had no further desire to be queen, but lived a retired life in a convent, and was much more respected there than as queen.

CHAPTER XI

HENRY II., FITZ-EMPRESS

A.D. 1154-1189

Henry Fitz-Empress is counted as the first king of the Plantagenet family, also called the House of Anjou. He was a very clever, brisk, spirited man, who hardly ever sat down, but was always going from place to place, and who would let no one disobey him. He kept everybody in order, pulled down almost all the Castles that had been built in Stephen's time, and would not let the barons ill-treat the people. Indeed, everyone had been so mixed up together during the wars in Stephen's reign, that the grandchildren of the Normans who had come over with William the Conqueror were now quite English in their feelings. French was, however, chiefly spoken at court. The king was really a Frenchman, and he married a French wife Eleanor, the lady of Aquitaine, a great dukedom in the South of France; and, as Henry had already Normandy and Anjou, he really was lord of nearly half France. He ruled England well; but he was not a good man, for he cared for power and pleasure more than for what was right; and sometimes he fell into such rages that he would roll on the floor, and bite the rushes and sticks it was strewn with. He made many laws. One was that, if a priest or monk was thought to have committed any crime, he should be tried by the king's

judge, instead of the bishop. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas a Becket, did not think it right to consent to this law; and, though he and the king had once been great friends, Henry was so angry with him that he was forced to leave England, and take shelter with the King of France. Six years passed by, and the king pretended to be reconciled to him, but still, when they met, would not give him the kiss of peace. The archbishop knew that this showed that the king still hated him; but his flock had been so long without a shepherd that he thought it his duty to go back to them. Just after his return, he laid under censure some persons who had given offence. They went and complained to the king, and Henry exclaimed in passion, "Will no one rid me of this turbulent priest?" Four of his knights who heard these words set forth to Canterbury. The archbishop guessed why they were come; but he would not flee again, and waited for them by the altar in the cathedral, not even letting the doors be shut. There they slew him; and thither, in great grief at the effect of his own words, the king came—three years later—to show his penitence by entering barefoot, kneeling before Thomas's tomb, and causing every priest or monk in turn to strike him with a rod. We should not exactly call Thomas a martyr now, but he was thought so then, because he died for upholding the privileges of the Church, and he was held to be a very great saint.

While this dispute was going on, the Earl of Pembroke, called Strongbow, one of Henry's nobles, had gone over to Ireland and obtained a little kingdom there, which he professed to hold of

Henry; and thus the Kings of England became Lords of Ireland, though for a long time they only had the Province of Leinster, and were always at war with the Irish around.

Henry was a most powerful king; but his latter years were very unhappy. His wife was not a good woman, and her sons were all disobedient and rebellious. Once all the three eldest, Henry, Richard, and Geoffrey, and their mother, ran away together from his court, and began to make war upon him. He was much stronger and wiser than they so he soon forced them to submit; and he sent Queen Eleanor away, and shut her up in a strong castle in England as long as he lived. Here sons were much more fond of her than of their father, and they thought this usage so hard, that they were all the more ready to break out against him. The eldest son, Henry, was leading an army against his father, when he was taken ill, and felt himself dying. He sent an entreaty that his father would forgive him, and come to see him; but the young man had so often been false and treacherous, that Henry feared it was only a trick to get him as a prisoner, and only sent his ring and a message of pardon; and young Henry died, pressing the ring to his lips, and longing to hear his father's voice.

Geoffrey, the third son, was killed by a fall from his horse, and there were only two left alive, Richard and John. Just at this time, news came that the Mahommedans in the Holy Land had won Jerusalem back again; and the Pope called on all Christian princes to leave off quarreling, and go on a crusade to recover the Holy Sepulchre.

The kings of England and France, young Richard, and many more, were roused to take the cross; but while arrangements for going were being made, a fresh dispute about them arose, and Richard went away in a rage, got his friends together, and, with King Philip of France to help him, began to make war. His father was feeble, and worn out, and could not resist as in former times. He fell ill, and gave up the struggle, saying he would grant all they asked. The list of Richard's friends whom he was to pardon was brought to him, and the first name he saw in it was that of John, his youngest son, and his darling, the one who had never before rebelled. That quite broke his heart, his illness grew worse, and he talked about an old eagle being torn to pieces by his eaglets. And so, in the year 1189, Henry II. died the saddest death, perhaps, that an old man can die, for his sons had brought down his gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.

CHAPTER XII

RICHARD I., LION-HEART

A.D. 1189—1199

Richard was greatly grieved at his father's death, and when he came and looked at the dead body, in Fontevraud Abbey Church, he cried out, "Alas! it was I who killed him!" But it was too late now: he could not make up for what he had done, and he had to think about the Crusade he had promised to make. Richard was so brave and strong that he was called Lion-heart; he was very noble and good in some ways, but his fierce, passionate temper did him a great deal of harm. He, and King Philip of France, and several other great princes, all met in the island of Sicily in the Mediterranean Sea, and thence sailed for the Holy Land. The lady whom Richard was to marry came to meet him in Sicily. Her name was Berengaria; but, as it was Lent, he did not marry her then. She went on to the Holy Land in a ship with his sister Joan, and tried to land in the island of Cypress; but the people were inhospitable, and would not let them come. So Richard, in his great anger, conquered the isle, and was married to Berengaria there.

The Mahommedans who held Palestine at that time were called Saracens, and had a very brave prince at their head named Saladin, which means Splendor of Religion. He was very good,

just, upright, and truth-telling, and his Saracens fought so well, that the Crusaders would hardly have won a bit of ground if the Lion-heart had not been so brave. At last, they did take one city on the coast named Acre; and one of the princes, Leopold, Duke of Austria, set up his banner on the walls. Richard did not think it ought to be there: he pulled it up and threw it down into the ditch, asking the duke how he durst take the honors of a king. Leopold was sullen, and brooded over the insult, and King Philip thought Richard so overbearing, that he could not bear to be in the army with him any longer. In truth, though Philip had pretended to be his friend, and had taken his part against his father, that was really only to hurt King Henry; he hated Richard quite as much, or more, and only wanted to get home first in order to do him as much harm as he could while he was away. So Philip said it was too hot for him in the Holy Land, and made him ill. He sailed back to France, while Richard remained, though the climate really did hurt his health, and he often had fevers there. When he was ill, Saladin used to send him grapes, and do all he could to show how highly he thought of so brave a man. Once Saladin sent him a beautiful horse; Richard told the Earl of Salisbury to try it, and no sooner was the earl mounted, than the horse ran away with him to the Saracen army. Saladin was very much vexed, and was afraid it would be taken for a trick to take the English king prisoner, and he gave the earl a quieter horse to ride back with. Richard fought one terrible battle at Joppa with the Saracens, and then he tried to go on to take Jerusalem; but

he wanted to leave a good strong castle behind him at Ascalon, and set all his men to work to build it up. When they grumbled, he worked with them, and asked the duke to do the same; but Leopold said gruffly that he was not a carpenter or a mason. Richard was so provoked that he struck him a blow, and the duke went home in a rage.

So many men had gone home, that Richard found his army was not strong enough to try to take Jerusalem. He was greatly grieved, for he knew it was his own fault for not having shown the temper of a Crusader; and when he came to the top of a hill whence the Holy City could be seen, he would not look at it, but turned away, saying, "They who are not worthy to win it are not worthy to behold it." It was of no use for him to stay with so few men; besides, tidings came from home that King Philip and his own brother, John, were doing all the mischief they could. So he made a peace for three years between the Saracens and Christians, hoping to come back again after that to rescue Jerusalem. But on his way home there were terrible storms; his ships were scattered, and his own ship was driven up into the Adriatic Sea, where he was robbed by pirates, or sea robbers, and then was shipwrecked. There was no way for him to get home but through the lands of Leopold of Austria; so he pretended to be a merchant, and set out attended only by a boy. He fell ill at a little inn, and while he was in bed the boy went into the kitchen with the king's glove in his belt. It was an embroidered glove, such as merchants never used, and

people asked questions, and guessed that the boy's master must be some great man. The Duke of Austria heard of it, sent soldiers to take him, and shut him up as a prisoner in one of his castles. Afterwards, the duke gave him up for a large sum of money to the Emperor of Germany. All this time Richard's wife and mother had been in great sorrow and fear, trying to find out what had become of him. It is said that he was found at last by his friend, the minstrel Blondel. A minstrel was a person who made verses and sang them. Many of the nobles and knights in Queen Eleanor's Duchy of Aquitaine were minstrels—and Richard was a very good one himself, and amused himself in his captivity by making verses. This is certainly true—though I cannot answer for it that the pretty story is true, which says that Blondel sung at all the castle courts in Germany, till he heard his master's voice take up and reply to his song.

The Queens, Eleanor and Berengaria, raised a ransom—that is, a sum of money to buy his freedom—though his brother John tried to prevent them, and the King of France did his best to hinder the emperor from releasing him; but the Pope insisted that the brave crusader should be set at liberty: and Richard came home, after a year and a half of captivity. He freely forgave John for all the mischief he had done or tried to do, though he thought so ill of him as to say, "I wish I may forget John's injuries to me as soon as he will forget my pardon of him."

Richard only lived two years after he came back. He was besieging a castle in Aquitaine, where there was some treasure

that he thought was unlawfully kept from him, when he was struck in the shoulder by a bolt from a cross-bow, and the surgeons treated it so unskilfully that in a few days he died. The man who had shot the bolt was made prisoner, but the Lion-heart's last act was to command that no harm should be done to him. The soldiers, however, in their grief and rage for the king, did put him to death in a cruel manner.

Richard desired to be burned at the feet of his father, in Fontevraud Abbey, where he once bewailed his undutiful conduct, and now wished his body forever to lie in penitence. The figures in stone, of the father, mother, and son, who quarreled so much in life, all lie on one monument now, and with them Richard's youngest sister Joan, who died nearly at the same time as he died, party of grief for him.

CHAPTER XIII

JOHN, LACKLAND

A.D. 1199—1216

As a kind of joke, John, King Henry's youngest son, had been called Lackland, because he had nothing when his brothers each had some great dukedom. The name suited him only too well before the end of his life. The English made him king at once. They always did take a grown-up man for their king, if the last king's son was but a child. Richard had never had any children, but his brother Geoffrey, who was older than John, had left a son named Arthur, who was about twelve years old, and who was rightly the Duke of Normandy and Count of Anjou. King Philip, who was always glad to vex whoever was king of England, took Arthur under his protection, and promised to get Normandy out of John's hands. However, John had a meeting with him and persuaded him to desert Arthur, and marry his son Louis to John's own niece, Blanche, who had a chance of being queen of part of Spain. Still Arthur lived at the French King's court, and when he was sixteen years old, Philip helped him to raise an army and go to try his fortune against his uncle. He laid siege to Mirabeau, a town where his grandmother, Queen Eleanor, was living. John, who was then in Normandy, hurried to her rescue, beat Arthur's army, made him prisoner and carried him off, first

to Rouen, and then to the strong castle of Falaise. Nobody quite knows what was done to him there. The governor, Hubert de Burgh, once found him fighting hard, though with no weapon but a stool, to defend himself from some ruffians who had been sent to put out his eyes. Hubert saved him from these men, but shortly after this good man was sent elsewhere by the king, and John came himself to Falaise. Arthur was never seen alive again, and it is believed that John took him out in a boat in the river at night, stabbed him with his own hand, and threw his body into the river. There was, any way, no doubt that John was guilty of his nephew's death, and he was fully known to be one of the most selfish and cruel men who ever lived; and so lazy, that he let Philip take Normandy from him, without stirring a finger to save the grand old dukedom of his forefathers; so that nothing is left of it to us now but the four little islands, Guernsey, Jersey, Alderney, and Sark.

Matters became much worse in England, when he quarreled with the Pope, whose name was Innocent, about who should be archbishop of Canterbury. The Pope wanted a man named Stephen Langton to be archbishop, but the king swore he should never come into the kingdom. Then the Pope punished the kingdom, by forbidding all church services in all parish churches. This was termed putting the kingdom under an interdict. John was not much distressed by this, though his people were; but when he found that Innocent was stirring up the King of France to come to attack him, he thought it time to make his peace with

the Pope. So he not only consented to receive Stephen Langton, but he even knelt down before the Pope's legate, or messenger, and took off his crown, giving it up to the legate, in token that he only held the kingdom from the Pope. It was two or three days before it was given back to him; and the Pope held himself to be lord of England, and made the king and people pay him money whenever he demanded it.

All this time John's cruelty and savageness were making the whole kingdom miserable; and at last the great barons could bear it no longer. They met together and agreed that they would make John swear to govern by the good old English laws that had prevailed before the Normans came. The difficulty was to be sure of what these laws were, for most of the copies of them had been lost. However, Archbishop Langton and some of the wisest of the barons put together a set of laws—some copied, some recollected, some old, some new—but all such as to give the barons some control of the king, and hinder him from getting savage soldiers together to frighten people into doing whatever he chose to make them. These laws they called Magna Carta, or the great charter; and they all came in armor, and took John by surprise at Windsor. He came to meet them in a meadow named Runnymede, on the bank of the Thames, and there they forced him to sign the charter, for which all Englishmen are grateful to them.

But he did not mean to keep it! No, not he! He had one of his father's fits of rage when he got back to Windsor Castle—

he gnawed the sticks for rage and swore he was no king. Then he sent for more of the fierce soldiers, who went about in bands, ready to be hired, and prepared to take vengeance on the barons. They found themselves not strong enough to make head against him; so they invited Louis, the son of Philip of France and husband of John's niece, to come and be their king. He came, and was received in London, while John and his bands of soldiers were roaming about the eastern counties, wasting and burning everywhere till they came to the Wash—that curious bay between Lincolnshire and Norfolk, where so many rivers run into the sea. There is a safe way across the sands in this bay when the tide is low, but when it is coming in and meets the rivers, the waters rise suddenly into a flood. So it happened to King John; he did get out himself, but all carts with his goods and treasures were lost, and many of his men. He was full of rage and grief, but he went on to the abbey where he meant to sleep. He supped on peaches and new ale, and soon after became very ill. He died in a few days, a miserable, disgraced man, with half his people fighting against him and London in the hands of his worst enemy.

CHAPTER XIV

HENRY III., OF WINCHESTER

A.D. 1216—1272

King John left two little sons, Henry and Richard, nine and seven years old, and all the English barons felt that they would rather have Henry as their king than the French Louis, whom they had only called in because John was such a wretch. So when little Henry had been crowned at Gloucester, with his mother's bracelet, swearing to rule according to Magna Carta, and good Hubert de Burgh undertook to govern for him, one baron after another came back to him. Louis was beaten in a battle at Lincoln; and when his wife sent him more troops, Hubert de Burgh got ships together and sunk many vessels, and drove the others back in the Straits of Dover; so that Louis was forced to go home and leave England in peace.

Henry must have been too young to understand about Magna Carta when he swore to it, but it was the trouble of all his long reign to get him to observe it. It was not that he was wicked like his father—for he was very religious and kind-hearted—but he was too good-natured, and never could say No to anybody. Bad advisers got about him when he grew up, and persuaded him to let them take good Hubert de Burgh and imprison him. He had taken refuge in a church, but they dragged him out and took him

to a blacksmith to have chains put on his feet; the smith however said he would never forge chains for the man who had saved his country from the French. De Burgh was afterwards set free, and died in peace and honor.

Henry was a builder of beautiful churches. Westminster Abbey, as it is now, was one. And he was so charitable to the poor that, when he had his children weighed, he gave their weight in gold and silver in alms. But he gave to everyone who asked, and so always wanted money; and sometimes his men could get nothing for the king and queen to eat, but by going and taking sheep and poultry from the poor farmers around; so that things were nearly as bad as under William Rufus—because the king was foolishly good-natured. The Pope was always sending for money, too; and the king tried to raise it in ways that, according to Magna Carta, he had sworn not to do. His foreign friends told him that if he minded Magna Carta he would be a poor creature—not like a king who might do all he pleased; and whenever he listened to them he broke the laws of Magna Carta. Then, when his barons complained and frightened him, he swore again to keep them; so that nobody could trust him, and his weakness was almost as bad for the kingdom as John's wickedness. When they could bear it no longer, the barons all met him at the council which was called the Parliament, from a French word meaning talk. This time they came in armor, bringing all their fighting men, and declared that he had broken his word so often that they should appoint some of their own number to watch him, and hinder his doing anything

against the laws he had sworn to observe, or from getting money from the people without their consent. He was very angry; but he was in their power, and had to submit to swear that so it should be; and Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, who had married his sister, was appointed among the lords who were to keep watch over him. Henry could not bear this; he felt himself to be less than ever a king, and tried to break loose. He had never cared for his promises; but his brave son Edward, who was now grown up, cared a great deal: and they put the question to Louis, King of France, whether the king was bound by the oath he had made to be under Montfort and his council. This Louis was son to the one who had been driven back by Hubert de Burgh. He was one of the best men and kings that ever lived, and he tried to judge rightly; but he scarcely thought how much provocation Henry had given, when he said that subjects had no right to frighten their king, and so that Henry and Edward were not obliged to keep the oath.

Thereupon they got an army together, and so did Simon de Montfort and the barons; and they met at a place called Lewes, in Sussex. Edward got the advantage at first, and galloped away, driving his enemies before him; but when he turned round and came back, he found that Simon de Montfort had beaten the rest of the army, and made his father and uncle Richard prisoners. Indeed, the barons threatened to cut off Richard's head if Edward went on fighting with them; and to save his uncle's life, he too, gave himself up to them.

Simon de Montfort now governed all the kingdom. He still

called Henry king, but did not let him do anything, and watched him closely that he might not get away; and Edward was kept a prisoner—first in one castle, then in another. Simon was a good and high-minded man himself, who only wanted to do what was best for everyone; but he had a family of proud and overbearing sons, who treated all who came in their way so ill, that most of the barons quarreled with them. One of these barons sent Edward a beautiful horse; and one day when he was riding out from Hereford Castle with his keepers, he proposed to them to ride races, while he was to look on and decide which was the swiftest. Thus they all tired out their horses, and as soon as he saw that they could hardly get them along, Edward spurred his own fresh horse, and galloped off to meet the friends who were waiting for him. All who were discontented with the Montforts joined him, and he soon had a large army. He marched against Montfort, and met him at Evesham. The poor old king was in Montfort's army, and in the battle was thrown down, and would have been killed if he had not called out—"Save me, save me, I am Henry of Winchester." His son heard the call, and, rushing to his side, carried him to a place of safety. His army was much the strongest, and Montfort had known from the first that there was no hope for him. "God have mercy on our souls, for our bodies are Sir Edward's," he had said; and he died bravely on the field of battle.

Edward brought his father back to reign in all honor, but he took the whole management of the kingdom, and soon set things

in order again—taking care that Magna Carta should be properly observed. When everything was peaceful at home, he set out upon a Crusade with the good King of France, and while he was gone his father died, after a reign of fifty-six years. There only three English Kings who reigned more than fifty years, and these are easy to remember, as each was the third of his name—Henry III., Edward III., and George III. In the reign of Henry III. the custom of having Parliaments was established, and the king was prevented from getting money from the people unless the Parliament granted it. The Parliament has, ever since, been made up of great lords, who are born to it: and, besides them, of men chosen by the people in the counties and towns, to speak and decide for them. The clergy have a meeting of their own called Convocation; and these three—Clergy, Lords, and Commons—are called the Three Estates of the Realm.

CHAPTER XV

EDWARD I., LONGSHANKS

A.D. 1272—1307

The son of Henry III. returned from the Holy Land to be one of our noblest, best, and wisest kings. Edward I.—called Longshanks in a kind of joke, because he was the tallest man in the Court—was very grand-looking and handsome; and could leap, run, ride, and fight in his heavy armor better than anyone else. He was brave, just, and affectionate; and his sweet wife, Eleanor of Castille, was warmly loved by him and all the nation. He built as many churches and was as charitable as his father, but he was much more careful to make only good men bishops, and he allowed no wasting or idling. He faithfully obeyed Magna Carta, and made everyone else obey the law—indeed many good laws and customs have begun from this time. Order was the great thing he cared for, and under him the English grew prosperous and happy, when nobody was allowed to rob them.

The Welsh were, however, terrible robbers. You remember that they are the remains of the old Britons, who used to have all Britain. They had never left off thinking that they had a right to it, and coming down out of their mountains to burn the houses and steal the cattle of the Saxons, as they still called the English. Edward tried to make friends with their princes—Llewellyn and

David—and to make them keep their people in order. He gave David lands in England, and let Llewellyn marry his cousin, Eleanor de Montfort. But they broke their promises shamefully, and did such savage things to the English on their borders that he was forced to put a stop to it, and went to war. David was made prisoner, and put to death as a traitor; and Llewellyn was met by some soldiers near the bridge of Builth and killed, without their knowing who he was. Edward had, in the meantime, conquered most of the country; and he told the Welsh chiefs that, if they would come and meet him at Caernarvon Castle, he would give them a prince who had been born in their country—had never spoken a word of any language but theirs. They all came, and the king came down to them with his own little baby son in his arms, who had lately been born in Caernarvon Castle, and, of course, had never spoken any language at all. The Welsh were obliged to accept him; and he had a Welsh nurse, that the first words he spoke might be Welsh. They thought he would have been altogether theirs, as he then had an elder brother; but in a year or two the oldest boy died; and, ever since that time, the eldest son of the King of England has always been Prince of Wales.

There was a plan for the little Prince Edward of Caernarvon being married to a little girl, who was grand-daughter to the King of Scotland, and would be Queen of Scotland herself—and this would have led to the whole island being under one king—but, unfortunately, the little maiden died. It was so hard to decide

who ought to reign, out of all her cousins, that they asked king Edward to choose among them— since everyone knew that a great piece of Scotland belonged to him as over-lord, just as his own dukedom of Aquitaine belonged to the King of France over him; and the Kings of Scotland always used to pay homage to those of England for it.

Edward chose John Balliol, the one who had the best right; but he made him understand that, as overlord, he meant to see that as good order was kept in Scotland as in England. Now, the English kings had never meddled with Scottish affairs before, and the Scots were furious at finding that he did so. They said it was insulting them and their king; and poor Balliol did not know what to do among them, but let them defy Edward in his name. This brought Edward and his army to Scotland. The strong places were taken and filled with English soldiers, and Balliol was made prisoner, adjudged to have rebelled against his lord and forfeited his kingdom, and was sent away to France.

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