CHAPTER XV.

Revolt of Nobles.—Continental Wars.—Family Quarrels.—General Oath of Fealty.—Domesday Book.—Classes—Industry.—Land.—Forests.—The New Forest.—Gardens.—Mills.—Mines.—Cities and Burghs.—Royal and Baronial Manors.—Castles.—Churches.—Knight-service.—Feudal Tenures.—Feudal Exactions.

ENGLAND at length has rest. The politic conqueror has destroyed the Saxon independence, by force or by cunning. Malcolm of Scotland has submitted to him, and remains at peace. Edgar Atheling has become a pensioner upon the bounty of William, who thrust him from a throne. The people are settling into their old habits of rural industry. Many of the dispossessed and hunted proprietors and tenants of the northern counties had found shelter in Scotland, under the protection of Margaret the queen. The Scottish warrior-king, totally illiterate, was made gentle and devout under the guidance of his noble wife; and the lowland districts beyond the Tyne gradually became more and more Saxon, in their language and manners. At this period, it is probable that no sweeping change had taken place in the laws of England, or the tenure of property. The king had repeated his oaths to maintain the ancient laws; and although there were confiscations of English lands, wherever there had been resistance, and enormous grants to Norman soldiers, the system, founded upon what Mr. Kemble calls "the monstrous fiction that the king is owner of all the land in a country," had not been brought into general usage. The settlers in Normandy under Rollo are described as never bowing the knee to king or lord, but holding their lands free from service.* The old Germanic constitution of England had not yet sustained the full burden of the yoke of feudality, which had gradually been established in France by the middle of the eleventh century.

While England was under the dominion of the Norman dukes, and was to all intents a tributary state, our historians have commonly bestowed nearly as much attention upon the affairs of Normandy and Maine, of Brittany and Anjou, as upon those of our own

* See the pretended epitaph on Rollo, in Ordericus Vitalis, bk. v. c. 9.

country. This arises from the habit of too commonly looking at the history of a king as the history of a nation. Sometimes indeed, in certain portions of a reign the personal history of the monarch is no untrue representation of the condition of the nation. But, as a general principle, that personal history must be regarded as a very imperfect, and a very unimportant, if not a delusive chronicle. "So strong an association is established in most minds between the greatness of a sovereign and the greatness of a nation which he rules, that almost every historian of England has expatiated with a sentiment of exultation on the power and splendour of her foreign masters, and has lamented the decay of that power and splendour as a calamity to our country." * We shall endeavour to avoid this error, and principally to regard the acts of the Norman kings merely as illustrations of the course of events, and the progress of society in England.

William, in 1073, is in Normandy. There was insurrection in Maine. It would seem that his army was composed of Normans and English; and with a great force he speedily quelled the revolt. But there is again danger in England. Roger Fitz-Osborn, the earl of Hereford, and Ralph de Guader, the earl of Norfolk, had agreed to unite their interests by the marriage of the sister of one to the other. But the king, with that tyrannical interference with the domestic rights of families which prevailed down to the time of the Stuarts, issued his commands that no such marriage should take place. He was absent, and the earls gave no heed to his prohibition. There was a great feast at Norwich; and there came bishops and barons, Saxon as well as Norman, to honour the bridal of Emma with De Guader. It was a time when men spoke out; and the Normans complained bitterly of the interference of the absent king with their private alliances. The Normans complained of his ingratitude; the Saxons of his oppressions. The murmurs ripened into plots. Waltheof, the Saxon earl, was made privy to the conspiracy; but he refused to take any active part in what he conceived a hopeless attempt. He however kept the secret of the Normans. The insurrection broke out, but was speedily subdued. A great battle was fought in Norfolk, before the arrival of William from Normandy. He came to determine the fate of the captive rebels. The Norman leaders were sentenced to perpetual imprisonment. Waltheof was betrayed by his wife—the Conqueror's daughter, Judith; and after lingering a year in prison, was be-

* Macaulay, vol. i. p. 14.

headed at Winchester. The Norman archbishop Lanfranc made great efforts to save the Saxon. But the perfidy of Judith, and the rapacity of those followers of William who thirsted for his blood, that they might possess his estates, determined the fate of Waltheof, whose memory was long regarded as that of a martyr.

William returned to Normandy after the revolt of the nobles was suppressed. For seven or eight years we cannot trace him in England. But the space is filled up by narratives of his continental wars, and his family quarrels. The Norman princes of the blood have no very prepossessing associations belonging to them. Robert is the eldest. Before the conquest of England he had been named as his father's successor in Normandy. Richard, the second son, had been killed in England by an accident whilst hunting. Robert desired to have the crown of Normandy during his father's life, and his father was not at all willing to forego any power. William, the next brother, who was now twenty-one, took part against Robert. Henry was a boy of nine years. The younger brothers were playing at dice in the gallery of a house at Maine, and Robert was beneath. To insult their brother, they threw water on the heads of him and his followers; and the fiery Robert followed his brothers to the banqueting-room in fierce anger. Their father interposed. But the elder son could not forgive the insult, and was soon in arms to enforce his pretensions. The parent and child met in battle; and the son unhorsed the father. Perceiving whom he had at his mercy, the son begged the forgiveness of the parent. But the very stark man would not be fully reconciled; and after a few years of secret hostility they never again met. Odo, the half brother of the king, gave him dire offence by entertaining the ambition of becoming Pope. William seized him as he was sailing from the Isle of Wight, and kept him strictly imprisoned, till death conquered the conqueror. Whilst these turbulent princes are hating and fighting, the lower world goes on in its accustomed round, of the proud and the avaricious oppressing the humble and the contented. There was little difference in the principles by which the selfish accomplished the supremacy over the generous, in those times as compared with ours. They only employed different instruments from those we employ. Yet, after all we read in their chronicles of the power and riches of the ancient tyrants, there was, perhaps, more real happiness in the hut of the "poor old woman of Weston," who, when the monastery of Croyland was burned down, gave the produce of her spindle to sew the garments

of the houseless monks,* than in the mansion of Ivo Taillebois, who was evermore their persecutor. We may believe that the satisfaction of Fergus, the coppersmith of Boston, when he gave two bells to the new church of Croyland, was more precious to the simple Christian than the murderous triumph of Tonstain, the Norman abbot, who chased all the Saxon monks out of Glastonbury with sword and lance, because they chanted the service after the fashion of their predecessors.

Under the date of 1085, the Saxon Chronicle has an important passage, which has been considered, by some authorities, to determine the period when the feudal tenures were generally established by a solemn legal act, which was preceded by a general survey of the kingdom. The writer of this portion of the Chronicle was an Englishman, and a man of high position; for in describing the character of William, he says, "If any one wish to know what manner of man he was, or what worship he had, or of how many lands he was the lord, we will describe him, as we have known him; for we looked on him, and some while dwelt in his court." It is conjectured that this chronicler was Wulstan, the only Saxon bishop that was left at that time. This faithful witness records that in the nineteeth year of King William's reign, Canute, the king of Denmark, was expected to invade England; and that when William, who was then in Normandy, heard this, he came over with a great army of Normans and Bretons—a greater company of horse and foot than had ever before entered the land, insomuch that men wondered how such a host could be fed. He dispersed this army through the country, and they devastated the maritime districts, and the people suffered much by their presence. The invasion being abandoned, the king sent back some of these stipendiaries. The writer then relates, that at Christmas the king was at Gloucester, with his witan, and held his court there for five days, after which the archbishop and clergy held a synod for three days. Then the king called a great council, and had much grave talk concerning the land, how it was held, and by what men. Then he sent his servants through all the country, to make a survey of every possession, and to register every hide of land in every county, and what was the money value, and what cattle were maintained upon each property. The chronicler further relates that at Lammas, in 1085, the king was at Salisbury; and there came to him his witan, and all the landowners of any account, from all parts of England, whose men

* Ingulphus.

soever they were, and they all bowed to him and became his men, and swore to him an oath of fealty, that they would be faithful to him against all other men. It will be desirable, at this period of our narrative, to enter upon some detailed account of this remarkable survey of the kingdom; and to consider what great and long-enduring change was wrought in the country, when the king's witan, or chiefs, and all the land-owners, became the king's immediate vassals, and did homage, and swore the oath of fealty.

On the left of the passage which leads to the entrance of Westminster Abbey called "Poets' Corner," stands the Chapter-House of the Abbey, hidden by brick tenements, and fitted up within with shelves and closets for public records. Yet this Chapter-House is one of the most beautiful buildings of our country; and was thus desecrated in the time of James I. by some official representative of the ignorant indifference of the people for their national monuments. In one of the closets of this building is locked up the most precious document of English history—the Register of the Survey made under the orders of the Conqueror and his witan, which we have just noticed. This document is called "Domesday Book," and, in fact, consists of two books, of different sizes,—one a folio, the other a quarto,—on the vellum of which the entries are made, in beautifully clear characters. The whole Register, with valuable introductory matter, indices, &c., was printed at the cost of the Government in 1787, in types which represent the contractions of the original with all needful exactness.

The Survey thus contained in this ancient register extended to all England, with the exception of Northumberland, Cumberland, Westmoreland, and Durham. All the country between the Tees and the Tyne was held by the bishop of Durham; and he was reputed a count palatine, having a separate government. The other three northern counties were probably so devastated that they were purposely omitted.* Let us first see, from the information of Domesday Book, by "what men" the land was occupied.

First, we have Barons, and we have Thanes. The barons were the Norman nobles; the thanes, the Saxon. These were included under the general designation of *liberi homines*, freemen; which term included all the freeholders of a manor. Many of these were tenants of the king "in capite"—that is, they held their possessions direct from the crown. Others of these had placed themselves under the protection of some lord, as the defender of their

* Introduction to Domesday, by Sir H. Ellis, folio, p. xii.

persons and estates, they paying some stipend or performing some service. In the Register there are also *liberæ feminæ*, free women. Next to the free class were the *sochemanni* or "socmen," a class of inferior land-owners, who held lands under a lord, and owed suit and service in the lord's court; but whose tenure was permanent. They sometimes performed services in husbandry; but those services, as well as their payments, were defined. Descending in the scale, we come to the *Villani.* These were allowed to occupy land at the will of the lord, upon the condition of performing services, uncertain in their amount, and often of the meanest nature. But they could acquire no property in lands or goods; and they were subject to many exactions and oppressions. There are entries in Domesday Book which show that the *villani* were not altogether bondmen; but represented the Saxon "churl." The lowest class were *servi*, slaves; the class corresponding with the Saxon "theow." By a degradation in the condition of the *villani*, and the elevation of that of the *servi*, the two classes were brought gradually nearer together; till at last the military oppression of the Normans thrusting down all degrees of tenants and servants into one common slavery, or at least into strict dependence, one name was adopted for both of them as a generic term, that of *villeins regardant*.*

Of the subdivisions of these great classes, the Register of 1085 affords us some particulars. We find that some of the nobles are described as *milites*, soldiers; and sometimes the *milites* are classed with the inferior orders of tenantry. Many of the chief tenants are distinguished by their offices. We have amongst these the great regal officers, such as they existed in the Saxon times,—the *camerarius* and *cubicularius*, from whom we have our lord chamberlain; the *dapifer* or lord-steward; the *pincerna*, or chief butler; the constable, and the treasurer. We have the hawk-keepers, and the bow-keepers; the providers of the king's carriages, and his standard-bearers. We have lawmen, and legates, and mediciners. We have foresters and hunters. Coming to the inferior officers and artificers we have carpenters, smiths, goldsmiths, farriers, potters, ditchers, launders, armourers, fishermen, millers, bakers, salters, tailors, and barbers. We have mariners, moneyers, minstrels, and watchmen. Of rural occupations, we have the bee-keepers, ploughmen, shepherds, neat-herds, goat-herds, and swine-herds. Here is a population in which there is a large division of

* Introduction to Domesday.

labour. The freemen, tenants, villains, slaves, are labouring and deriving sustenance from arable land, meadow, common pasture, wood, and water. The grain-growing land is of course, carefully registered as to its extent and value, and so the meadow and pasture. An equal exactness is bestowed upon the woods. It was not that the timber was of great commercial value, in a country which possessed such insufficient means of transport; but that the acorns and beech-mast, upon which great herds of swine subsisted, were of essential importance to keep up the supply of food. We constantly find such entries as "a wood for pannage of fifty hogs." There are woods described which will feed a hundred, two hundred, three hundred hogs; and on the Bishop of London's demesne at Fulham a thousand hogs could fatten. The value of a tree was determined by the number of hogs that could lie under it, in the Saxon time; and in this Survey of the Norman period, we find entries of useless woods, and woods without pannage, which to some extent were considered identical. In some of the woods there were patches of cultivated ground, as the entries show, where the tenant had cleared the dense undergrowth and had his corn land and his meadows. Even the fen lands were of value, for their rents were paid in eels.

There is only mention of five forests in this record, Windsor, Gravelings (Wiltshire), Winburn, Whichwood, and the New Forest. Undoubtedly there were many more, but being no objects of assessment they are passed over. It would be difficult not to associate the memory of the Conqueror with the New Forest; and not to believe that his unbridled will was here the cause of great misery and devastation. Ordericus Vitalis says, speaking of the death of William's second son, Richard:—"Learn now, my reader, why the forest in which the young prince was slain, received the name of the New Forest. That part of the country was extremely populous from early times, and full of well-inhabited hamlets and farms. A numerous population cultivated Hampshire with unceasing industry, so that the southern part of the district plentifully supplied Winchester with the products of the land. When William the First ascended the throne of Albion, being a great lover of forests, he laid waste more than sixty parishes, compelling the inhabitants to emigrate to other places, and substituted beasts of the chase for human beings, that he might satisfy his ardour for hunting." There is probably some exaggeration in the statement of the country being "extremely populous from early times." This was an old

woody district, called Ytene. No forest was artificially planted, as Voltaire has imagined; but the chases were opened through the ancient thickets, and hamlets and solitary cottages were demolished. It is a curious fact that some woodland spots in the New Forest have still names, with the terminations of *ham* and *ton*.* There are many evidences of the former existence of human abodes in places now solitary; yet we doubt whether this part of the district plentifully supplied Winchester with food, as Ordericus relates; for it is a sterile district, in most places, fitted for little else than the growth of timber. The lower lands are marsh, and the upper are sand. The Conqueror, says the Saxon Chronicle, "so much loved the high deer as if he had been their father." The first of the Norman kings, and his immediate successors, would not be very scrupulous about the depopulation of a district, if the presence of men interfered with their pleasures. But Thierry thinks that the extreme severity of the Forest Laws was chiefly enforced to prevent the assemblage of Saxons in those vast wooded spaces which were now included in the royal demesnes. All these extensive tracts were, more or less, retreats for the dispossessed and the discontented. The Normans, under pretence of preserving the stag and the hare, could tyrannise with a pretended legality over the dwellers in these secluded places; and thus William might have driven the Saxon people of Ytene to emigrate, and have destroyed their cottages, as much from a possible fear of their association as from his own love of "the high deer." Whatever was the motive, there was devastation and misery. Domesday shows that in the district of the New Forest certain manors were afforested after the conquest; cultivated portions, in which the Sabbath-bell was heard. William of Jumièges, the Conqueror's own chaplain, says, speaking of the deaths of Richard and Rufus, "There were many who held that the two sons of William the king perished by the judgment of God in these woods, since for the *extension* of the forest, he had destroyed many inhabited *places* (*villas*) *and churches within its circuit*." It appears that in the time of Edward the Confessor, about seventeen thousand acres of this district had been afforested; but that the cultivated parts remaining had then an estimated value of 363*l*. After the afforestation by the Conqueror, the cultivated parts yielded only 129*l*.†

The grants of land to huntsmen (*venatores*) are common in

* Notes to Stewart Rose's Poem of "The Red King."
† Introduction to Domesday, folio, p. xxxiv.

Hampshire, as in other parts of England; and it appears to have been the duty of an especial officer to stall the deer—that is, to drive them with his troop of followers from all parts to the centre of a circle, gradually contracting, where they were to stand for the onslaught of the hunters. In the Survey, many parks are enumerated. The word Hay (*haia*), which is still found in some of our counties, was an enclosed part of a wood to which the deer were driven. In the seventeenth century, this mode of hunting upon a large scale, by stalling the deer—this mimic war—was common in Scotland. Taylor, called "The Water Poet," was present at such a gathering; and has described the scene with a minuteness which may help us to form a picture of the Norman hunters:—"Five or six hundred men do rise early in the morning, and they do disperse themselves divers ways; and seven, eight, or ten miles' compass, they do bring or chase in the deer in many herds (two, three, or four hundred in a herd) to such a place as the noblemen shall appoint them; then, when the day is come, the lords and gentlemen of their companies do ride or go to the said places, sometimes wading up to the middle through bourns and rivers; and then they being come to the place, do lie down on the ground till those foresaid scouts, which are called the Tinkhelt, do bring down the deer. Then, after we had stayed there three hours or thereabouts, we might perceive the deer appear on the hills round about us (their heads making a show like a wood), which being followed close by the Tinkhelt, are chased down into the valley where we lay; then all the valley on each side being waylaid with a hundred couple of strong Irish greyhounds, they are let loose as occasion serves upon the herd of deer, that with dogs, guns, arrows, dirks, and daggers, in the space of two hours, fourscore fat deer were slain."

Domesday affords indubitable proof of the culture of the vine in England. There are thirty-eight entries of vineyards in the southern and eastern counties. Many gardens are enumerated. Mills are registered with great distinctness; for they were invariably the property of the lords of the manors, lay or ecclesiastical; and the tenants could only grind at the lord's mill. Wherever we find a mill specified in Domesday, there we generally find a mill now. At Arundel, for example, we see what rent was paid by a mill; and there still stands at Arundel an old mill whose foundations might have been laid before the Conquest. Salt-works are repeatedly mentioned. They were either works upon the coast for procuring marine salt by evaporation, or were established in the localities of inland salt-springs. The salt-works of Cheshire were the most numerous, and were called "wiches." Hence the names of some places, such as Middlewich and Nantwich. The revenue from mines offers some curious facts. No mention of tin is to be found in Cornwall. The ravages of Saxon and Dane, and the constant state of hostility between races, had destroyed much of that mineral industry which existed in the Roman times. A century and a half after the Conquest had elapsed before the Norman kings had a revenue from the Cornish iron mines. Iron forges were registered; and lumps of hammered iron are stated to have been paid as rent. Lead-works are found only upon the king's demesne in Derbyshire.

Fisheries are important sources of rent. Payments of eels are enumerated by hundreds and thousands. Herrings appear to have been consumed in vast numbers in the monasteries. Sandwich yielded forty thousand annually to Christ Church in Canterbury. Kent, Sussex, and Norfolk appear to have been the great seats of this fishery. The Severn and the Wye had their salmon fisheries, whose produce king, bishop, and lord were glad to receive as rent. There was a weir for Thames fish at Mortlake. The religious houses had their *piscinæ* and *vivaria*—their stews and fish-pools.

Domesday affords us many curious glimpses of the condition of the people in cities and burghs. For the most part they seem to have preserved their ancient customs. London, Winchester, and several other important places are not mentioned in the record. We shall very briefly notice a few indications of the state of society. Dover was an important place, for it supplied the king with twenty ships for fifteen days in a year, each vessel having twenty-one men on board. Dover could therefore command the service of four hundred and twenty mariners. Every burgess in Lewes compounded for a payment of twenty shillings when the king fitted out a fleet to keep the sea. At Oxford the king could command the services of twenty burgesses whenever he went on an expedition; or they might compound for their services by a payment of twenty pounds. Oxford was a considerable place at this period. It contained upwards of seven hundred houses; but four hundred and seventy-eight were so desolated that they could pay no dues. Hereford was the king's demesne; and the honour of being his immediate tenants appears to have been qualified by considerable exactions. When he went to war, and when he went to hunt, men were to be ready for his service. If the wife of a burgher brewed

tains notices of forty-nine castles; but only one is mentioned as having existed in the time of Edward the Confessor. Some which the Conqueror is known to have built are not noticed in the Survey. Amongst these is the White Tower of London. The site of Rochester Castle is mentioned. These two buildings are associated by our old antiquaries as being erected by the same architect. Stow says, "I find in a fair register-book of the acts of the bishops of Rochester, set down by Edmund of Hadenham, that William I., surnamed Conqueror, builded the Tower of London, to wit, the great white and square tower there, about the year of Christ 1078, appointing Gundulph, then Bishop of Rochester, to be principal surveyor and overseer of that work, who was for that time lodged in the house of Edmere, a burghess of London." The chapel in the White Tower is a remarkable specimen of early Norman architecture. The Keep of Rochester Castle, so picturesquely situated on the Medway was not a mere fortress without domestic convenience. Here we still look upon the remains of sculptured columns and arches. We see where there were spacious fire-places in the walls, and how each of four floors was served with water by a well. The third story contains the most ornamental portions of the building. In the Domesday enumeration of castles, we have repeated mention of houses destroyed, and lands wasted, for their erection. At Cambridge twenty-seven houses are recorded to have been thus demolished. This was the fortress to overawe the fen districts. At Lincoln a hundred and sixty-six mansions were destroyed, "on account of the castle." In the ruins of all these castles we may trace their general plan. There was an outer court, an inner court, and a keep. Round the whole area was a wall, with parapets and loop-holes. The entrance was defended by an outwork or barbican. The prodigious strength of the keep is the most remarkable characteristic of these fortresses; and thus many of these towers remain, stript of every interior fitting by time, but as untouched in their solid construction as the mounts upon which they stand. We ascend the steep steps which lead to the ruined keep of Carisbrook, with all our historical associations directed to the confinement of Charles I. in this castle. But this fortress was registered in Domesday Book. Five centuries and a half had elapsed between William I. and James I. The Norman keep was out of harmony with the principles of the seventeenth century, as much as the feudal prerogatives to which Charles unhappily clung.

We have thus enumerated, as briefly as possible, some of the more prominent statistics of this ancient Survey, which are truly as much matter of history as the events of this beginning of the Norman period. There is one more feature of this Domesday-book, which we cannot pass over. The number of parish churches in England in the eleventh century will, in some degree, furnish an indication of the amount of religious instruction. By some most extraordinary exaggeration, the number of these churches has been stated to be above forty-five thousand. In Domesday, the number enumerated is a little above seventeen hundred. No doubt this enumeration is extremely imperfect. Very nearly half of all the churches put down are found in Lincolnshire, Norfolk, and Suffolk. The Register, in some cases, gives the amount of land with which the Church was endowed. Bosham, in Sussex, the estate of Harold, had, in the time of King Edward, a hundred and twelve hides of land. At the date of the Survey it had sixty-five hides. This was an enormous endowment. Some churches had five acres only; some fifty; some a hundred. Some are without land altogether. But, whether the endowment be large or small, here is the evidence of a Church planted upon the same foundation as the Monarchy, that of territorial possessions.

The politic ruler of England had, in the completion of Domesday Book, possessed himself of the most perfect instrument for the profitable administration of his government. He was no longer working in the dark, whether he called out soldiers or levied taxes. He had carried through a great measure, rapidly, and with a minuteness which puts to shame some of our clumsy modern statistics. We were guessing at the number of our population until the beginning of this century. We are still guessing how much corn is grown upon our lands, what is pasture, what is wood, and how many sheep and oxen are maintained. In the Chapter-House at Westminister, the two vellum books of eight centuries ago presented to the administrators for whom they were prepared a more complete view of the material condition of the country than we have at this hour. But the Conqueror did not want his vellum books for the gratification of official curiosity. He went to work when he knew how many tenants-in-chief he could command, and how many men they could bring into the field. He instituted the great feudal principle of Knight-Service. His ordinance is in these words:—"We command that all earls, barons, knights, sergeants, and freemen be always provided with horses and arms as they ought, and

that they be always ready to perform to us their whole service, in manner as they owe it to us of right for their fees and tenements, and as we have appointed to them by the common council of our whole kingdom, and as we have granted to them in fee with right of inheritance." These words, "in fee, with right of inheritance," leave no doubt that the great vassals of the crown were absolute proprietors, and that all their sub-vassals had the same right of holding in perpetuity. The estate, however, reverted to the crown, if the race of the original feoffee became extinct, and in cases, also, of felony and treason. When Alain of Bretagne, who commanded the rear of the army at the battle of Hastings, and who had received four hundred and forty-two manors, bowed before the king at Salisbury, at the great council in 1085, and swore to be true to him against all manner of men, he also brought with him his principal *land-sittende* men (land-owners), who also bowed before the king, and became his men. They had previously taken the oath of fealty to Alain of Bretagne, and engaged to perform all the customs and services due to him for their lands and tenements. Alain, and his men, were proprietors, but with very unequal rights. Alain, by his tenure, was bound to provide for the king as many armed horsemen as the vast extent of his estates demanded. But all those whom he had enfeoffed, or made proprietors, upon his four hundred and forty-two manors, were each bound to contribute a proportionate number. When the free service of forty days was to be enforced, the great earl had only to send round to his vassals, and the men were at his command. By this organisation, which was universal throughout the kingdom, sixty thousand cavalry could, with little delay, be called into the field. Those who held by this military service had their allotments divided into so many knight's fees, and each knight's fee was to furnish one mounted and armed soldier. The great vassals retained a portion of their land as their demesnes, having tenants who paid rents and performed services not military. But, under any circumstances, the vassal of the crown was bound to perform his whole free service with men and horses and arms. It is perfectly clear that this wonderful organisation rendered the whole system of government one great confederacy, in which the small proprietors, tenants, and villeins, had not a chance of independence; and that their condition could only be ameliorated by those gradual changes which result from a long intercourse between the strong and the weak, in which power relaxes its severity and becomes protection.

In the ordinance in which the king commanded "free service," he also says, "we will that all the freemen of the kingdom possess their lands in peace, free from all tallage and unjust exaction." This, unhappily for the freemen, was little more than a theory under the Norman kings. There were various modes of making legal exaction the source of the grossest injustice. When the heir of an estate entered into possession, he had to pay "a relief," or "heriot," to the lord. This soon became a source of oppression in the crown; and enormous sums were exacted from the great vassals. The lord was not more sparing of his men. He had another mode of extortion. He demanded "aid" on many occasions, such as the marriage of his eldest daughter, or when he made his eldest son a knight. The estate of inheritance, which looks so generous and equitable an arrangement, was a perpetual grievance; for the possessor could neither transmit his property by will nor transfer it by sale. The heir, however remote in blood, was the only legitimate successor. The feudal obligation to the lord was, in many other ways, a fruitful source of tyranny, which lasted up to the time of the Stuarts. If the heir were a minor, the lord entered into possession of the estate, without any accountability. If it descended to a female, the lord could compel her to marry according to his will, or could prevent her marrying. During a long period all these harassing obligations connected with property were upheld. The crown and the nobles were equally interested in their enforcement; and there can be little doubt that, though the great vassals sometimes suffered under these feudal obligations to the king, the inferior tenants had a much greater amount of oppression to endure at the hands of their immediate lords. But if the freemen were oppressed in the tenure of their property, we can scarcely expect that the landless man had not much more to suffer. If he committed an offence in the Saxon time, he paid a "mulct;" if in the Norman, he was subjected to an "*amerciament*." His whole personal estate was at the mercy of the lord.

Having thus obtained a general, however imperfect, notion of the system of society established in less than twenty years after the Conquest, we see that there was nothing wanting to complete the most entire subjection of the great body of the nation. What had been wanting was accomplished in the practical working out of the theory, that the entire land of the country belonged to the king. It was now established that every tenant in chief should do homage to the king; that every superior tenant should do homage to his

lord; that every villein should be the bondman of the free; and that every slave should, without any property however limited and insecure, be the absolute chattel of some master. The whole system was connected with military service. This was the feudal system. There was some resemblance to it in parts of the Saxon organisation; but under that organisation there was so much of freedom in the allodial or free tenure of land, that a great deal of other freedom went with it. The casting-off of the chains of feudality was the labour of six centuries.

CHAPTER XVI.

Burning of Mantes.—Death-bed of the Conqueror.—His funeral.—Traits of his character.—Coronation of William II.—Insurrection of Norman nobles in England.—Ralph Flambard.—Profligacy of the court of Rufus.—Robert's government in Normandy.—Quarrels of William and Robert.—Troubles in England.—Rapacity of the king.—Effects upon the country.—Robert pawns Normandy.—The first Crusade preached by Pope Urban II.—Progress of the Crusaders.—Jerusalem taken.—William's Norman wars.—His death in the New Forest.

KING WILLIAM was holding his court at Westminster in 1086. His youngest son, Henry, who is eighteen years of age, had been knighted by his father. He was the *Beau Clerc*—the lettered prince—of the family; brought up under the tuition of the learned and sagacious Archbishop Lanfranc. In the January of 1087, William returned to Normandy. He had a long-standing dispute to settle with Philip I. of France, about his claim to the territory of the Vexin, which had been dismembered from Normandy and annexed to France. The French king despised the demand of the Norman duke, and made a coarse joke about his corpulency. William, old and heavy, had still that alacrity of mind, and that unconquerable will which won and kept England. He left his bed at Rouen, and in August was on his war-horse before the town of Mantes. As his army had marched along those pleasant banks of the Seine, on whose winding course the steam-borne traveller of the nineteenth century gazes with delight, the ripe corn was burnt, and the laden vines trodden down. The fierce soldiers took the town by assault; and fire and slaughter waited upon the ferocious duke as his accustomed ministers. The race, of which he was the greatest, cared very little for human life; but they were equally prodigal of their own lives. William, under the hot autumn sun, rode amongst the smouldering ruins of the burning town. His horse fell, with his bulky rider, who received a severe injury, and was carried back to Rouen. The hour was approaching, when the great ones of the earth feel that their glory is a very unsubstantial thing; and when some human emotions mingle with the pride and cruelty which have separated them from mankind. The death-bed