

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



of William, according to the Chroniclers, was a death-bed of repentance. He had always made a profession of religion, and he was now surrounded by bishops and confessors. He spoke, it is related, of the rivers of blood he had shed. He lamented his barbarities in England. We are somewhat skeptical about the authenticity of his dying oration. His two sons, William and Henry, were around their father. Robert, the elder, was at the court of France. He, whom his fathers and brothers used to ridicule for his short legs—the Gambaron or Curt-hose—had a nobler nature than the brutal Rufus, or the crafty Beau Clerc. But the king hated him. Still, he could not deny him his right to the inheritance of Normandy. To William he recommended an instant journey to England to secure the possession of the crown. To Henry, who was then only eighteen years of age, he bequeathed five thousand pounds of silver. He commanded the release of some whom he held in captivity—amongst whom was earl Morcar. His forgiveness of Odo was most reluctantly wrung from him. The great duke and king suddenly expired, on the morning of the 9th of September, as the cathedral bell of Rouen was tolling the hour of prime. The moment he was gone, his attendants laid hands on robes and linen, plate and armour; and the Conqueror was left, to point the same moral of the vanity of grandeur, and the heartlessness of flatterers and favourites, that has been drawn from kingly death-beds, even up to our own times. The grave of William was as remarkable for an extraordinary occurrence as the deserted chamber of death. He had founded the church of St. Etienne at Caen. It was consecrated in 1077, amidst the most gorgeous ceremonies. The west front of the original building, with two high and solid towers, still remains. Here was brought the body of the king, by barge from Rouen. Being about to be lowered into the earth—in the presence of a few, for a fire had broken out in the town—Ascelin, the son of Arthur, cried out, that the land upon which they stood was the yard belonging to his father's house, and that the Duke of Normandy had seized it, by an exercise of tyranny. "I therefore," said the bold man, "openly demand its restitution, and in God's name I forbid the body of the spoiler being covered with earth which is my inheritance." Ordericus thus sums up the closing scene of the life of the Conqueror:—"A king, once potent, and warlike, and the terror of numberless inhabitants of many provinces, lay naked on the floor, deserted by those who owed him their birth, and those he had fed and en-

riched. He needed the money of a stranger for the cost of his funeral, and a coffin and bearers were provided, at the expense of an ordinary person, for him, who till then had been in the enjoyment of enormous wealth. He was carried to the church, amidst flaming houses, by trembling crowds, and a spot of freehold land was wanting for the grave of one whose princely sway had extended over so many cities, and towns, and villages."

The Saxon Chronicler, from whom we have quoted a passage or two bearing hardly upon the character of the Conqueror, has put some of his merits in a fair point of view. He says, "King William was a very wise man." He was "rich," and "worshipful," and "strong," according to the same authority; but these would have availed him little had he been wanting in sagacity. His ferocity is contrasted with "his mildness to good men who loved God." Whatever violence was exercised by the powerful, he forcibly put down that system of private violence which was a part of the old Germanic habits and traditions: "No man durst slay another man, though he had suffered never so mickle evil from the other." In Alfred's time, the right of private vengeance, in certain cases, was legally recognised. However the Norman chiefs plundered the Saxon, in the guise of feudal rights, the vulgar plunderer was mercilessly punished, "So that a man, that was good for aught, might travel over the kingdom with his bosom full of gold, without molestation." His pride, his avarice, his severity, are prominent characteristics of this man; but we must look at him in connection with the times in which he lived and the circumstances he had to controul; and admire the pious chronicler who sums up his merits and demerits by praying that God would "grant him of his sins forgiveness."

The "Red King" was crowned at Westminster on the 26th September, 1087. He was on his road to England while his father was dying. But there were difficulties in his elevation to the throne, which would probably not have been easily overcome had not Archbishop Lanfranc moved the whole power of the church in his behalf. The principle of elevation to the sovereignty was not relaxed. As the elder brother, Robert, would have had a clearer title, the doubts that hung over the accession of the younger were very considerable. But, beyond this, the severance of the crowns of England and Normandy could not have been agreeable to many of the Norman barons. If the severance could have been maintained, the destinies of the island-kingdom might have been changed at an earlier period.



The first proceedings of William II. gave evidence of his character. The death-bed clemency of the Conqueror had bestowed freedom on Morcar, and on Wulfnoth, the brother of Harold. They followed Rufus to England; and he rewarded their confidence by immediate imprisonment. He had greater dangers to apprehend from the Norman chiefs. Some of the more powerful were strongly against a divided sovereignty. They had large possessions in both countries. If they clung to William, Robert would seize upon their Norman estates. If they clung to Robert, William would seize upon their English estates. Robert was of an easy temper; William was arrogant. Odo and others therefore tendered their allegiance to Duke Robert. An insurrection very soon broke out in different quarters. It is worthy of special remark that the English, almost universally, supported the young king. We may attribute this not only to the oppressions they had endured from the Norman chieftains, but to a far-seeing policy, chiefly derived from the churchmen. The bold and haughty Rufus, as a sole king of England, was to be upheld, in preference to the indolent and pliant Robert, as joint sovereign of England and Normandy. It was a part of the old Saxon nationality, subdued, but not extinct. William raised a large army, and besieged Odo, who was the most formidable of the conspirators, in Rochester Castle, after a previous encounter at Pevensey. There were five hundred Normans shut up in the stronghold of the Medway, with the Bishop of Bayeux, and Eustace of Boulogne, and other powerful leaders. It was the height of summer, and the heat, and the vitiated atmosphere of the castle, produced disease, and a plague like one of those of Egypt—the plague of “innumerable flies.” At length the garrison was allowed to capitulate; and the Norman revolvers marched out, amidst the English cry of “A gallows for the bishop.” Odo never returned; and his enormous possessions were confiscated. The other disaffected nobles and bishops were subdued or propitiated.

In 1089, Lanfranc, the archbishop of Canterbury, died. To his firmness and moderation William II. was mainly indebted for his throne; and, during the short time in which Lanfranc was his adviser, the more prominent evils of the king's character were kept in subjection. William appointed no successor to the archbishop, but held the revenues of the see in his own hands. He soon found a more congenial minister than Lanfranc. There was in his court, a Norman clerk, of the name of Ralph, of handsome person and fluent speech, sensual and ambitious. So the old writers describe

him; and they tell us that the king's steward—*dispensator*, (from whose title came the family name of Despenser,) gave Ralph the soubriquet of Flambard; “for, like a devouring flame, he tormented the people, and turned the daily chants of the church into lamentations.”\* He was a subtle financier. He managed to swell the king's revenues by a stricter admeasurement of the lands of the kingdom than that of Domesday-Book. He was perhaps not altogether wrong in this strictness; for we learn from Ingulphus that the commissioners who prepared the first Survey “showed a kind and benevolent feeling towards our monastery, and did not value the monastery at its true revenue, nor yet at its exact extent, and thus, in their compassion, took due precautions against the future exactions of the kings.” The simple Abbot of Croyland did not calculate upon the presence of “the destructive torch,” to throw a light upon these little secrets of official management. In other state matters, Flambard and his master seized church properties, and made exactions upon the laity, with no pretence of justice. Malmesbury has given a strong picture of these times. There was no man rich except the money-changer; no clerk, unless he was a lawyer. The halter was loosened from the robber's neck, if he could promise any gain to the king. The courtiers consumed the substance of the country people. The state of manners at the court of Rufus is described as the most disgusting mixture of folly and licentiousness. The extravagant fashions of dress are amusingly detailed by Ordericus. The shoes were long-peaked, turned up like a ram's horn, instead of the “shoes with round toes, fitted to the foot, which were in common use by rich and poor, clergy and laity.” These most inconvenient marks of gentility kept their place for three centuries. The courtiers of Rufus, too, wore long robes and mantles; muffled their hands with gloves that prevented their doing anything useful; and their flowing locks were curled with hot irons. These extravagances are denounced with an honest vehemence by the monk of St. Evroult, and he contrasts these absurd and costly fashions with the proprieties of “a modest dress, well fitted to the proportions of the body, and convenient for riding and walking, and for all active employments, as common sense dictated.” The “wealthy curled darlings” passed their time in banqueting and drunkenness, in idle talk and gambling. It might be a question if the silly and enervated parasites of Rufus were not more endurable than the crafty and tyrannous warriors of

\* Ordericus Vitalis, book viii. c. 8.



the Conqueror, did we not know that the caterpillars that devour the leaves and blossoms of the vineyard are more destructive than the boar that roots up the vine.

Robert, duke of Normandy, was doing wrong to his commonwealth, after a different mode from William, king of England. Robert was destroying the resources of the state by improvident liberality. He had sold a third part of his duchy, the province of Cotentin, to his brother Henry, under some financial pressure; whilst his kind brother of England was using every intrigue to dispossess him of all that was left of his dominions, and had already obtained possession of fortresses on the right bank of the Seine. In 1090, the city of Rouen was incited to insurrection, chiefly by the bribes and promises of William. Henry came to the aid of Robert, although they had previously quarrelled; and through his determined boldness the revolt was quelled. The townsmen were divided. Some fought for the king, and some for the duke. The revolters against the ducal government were led by Conan, a rich burgher of Rouen. The revolt was put down, and he was taken prisoner, and led to the castle. Then Prince Henry took him to the summit of a tower, and bade him look upon the beautiful prospect beneath them—the wooded glades of the park on the south bank of the river—the vessels laden with merchandise—the populous city, with its high walls, and rich churches, and stately houses. “These are the things of which you desired to be master,” said the prince to the citizen. “Take all my wealth for ransom,” cried the trembling prisoner. “By the soul of my mother I will take no ransom;” and with these words the strong youth seized the wretched man, and threw him headlong from the lofty window. Ordericus tells this story and adds, “The place where the deed of vengeance was wrought is called to this day ‘Conan’s Leap.’”

Robert, the duke, had many affairs on his hands at this period. When he was roused by war he appears to have been foremost in battle and siege. In 1090, he is besieging Brionne, and setting fire to the castle by arrows whose steel points were made red-hot in a furnace. In 1091, he is before Courci, where the garrison made a resolute defence. Red-hot arrows are weapons of war not very common in the middle ages; but at the siege of Courci, the Norman duke employed a mode of offence which became common enough before the practice of warfare had been wholly changed by the invention of gunpowder. “He caused a vast machine, called a belfry (*berfredum*), to be erected over against the castle-walls, and

filled it with all kinds of warlike instruments.”\* These sieges and slaughterings arose out of the unhappy condition of the ducal dominions, which the historians attribute to the pride and ambition of the Norman nobles, bloated with the ill-gotten wealth of England. Robert, however, was freed awhile from the rapacity of Rufus. The king passed many months in Normandy, during the year 1091; and the brothers came to terms of agreement for their future government. Edgar, the Atheling, is still upon the stage; and he is now deprived of his estates in Normandy, and compelled to seek an asylum in Scotland. The king and the duke have now grown jealous of Henry, who has put his five thousand crowns to such good interest that he has become formidable. Amongst several strong castles, he has secured Mount St. Michael, although obliged to abandon other fortresses. Here, on this lofty rock, which stands, twice in the day amidst a plain of sand, and twice encompassed with tidal waters, Henry bade defiance to the assaults of armies. But the waters which surrounded the castle were useless to allay the cravings of his famished garrison, and he was finally obliged to capitulate. There are two occurrences during this siege which are told by Malmesbury as characteristic of the king and the duke. William was unhorsed by a soldier, who was about to kill him, when he cried out, “Hold, rascal, I am the King of England.” The king was spared, and the soldier rewarded. Robert, having learnt that Henry was suffering in the beleaguered castle, with his men, contrived that they should obtain some water, at which the less tender William was enraged. “Oh, shame,” said Robert, “should I permit my brother to die of thirst? and where shall we find another if we lose him?”

In 1092 the king returned to England, accompanied by the duke of Normandy. During his absence, Malcolm, the king of Scotland, had invaded the northern counties; and William hastened to drive him back. The armies met in Lothian; but a peace was concluded. On the return to the south, the English king seized Carlisle, which had been considered an appanage of the crown of Scotland. Here he founded a colony, and built the present castle. Another quarrel was the consequence; and Malcolm, after having met the English king at Gloucester, and resisted his claims, invaded Northumberland. Here the unfortunate king of Scotland, and his son Edward, were killed in a sudden surprise—some say by treachery. The good Queen Margaret survived her husband and son only four days.

\* Ordericus Vitalis, book viii. c. 16.



Duke Robert had come to England to obtain indemnity for possessions which he had surrendered in Normandy. He obtained nothing. According to the custom of chivalry, Robert sent to England two heralds to denounce his faithless brother as a perjured knight. William, like many other guilty men, would bear no imputation upon his honour, and went to Normandy to submit the points in dispute to arbitration. Twenty-four Norman barons decided against him. He then resolved upon war; and collected a large army at Hastings. The chroniclers say that the unscrupulous financier, Ralph Flambard, made this a new pretence of extortion. The war with Robert was not undertaken; and the soldiers were dismissed to their homes, upon making a handsome contribution to the wants of the king. He had more bribery to accomplish in Normandy. But he suddenly returned home, to put down an outbreak of the Welsh; to which succeeded an insurrection of the nobles in the north. Rufus was as energetic and as merciless as his father; and the dangers were averted.

But there was a new arrangement between the rival brothers, which was eventually to unite England and Normandy again under one king. Robert, in 1096, pawned his dukedom to William for five years. The mortgage-money of ten thousand pounds was, of course, to be paid by the people of the island. William and Robert are once more bound in hollow friendship, bought by "an edict for an intolerable tax throughout England."\*

The quarrels and the reconciliations of these turbulent princes would have little interest for us in these days, if we did not regard them from a higher point of view than that of their personal relations. Whatever these individuals do or suffer, the great body of the people is in some degree affected by their movements. In 1091, William, as we have seen, went to Normandy to cajole Robert, and to bribe Robert's supporters. He had a large revenue, but he required more money, and he levied a severe tax throughout the kingdom. Was it a tax which the rich and the powerful alone paid out of their abundance? Malmesbury writes thus, of the year 1092: "On account of the heavy tribute which the king, while in Normandy, had levied, agriculture failed; of which failure the immediate consequence was a famine. This also gaining ground, a mortality ensued, so general that the dying wanted attendance, and the dead, burial." Agriculture failed, because the king had appropriated the capital which was stored up for the maintenance of agri-

\* Malmesbury, book iv. c. 1.

culture. The lands were untilled one year, and famine inevitably followed. The poverty produced by exorbitant taxation, and by abstracting all the surplus wealth of the country, without a chance of its returning through the channels of commerce, kept the towns as poor as the fields were barren. In 1091, London was so meanly and unsubstantially built that six hundred houses were blown down by a violent whirlwind. In 1092, the greater part of London was destroyed by fire. Hoveden, who records these calamities, gives us no description of the houses that were blown down or burnt. No doubt they were wretched wooden hovels, such as were common enough in England and every other European country, till the peaceable and industrious many had become too numerous and too strong any longer to bear the oppressions of the arrogant and luxurious few. It was a long and difficult process to work this change; but we shall find how, amidst the misery and isolation of the feudal state, the great principles of modern society were gradually evolved, and a free and flourishing nation arose out of the chaotic relations of tyrant and bondman.

The mortgage of Normandy to William was connected with one of the most wonderful stirrings of the human heart that has been recorded in the history of mankind. The money of which William stripped his people, to pay the stipulated price to Robert for the surrender of his dominions—to raise which he even compelled the churchmen to bring to him their golden shrines and silver chalices—this price was nothing compared with the property that was devoted by the people of Europe for the recovery of Jerusalem from the infidels. "Whatever was stored in granaries, or hoarded in chambers," says Malmesbury, "all was deserted." Robert of Normandy was one of the leaders of the first Crusade. "It was one of those events," writes Guizot, "which change the condition of the people."

It is recorded that, on the night of the 4th of April, 1095, Gilbert, Bishop of Lisieux, in Normandy, who had been chaplain and physician to William the Conqueror, observing that remarkable phenomenon of innumerable falling stars which is now familiar to us at particular seasons, interpreted the appearance as a portent of an immense emigration of people from one country to another, from which they would never return till the stars came back to their place in the heavens.\* In November of the same year, Pope Urban II. attended the great council of Clermont, in Auvergne;

\* Ordericus Vitalis, book ix. c. 2.



and from a lofty scaffold in the market-place of Clermont preached the Crusade to assembled thousands. A vast multitude had arrived from all the surrounding districts—princes, bishops, nobles, knights, priests, burgesses, and rustics. For a zealous missionary had gone through Italy and France, and had proclaimed in every land that the Holy Sepulchre, which Christian pilgrims had freely visited from the days of Haroun Alraschid, was now closed against them by the Turk who had conquered Syria; and that the servants of the cross were massacred, plundered, sold into slavery. This was Peter of Amiens, known as Peter the Hermit.\* It was in the power of this man, mean of person, but gifted with that eloquence which is more potent than any physical superiority, to rouse a spirit in prince and people which had the character of universality. Before this time there was no common bond amongst the Christian communities of Europe—no prevailing sentiment which could unite the governments, and still less the people, in any general course of action. The extension of the Mo'ammedan empire was dreaded; but no state was strong enough to encounter the danger single-handed; and no confederacy of states could be constructed amidst the jealousies and hatreds of their ambitious rulers. Not only was any political unity impossible amongst many nations, but a common political sentiment was equally impossible amongst the classes of any one nation. But a vast European confederation for obtaining the freedom of Christian worship in the land which the Redeemer and his apostles had trodden, was an idea that seized upon the minds of men in all countries and of all classes, with a force which those only cannot comprehend who measure the character of a past age by the principles and feelings of their own age. When Pope Urban, from his lofty platform in the market-place of Clermont, called out to the chieftains and warriors, "Go, and employ, in nobler warfare, that valour and that sagacity which you have been used to waste in civil broils," he addressed himself to that love of excitement which, as much as the love of plunder, had called forth the lord from the monotony of his solitary castle, gladly to encounter the perils of "civil broils," rather than to dream away his life in wearisome idleness. None of the resources of modern society could give a relish to the existence of the feudal chief. The chase and the carousal, day by day, and year by year—the same priest at the mass; the same wife at the distaff; the same jester at the banquet—no books, no intelligent converse, no regular

\* This common title was derived from his family name of L'Ermitte.

communication with the surrounding world, no care for the education of children, no solicitude for the welfare of dependants—a dark tower for a dwelling, with neighbours whom he despised and persecuted—this was an existence for the lord of many manors that those who command the humblest of the manifold conveniences and pleasures of modern times need not envy. The prospect of visiting far-off and famous lands; of fighting against heathen miscreants; of returning with wealth and glory; or of dying in the assured hope of felicity; made the Crusade as welcome to the feudal lord as the gayest tournament. Nor was it less welcome to those whom Urban addressed, not as leaders in the enterprise, but as humble followers: "Let no love of relations detain you; for man's chiefest love is towards God. Let no attachment to your native soil be an impediment; because, in different points of view, all the world is exile to the Christian, and all the world his country." Attachment to his native soil would scarcely be an impediment to the lord's humble vassal; for the produce of the soil was scanty, and what he reaped he could rarely gather into his own homestead. If he could find another country where the prince would not rob the lord, and the lord would not grind the tenant—where the earth ripened her fruits beneath warmer suns, and man required less sustenance to be earned by unremitting labour—there would he gladly go. The burgher, who crouched under the hill-castle of the proud earl, and did his servile work of smith-craft or carpentry, with small pay and heavy dues, would dream of a land where ignorant misbelievers lived in glorious mansions, rich with all the wealth of the East,—for so the pilgrims told of the Asiatic cities,—and that wealth might be his. The foot-soldier, before whom the mounted men,—the favoured of the earls,—looked with contempt, would warm into a hero when the Pope spake of the Turks who fought at a distance with poisoned arrows,—the thin-blooded people, over whom the stalwart children of the West would make an easy conquest. To the feudal lord, to the tenant of his demesne, to the burgess of his town, to the common soldier who watched upon his ramparts,—the Crusade would offer the strongest incentives to the worldly-minded as well as to the enthusiastic. The mixture of motives made every crusader more or less alive to the higher influences. If wealth was not to be won, and new homes were not to be conquered, there were unearthly mansions prepared for the soldiers of the Cross. With one voice, therefore, the people in the market-place of Clermont shouted,—



*Deus lo volt; Deus lo volt.* "It is, indeed, the will of God," said the Pope. "Let that acclamation be your battle-cry. Wear the Cross as your sign and your solemn pledge."

The great army of the East was to be gathered together from all nations, by another year. But the impatience of the people would not wait for arms or leaders. In the March of 1096, a vast multitude set forward from France, gathering fresh crowds as they proceeded. The wonderful scenes of that year have been described by eye-witnesses. The peasant shod his oxen like horses, and yoking them to a cart, migrated with his wife and children; and the children, whenever they approached a town, cried out,— "Is this Jerusalem?" Lands were abandoned. Houses and chattels were sold for ready money by townsmen and husbandmen. The passion to reach Jerusalem extinguished all ordinary love of gain, and absorbed every other motive for exertion. Where Jerusalem was situate was to many a mystery. It was a far-distant land which a few pious and adventurous spirits had attained by difficult paths, over mountains and through deserts, and had returned to tell of its wonders and its dangers. It was a land where the fierce heathen kept possession of the holy seats which they despised, and where impure rites and demoniacal enchantments polluted the birth-place of the one true religion. The desire to see that land, if not to possess it, went through the most remote parts of Christian Europe. Wales, Scotland, Denmark, and Norway sent out their thousands, to join the great body that were moving on to the Rhine and the Danube. As they passed through the populous cities of Germany, the spirit of fanatical hatred which belonged to that age incited the multitude to pillage and massacre the Jews; and the best protectors of the unhappy race were the Christian bishops. This irregular host reached the frontiers of Austria, and then had to traverse the vast forests and morasses of Hungary and Bulgaria. Undisciplined, ill-provided, encumbered with women and children, their numbers had gradually been wasted by hunger and fatigue. They were led in two divisions, one of which was commanded by Peter the Hermit; the other by a soldier named Walter the Penniless. They irritated the inhabitants of the wild countries through which they passed, and suffered the most terrible defeats in Bulgaria. These were not the warlike bands that followed, under renowned and able leaders, in all the pomp and power of chivalry. In this irregular army there were only eight horsemen to fifteen thousand foot. At last the remnant of the

hundred thousand that had undertaken this perilous journey reached Constantinople. The emperor would have treated them with kindness, but they began to plunder the beautiful city, and they were driven out to seek the Asiatic side of the Bosphorus. They here renewed their devastations, uncontrolled by any respect for their leader, Walter, or any care for their own safety; and they were finally routed and cut to pieces by the Turks. The regular army of the Crusaders at length approached Asia under the commanders whom History and Poetry have made famous,—Godfrey of Bouillon, Hugh of Vermandois, Robert of Normandy, Robert of Flanders, Stephen of Chartres, Raymond of Toulouse, the ambitious Bohemond, and the accomplished Tancred. They came by different routes from their several countries. The history of their progress belongs not to our narrative. It was more than three years after Pope Urban had preached the crusade at Clermont, that Jerusalem fell, and the Holy Sepulchre was free. A terrible massacre disgraced this Christian triumph; and whilst the merciless conquerors knelt upon the sacred earth, they showed how little they comprehended the spirit of the religion whose sign they bore in that great warfare. But it is not the crimes of the fanatical warriors who won the Holy Land, or the rashness of the ignorant multitudes who preceded them, that should lead us to speak of the Crusades "as the most signal and most durable monument of human folly that has ever yet appeared in any age or nation."\* One who looks upon history with a more extended range of vision has pointed out that "the Crusades were the continuation, the zenith, of the grand struggle which had been going on for four centuries between Christianity and Mohammedanism."† Like all other great struggles of principle, they produced the most enduring influences upon the destinies of mankind; and, marked as was their course by the display of many evil passions, and many dangerous illusions, their tendency was to elevate the character of European life, and to prepare the way for the ultimate triumph of mental freedom and equal government.

Whilst Duke Robert was at the head of his knights and their horsemen in siege and battle; enduring privations unknown to the Norman military life; exposed to diseases peculiar to a climate so different from that of his own pleasant lands; William, the king, was foreclosing upon the property of Normandy like a grasping usurer. In 1095, "he crossed over the sea in the month of Sep-

\* Hume.

† Guizot: Civilization in Europe.



tember, and obtaining possession of Normandy for the price he paid, trampled it under foot for nearly five years, that is, all the rest of his life." \* Hume, without any distinct authority, but with a just estimate of the character of Rufus, has said, "it is likely that he made the romantic chivalry of the Crusades the object of his perpetual raillery." According to William's estimate of human affairs, his own business was to get as much as he could out of the less sordid impulses of those who fell into his toils. His borrowed dukedom, however, gave him some trouble. He renewed the old quarrel with the King of France about the Vexin territory. In the province of Maine also, which had been ceded to him, there was an obstinate baron, Helie, who was little disposed to submit to his domination, and relied upon the support of the people, by whom he was beloved. The Red King was too strong for the baron in the end. His contest in this petty war is characteristic of the energy and self-confidence which belonged to the descendant of "Robert the Devil." In 1099, William was hunting in the New Forest when he received a message that Helie had defeated the Normans and surprised the city of Mans. Without drawing bit, he galloped to the coast, and jumped into a vessel lying at anchor. The day was stormy, and the sailors were unwilling to embark. "Sail instantly," cried the bold man, "kings are never drowned." He landed at Touques, a small port, and was soon at the head of his troops. Helie fled, without offering battle. In the siege of the castle of Maiet, William was held at bay; and finally marched back, after the accustomed fashion, "laying waste the enemy's country in every way, rooting up the vines, felling the fruit-trees, levelling walls and buildings, and ravaging the whole district, which was very rich, with fire and sword." †

In the July of 1099, at which time Duke Robert is marching into Jerusalem, King William is ravaging Maine. But he cannot leave England for long to its own guidance. Moreover, he wants more money from his island subjects; for the Duke of Guienne is willing to mortgage his dominions, that he may have the means of proceeding to the Holy Land. The ecclesiastics, too, are by no means well affected to their stern master, who had quarrelled with Anselm, the archbishop of Canterbury, and compelled him to flee from his dominions. The king has built Westminster-hall—a vast room, whose roof was supported by columns,—upon the site of the present noble structure, whose walls encase some of the timbers of the hall of

\* Ordericus Vitalis, book x. c. 4.

† Ibid., book x. c. 9.

Rufus. He has magnificent ideas; for he says that the hall shall be a mere bedroom compared with the palace which he means to build. He has erected a wall, too, around the Tower of London. Wherever he moves—and these Norman kings were constantly hurrying from city to city, and from castle to castle—the royal household plundered like an invading army. The king, in common with many other mighty tyrants, mingled jest with savagery. A Jew, whose son had become christianized, ventures to implore William to use his influence to bring the convert back to the faith of his fathers; and the king accepts the office for a present payment. The young man will not yield, and the Jew asks the king for his money again; he obtains only half, for the magnanimous prince keeps the other half as the payment of his trouble. These and other anecdotes of his rapacity and want of reverence for all sacred things and high principles, may be the idle tales of the cloister; but they show how the chroniclers felt that this son of the Conqueror had all the defects of his father's character, without any of his great qualities, except that of courage; and was despised as well as hated by his contemporaries. Whether this hatred and contempt led to the final catastrophe, or whether it was the result of accident, cannot now be determined. William of Malmesbury tells the story with some picturesque circumstances, of which we shall avail ourselves. The king is in Malwood keep, in the New Forest, hunting and feasting. On the 1st of August, 1100, being asked where he would keep his Christmas, he says at Poitou, for he was speculating upon the new dominion which England's money would obtain from the Duke of Guienne. That night he has had dreams; and a certain foreign ecclesiastic also dreams about the king coming into a church with menacing looks, and, insulting the symbol of religion, was struck down by the image. This is told to William; who says, "he is a monk, and dreams for money like a monk; give him a hundred shillings." But he is moved and dispirited, and will not hunt. Dinner comes, with copious draughts of wine; and then he will ride in the forest. He is alone with Walter Tyrrel. The sun is declining. The king has drawn his bow and wounded a stag; he is shading his eyes from the strong level light, when Walter, aiming at another stag, pierces the king's breast with a fatal arrow which glances from a tree. Breaking off the shaft of the arrow, William falls from his horse, and "speaks word never more." Walter immediately runs up to the body, and then leaps upon his horse, none perceiving him. A few countrymen convey the body in a cart to Winchester,



and there "it was committed to the ground within the tower, attended by many of the nobles, though lamented by few." In a hall of no great antiquity in the pretty town of Lyndhurst, hangs the stirrup which tradition, from time immemorial, asserts was attached to the saddle from which Rufus fell, when struck by the arrow of Walter Tyrrel. It is recorded also that the man who picked up the body was a charcoal-burner, of the name of Purkess, living in the village of Minstead, in the forest, and that on his cart was the corpse removed to Winchester. In that village in 1843 we saw the name of Purkess over the door of a little shop; and Mr. Stewart Rose, who held an office in the forest, records that the charcoal-burner's descendants have always lived in this village, where they still live, the possessors of one horse and cart, and no more. There was a stone erected in "green Malwood," by Lord Delaware, in 1745, upon a spot where the tree is said to have stood from which the arrow of Tyrrel glanced. In the time of Leland, there was a chapel built upon the site. After our visit to this interesting and beautiful glade, which Gilpin has described as "a sweet sequestered bottom, open to the west, where the corner of a heath sinks gently into it, but sheltered on the east by a beechen grove,"\* we thus wrote:—"It would be a wise act of the Crown to found a school here—a better way of continuing a record than Lord Delaware's stone. The history of their country, its constitution, its privileges; the duties and the rights of Englishmen—things which are not taught to the children of our labouring millions—might worthily commence to be taught on the spot where the Norman tyrant fell, leaving successors who, one by one, came to acknowledge that the people were something not to be neglected or despised."

\* Forest Scenery, vol. ii.

## CHAPTER XVII.

Prince Henry seizes the treasures of the crown.—Coronation of Henry I.—Charter of Liberties.—Marriage with Matilda.—Duke Robert invades England.—Henry punishes disaffected Barons.—Hostile movements of Henry in Normandy.—Battle of Tinchenbrai.—Battle of Noyon.—Death of Queen Matilda.—Eustace and Juliana.—The Blanche-Nef.—Geoffrey Plantagenet.—Death of King Henry.—Prophecies of Merlin.

ON the 2nd of August, in the year 1100, there was a chase from Malwood, across the New Forest, and onward to Winchester, in which chase the prey was of far greater importance than stag or boar. Henry, to whom his father gave five thousand pounds as his inheritance, with an injunction to bide his time, found that his time for accomplishing all that his loftiest ambition could desire had at length arrived. He had been riding near the spot where William fell. Immediately that the death of his brother was certain, he spurred his horse along the green glades, for a gallop of twenty miles in that autumn evening. But another horseman was at his heels. William de Breteuil, the treasurer of Rufus, divined the prince's purpose. They arrived at Winchester at the same hour. Henry hastened to the Treasury, which probably was in some strong vault of the Castle, similar to the arched chamber of the Treasury at Westminster, in the Cloister of the Abbey next the Chapter-house, in which the *pix* is still contained.\* The prince authoritatively demanded the keys. William de Breteuil insisted that they should not be given up, saying that Prince Henry, as well as himself, had paid Robert, the elder brother, homage, and that he was the rightful successor. Henry drew his sword, and at length, by force and persuasion, obtained the royal treasures. The next step was easy. He was crowned at Westminster on Sunday the 5th of August.

Duke Robert, after the conquest of Jerusalem, had set out homeward. It is related that the crown of Jerusalem, which was ultimately worn by Godfrey of Bouillon, had been offered to him. He preferred his dukedom. Passing through the Norman dominions in Italy, he was cordially received at the court of Geoffrey of

\* "Introduction to Kalendars, &c., of the Exchequer;" by Sir F. Palgrave.