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.

Conversana, in Apulia; and there, amidst all the refinements of a chivalric life, he lingered long, and finally married Sibylla, the daughter of his entertainer. With his young and beauteous wife he received a marriage-portion, amply sufficient to redeem his mortgaged dukedom. They arrived in Normandy, within a few weeks after Henry was firmly seated on the throne of England.

The sovereignty of Henry was so clearly an usurpation, that, with that prudence, however selfish, which belonged to his character, he sought to conciliate all classes of his subjects. He published a charter of liberties in 1101, in which he engaged to put in force the laws of Edward the Confessor, which the Anglo-Saxon race had so earnestly demanded. To the Church he promised that he would retain no vacant benefices, nor sell them, nor farm them. He granted to his immediate vassals—and required that they should grant the same to their sub-vassals—to be in future free from arbitrary exactions in the form of reliefs; that the lord should not interfere with the marriage of their daughters; and that heiresses and widows should not be compelled to marry against their will.* He, however, retained the royal forests, and the forest laws. It was a very large concession to the public good. Like many subsequent charters and ordinances, it soon became inoperative in many of its provisions.

It is now thirty-five years since the Conquest. A generation has passed away, to whom the name of Norman was odious. Two kings have gone to their account, with whom the name of Saxon was associated with the character of slave. The third king of the Norman race is, probably, as little English in his heart as his father and brother; but he knows how essential the English support is to his safety. The reign of Henry is not a struggle against the resistance of the Saxons, but a perpetual conflict against the disaffection of the Normans. There is a gradual progress, therefore, towards the condition in which the Normans should become Anglicised, and Norman domination should be lost in English independence. The transition state of the period of Henry I. is, in many respects, one of the most interesting of our history. It is not marked by any very great events. The course of political action is, in its general character, monotonous and languid. There is a perpetual contest of local and class interests. The battle of feudal selfishness is chiefly removed from the island to the continent. England has a long rest from the devastations of war, though she

* See p. 243.

knows its cost. The Church is becoming a great power, that stands between the people and their tyrants, and which upholds, though in no slavish spirit, the one regal tyrant as the lesser evil. There are several contemporary historians of this period; and out of their narratives, the more trustworthy in proportion as they are rambling and ill-digested, may be constructed a tolerably complete view of the first half of the twelfth century.

The court of Rufus had been contemptible for its unscrupulous profligacy. Whilst his father, amidst all his self-will and ferocity, had manifested a respect for the decencies of life and the sanctities of religion, his successor had offended the churchmen by his profaneness, and the laity by his licentiousness. Surrounded by men of abandoned lives, his scurrilous jests and his brutal voluptuousness made him as odious as his energetic tyranny made him dreaded. Henry lived in that court, and he partook of its voluptuousness, whilst his cultivated intellect revolted at its grossness. He had many of the high qualities of his father, with an amount of adroit duplicity, which his father scarcely condescended to exercise. Upon his accession he purged his government of the evil ministers of his brother's pleasures, and the corrupt administrators of his oppressive exactions. Ralph Flambard, the bishop of Durham, who was particularly obnoxious, was committed to the Tower, whence he contrived to escape to Normandy. His friends had conveyed to him a rope in a pitcher of wine, and after a night of carousal with those who should have guarded him, he let himself down by a window, and reached the coast in safety, where he found a ship ready to bear him across the channel. He soon became an instrument of mischief at the court of Duke Robert. Meanwhile Henry had married. His choice of a queen appears to have been decided by a just and wise desire to propitiate the English population. Maud, the daughter of Malcolm, king of Scotland, and of Margaret, the sister of Edgar the Etheling, was of the lineage of the Saxon kings. She had been brought up under the care of her aunt, the Abbess of Wilton, who, to preserve her from the Norman warriors, who seized upon the Saxon maidens as wives or mistresses, had caused her to wear the veil, though she had not taken the vows. After many discussions amongst the ecclesiastics, it was held that Maud was not bound to celibacy; and the king, "having been long attracted by her many graces and virtues," according to Ordericus, shared his throne with her, and she was crowned by Gerard, bishop of Hereford.

This marriage, which, as we have before mentioned, was called, "The Union of the Races," was a cause of offence to the imperious Norman nobles. The queen's name, as a Saxon maiden, was Edith; but her name was changed to Maud, or Matilda, as having a more agreeable sound to the Norman ear. The proud countrymen of Henry gave him the nickname of Godric, and the queen that of Godiva—both conveying some opprobrium. "This marriage was regarded as a marriage between a white planter and a quadroon girl would now be regarded in Virginia." * Yet, supported as Henry was by the best of the Churchmen, and especially by Anselm, the honest and enlightened bishop of Canterbury, who had been recalled and re-invested, the union might have tended to produce a more united people, at an earlier period than that when the distinctions of race were forgotten in common interests, had there been a wiser sovereign in Normandy. Robert, though his claim to the crown of England was founded upon the strict right of succession, would have evinced more sagacity to have been content with the expressed desire of his father, that one brother should rule Normandy and another England. He was misled by the belief that the Norman barons and their Norman followers were all-powerful in England. He had conducted himself with skill and bravery as a leader in the Crusade; but as the ruler of a kingdom he was manifestly inferior to the politic Henry. The exiled bishop of Durham was one of his chief advisers in an invasion of England in 1101. The king was prepared for the danger, and had disciplined the English, upon whom he could rely more confidently than upon the barons and their followers. The Duke of Normandy landed at Portsmouth on the 1st of August. Some of the Norman barons openly joined him: others secretly encouraged his pretensions. Robert marched from the coast, and the two armies pitched their camps near each other. Henry desired a conference with his brother; and they met in the presence of the hostile troops, who "formed a magnificent circle round them, displaying the terrible but brilliant spectacle of the Normans and English under arms." † They were reconciled. Robert was of a generous and yielding nature; Henry was far-seeing and prudent. A treaty was concluded without umpires; of which the chief article was that Robert relinquished his claims upon England. The rivalry between the brothers was not subdued; but the blood of two hostile races was no more to be poured out upon English

* Macaulay: History, vol. i.

† Ordericus Vitalis, book x. c. 18.

ground. Robert and his army returned to Normandy; and the troops of Henry were disbanded, after the duke had remained a guest for several months at the court of the king.

In the following year Henry, of whom clemency was not an attribute, commenced a series of persecutions against those of his barons who had favoured the enterprise of Robert. They were protected by the treaty of 1101, in which there was an amnesty for political offences. But the king brought many of them to trial, on charges which had probably some solid foundation, though urged with acrimony, and punished with severity. Thus, Ivo de Grantesmenil, was subjected to an enormous fine, for having "set the example of engaging in war on his own account, and given to the flames the territories of his neighbours, such private wars being hitherto unknown in England." * Unquestionably Henry was right in allowing no such wars to devastate England as were then raging in Normandy; and which in the next reign of Stephen rendered our country a desert. If the king was not magnanimous in punishing under legal forms those who had offended him by their disaffection, we may still believe that the great mass of the people were not injured by his severity. One of the principal offenders was Robert de Belèsme, earl of Shrewsbury. No one of the Norman chieftains was more cruel or rapacious, no one more powerful. The king had surrounded him with spies, and preferred many charges against him of the heaviest nature. The earl fled to his castles, and refused to appear to abide a trial. Henry immediately called out the whole military force of the country, so formidable was this baron. His castles of Arundel and Blythe surrendered; and Bridgenorth, after a long siege, was opened to the royal troops. Robert de Belèsme had possession of Shrewsbury, and the king marched with a vast army to besiege the town, by a road called the "Huvel Hegen"—which Ordericus interprets as the evil way—more properly the evil hedge. The description of this road presents a curious feature of a large town still protected by an old Saxon wood on one side, whilst a river, the Severn, was a natural defence to the rising ground round which it flowed. "This road was for a thousand paces full of holes, and the surface rough with large stones, and so narrow that two men on horseback could scarcely pass each other. . . . There were more than sixty thousand infantry in the expedition; and the king gave orders that they should clear a broad track by cutting down the wood with

* Ordericus Vitalis, book xi. c. 2.

axes, so that a road might be formed for his own passage, and a public highway for ever afterwards." The rebel earl surrendered, and was banished; and at the fall of the tyrant, according to Ordericus, "all England was in a tumult of joy." The same chronicler adds, "Robert de Belèsme, having been thus expelled, the realm of Albion enjoyed peace and tranquillity, and during the thirty-three years of Henry's subsequent reign no one afterwards dared to revolt in England, nor held any fortress against him." But the terrible earl, who had vast estates in Normandy, went over to a land where there was no energetic ruler to oppose him; and for several years ravaged the country, and defied the power of the duke, who had entered into a mutual engagement with Henry to make common cause against any traitor to either of them. At length Duke Robert concluded a peace with the fierce earl, and admitted him to his patrimonial estates. There was now a new cause for enmity between the reigning brothers. The catastrophe was fast approaching which had been long foreseen.

The natural and laudable desire to take part with the weak against the strong has given a colour to the popular view of the reign of Henry I. The eminent ability of the king, as a ruler, has been overshadowed by the heartlessness of his conduct as a brother. Yet, even the unbending determination with which Henry made himself master of Normandy, and held Robert a prisoner to the end of a long life, cannot be wholly referred to the obdurate hostility and calculating ambition of the wiser and more powerful of the two princes. There is nothing more clear than the general course of Henry's policy from the commencement of his reign. He was determined to be supreme in England; to hold in check the tyranny of the great vassals of the crown; to cultivate friendly relations with the Anglo-Saxon people; to respect the authority and maintain the possessions of the Church, without yielding an unreserved obedience to the pretensions of the Papacy. Had there been a sovereign of equally vigorous character in Normandy, it is possible that Henry might have been content with his island dominions. But the loose authority of Robert was a perpetual danger to Henry; for in repressing the enormities of the barons in England he roused the sympathies of their connexions in Normandy, and tranquillity in the island was uncertain whilst there was constant disaffection on the continent. Many of the Anglo-Norman barons were also vassals of the crown in Normandy, and thus there was a perpetual conflict of interests, whilst

the policies of the two countries was discordant. The Norman ecclesiastics were, moreover, subjected to constant outrage and terror under the feeble administration of Duke Robert. Mailed freebooters, with high-sounding titles, ravaged the country, with no central power either of arms or law to control and punish. No doubt, the ambition of Henry, criminal as it might have been in his family relations, but in some degree justifiable in his sovereign character, was ready to avail itself of its opportunities in the misrule of his brother. The story of his acquisition of Normandy, and of his subsequent wars for its safe possession, may be very briefly told as regards its leading events; but the accessories of that story, as related by the contemporary chroniclers, and especially by Ordericus Vitalis, are amongst the most curious illustrations of the feudal times.

Robert of Normandy had lost his wife in 1102. The corrupt manners of the times were immediately exhibited in the personal conduct of the unhappy prince; and for three or four years his example was one of public offence. In 1104, Henry went over to Normandy. Many of the nobles, who had also estates in England, gathered round him, and stimulated what was no doubt the secret desire of his heart; yet the brothers parted friends. Again the province was ravaged by the private hostilities of those who were considered the friends of Henry, and those who hated him. The country people in many districts fled into France, leaving their lands uncultivated. In the spring of 1105, the king of England took a final step towards the union of the two crowns. There is a dramatic interest in his cautious and half-reluctant approaches to the deposition of his brother, which reminds us of the well-known passage of a later history, when Glo'ster is urged "of his accustomed goodness and zeal unto the realm, now with his eye of pity to behold the long-continued distress and decay of the same."* Henry landed on Easter Eve, at the small port of Barbaflot; and slept at the village of Carentan. On Easter Sunday he went in the most private manner to the church, where Serlo, the bishop of Sèez, was to officiate at the solemnities of the great festival. The king had taken his place at the lower end of the church, seated amongst peasants' panniers, and household goods of every kind, with which the place was encumbered. The bishop took this desecration as his theme. The spectacle exhibited in the church shows the desolation of the Cotentin. All Normandy is a prey to

* Sir Thomas More's "Tragical History of Richard III."

freebooters. This edifice is, for want of a just protector, become the storehouse of the people. The goods heaped up in this house of God are brought here by the defenceless peasants to save them from the sons of violence. Rouse yourself then, O king, in the name of the Lord, and with the sword of justice make yourself master of your father's inheritance. Your brother Robert is abandoned to sloth and folly. He is surrounded by buffoons and harlots, who plunder him even of his clothes. Take arms, then, to redress this affliction of the land. Take arms, and recover the territory of your ancestors, and rescue the people from the dominion of abandoned men. And then the king said—"In God's name, I will not shrink from toiling earnestly for the restoration of peace." The bishop then went on to inveigh against the fashions of the time—against long hair, and long beards, and peaked-toed shoes; and exhorted the king to testify by his example against these abominations. The king was ready with his testimony; and forthwith the zealous bishop produced a pair of scissors out of his scrip, and cropped, first the king's hair, with his own hand. Then the flowing locks of the Earl of Mellent,—"the glass of fashion," as well as the most sagacious councillor of the English court—were subjected to the fatal shears. After these examples the royal household and the other great men of the congregation, contended with each other who should be cropped first. This farce went before the tragedy. Very shortly after, the king took Bayeux by assault, and burnt it to the ground. The people of Caen surrendered their fortress. At Whitsuntide, Henry and Robert had a conference, without coming to agreement. The Normans took their several sides; and the country was burnt and pillaged. Henry returned to England for money and men. But in 1106 he was in Normandy with a far greater force, and constructed a fort before Tenchebrai. The place was vigorously defended by William, earl of Morton; and Duke Robert came to his relief, with a large force of Norman chivalry. Henry was strong in his infantry both English and Norman. There was some negociation before the decisive battle, which took place on the 28th of September, the anniversary of William the Conqueror's landing at Hastings. When the ranks met, "the troops were thronged so closely, and their weapons so locked together, that it was out of their power to injure each other, and both parties in turn attempted in vain to break the impenetrable phalanx." The details of the battle are rather meagre, beyond this curious circumstance related by Order-

icus. One of Henry's chaplains, Baudri, took the duke prisoner, after he had gallantly fought with unequal numbers. The contest was over. Amongst other prisoners was Edgar the Etheling, who passed the remainder of his eventful life in England, without molestation, an object of pity rather than of fear. The deposed Duke Robert was kept a prisoner in Cardiff Castle. Eleven years later, Pope Calixtus met King Henry at Gison; and when exhorted by the pontiff to release his brother, said, "I have not caused him to be bound in fetters like a captive enemy, but treating him like a noble pilgrim worn by long sufferings, I have placed him in a royal castle, and supplied his tables and wardrobe with all kinds of luxuries." We may believe in the luxuries or not; but there are entries in the accounts called "The Pipe Rolls," which show that in 1131 the Count of Normandy, as he is termed, was supplied with new clothes. The story of his eyes being put out, by the organs of sight being seared over a red-hot basin, rests upon no contemporary authority. William of Malmesbury, who wrote whilst Duke Robert was alive, says, "he endured no evil but solitude, if that can be called solitude where, by the attention of his keepers, he was provided with abundance both of amusement and of food. He was confined, however, till he had survived all his companions in the crusade, and whether he ever will be set free is doubtful." In another manuscript of Malmesbury's chronicle, we find this reading—"nor was he liberated till the day of his death." That release from a captivity of twenty-eight years arrived in 1135.

At the time of the battle of Tenchebrai, Duke Robert had a son of five years old, who had been brought up at Falaise. When Henry took possession of the place, the little boy was led to him. This possible heir of two kingdoms bore the name of his grandfather; and the William of five years old shrank with terror from his conquering uncle. Henry used no violence to the child, but committed him to an honest guardianship. The king appears, in another year, to have repented of his honesty, and to have desired to get the young prince into his power. But Helie de St. Saen fled with his charge; and put him under the protection of Louis, king of France, and Fulk, earl of Anjou. As the boy grew, the interests connected with him became more complicated. He was first patronised, and afterwards cast off, by the earl of Anjou. The king of France used him as an instrument to check the growing power of Henry. At length there was open war between France and Normandy, and in 1119 was fought the battle of Noyon, or

Brenneville, a place on the road from Rouen to Paris. Louis was here defeated, and fled. The battle was not a sanguinary one; and was remarkable for the comparative safety with which the horsemen in complete harness encountered each other. Ordericus says, "In the battle between the two kings, in which nearly nine hundred knights were engaged, I have ascertained that three only were slain. This arose from their being entirely covered with steel armour, and mutually sparing each other for the fear of God, and out of regard for the fraternity of arms." The knights might spare each other, but the people were little spared. The chronicler adds, "The whole country was a desert in consequence of the wars which raged so furiously." And yet there was an influence counteracting the violence of these intestine wars of Normandy, which "the philosophical historian," writing in a spirit very different from that of philosophy, invariably calls "superstition." Ordericus records that after the battle of Noyon, a certain knight, who was essentially a free-booter, was driving out the cattle, and carrying away the booty, of a village which he had plundered, when the peasants came out in a numerous body to attempt the recovery of their few worldly possessions. An armed band, of whose numbers they were unaware, turned round upon them, to slay and make captive. The peasants fled, and in their terror fell upon their knees before a way-side cross, and implored the succour of Heaven. The plunderers stopped in reverent piety, and the destitute people were spared. But piety and chivalry never failed to oppress by indirect power. Huntingdon, under the same date, records that "this year the English were grievously burdened with continual taxes and various exactions occasioned by the king's wants."

In 1118 "the good queen Maud" died. Henry was probably not inconsolable; for she had long retired to the monastery of Westminster, where she spent her revenues in the relief of the sick, and in acts of penitential piety. She had, in the early years of her marriage, when Anselm was an exile from England, in consequence of his dispute with Henry about the right of investiture, considerable influence over her husband, if we may judge from a passage in one of her letters to the prelate. In this letter she says, speaking of the king, "His mind is not so provoked against you as some men think; and by God's good will, with my suggestions, which shall not be wanting, he will be more disposed to concord." In a true Christian spirit she implores the archbishop to be "a kind intercessor with God both for him and me, and our little ones, and the prosperity of our kingdom." She had died, without enduring the sharpest pang that a mother can feel,—the untimely death of one of those "little ones" now growing to manhood. Her daughter had been betrothed to the Emperor of Germany in 1108, and was married in 1114; and the king, on the feudal principle, taxed every hide in England three shillings upon that occasion. The story of the son's death has presently to be related.

In 1119, William the Etheling,—the Saxon title being still applied to the heir to the crown,—was married to the daughter of Fulk, count of Anjou. The young prince remained in Normandy; and peace having been restored between Henry and the king of France, did homage to that king, Louis-le-Gros, for the fief of Normandy. At this season there was a general amity, and the most horrible violations of the rights of humanity appear to have left no enduring remorse, and to have presented no impediment to such friendships as the strong may form with the weak. The king had many illegitimate daughters, and one was married to Eustace of Breteuil. There had been deadly enmity between the king and his son-in-law, in which his daughter partook with a passion which demands excuse and pity. In 1118, Eustace and the king had a dispute about the castle of Ivri; but Henry was desirous to retain the allegiance of Eustace, and it was agreed that hostages should be exchanged. Ralph Harenc, the commander of the fortress, gave his son to Eustace, and Eustace gave his two little daughters to the custody of Henry. The quarrel was not made up, and the Count of Breteuil, with a savageness which is even wonderful in that age of ferocity, put out the eyes of the innocent boy. Ralph de Harenc, in a transport of rage, presented himself to the king, and demanded vengeance. Henry, without hesitation, gave up his two grand-daughters. Was that stern heart torn with agony at the danger of these helpless little ones? or did the honour of chivalry extinguish all natural emotion? The children were sacrificed to the revenge of Ralph de Harenc. But the mother's injuries were too deep for a common indignation. She had undertaken the defence of Breteuil in the absence of her husband. The king pressed the siege. Juliana appeared on the walls, and demanded a conference with her father; and when he appeared she launched a bolt at him from a cross-bow. Henry, who was unhurt, broke down the drawbridge, so that escape was difficult. But Juliana dropt from the wall into the fosse, on a freezing night in February. In 1119, when Henry was everywhere victorious, Eustace and his wife knelt before the king in his tent; and there was reconciliation and forgiveness.

We have to relate another tragical history; but it is not one in which an age of chivalry is presented to us with abhorrent features. Henry was about to leave Normandy in the early part of the winter of 1120. On the 25th of November he was at Barfleur with his son William, and his natural son Richard, with many a noble in his train. There came to him a mariner, and said, that Stephen, the son of Airard, was his father, and that Stephen was the owner of the ship that conveyed the Conqueror to make war on Harold; and he asked the king to sail with him in his ship, the Blanche-Nef. Henry replied he had chosen his ship, but that his son might sail with the son of Airard. The king put to sea in the first watch of the night, and reached England in safety. The young prince and his companions went on board full of merriment and wine, and the rowers and their steersman were mad with drink. As they pulled out of the harbour, incapable of directing the vessel, she struck upon a rock, filled, and went down. One man only out of three hundred on board, was saved — Berold, a butcher of Rouen. A writer,— who knows well that the episodes of history, in which we see the workings of the human heart amidst the craft of policy and the ferocity of war, are amongst the most valuable of what old records have preserved to us,—has said—"I should be sorry to lose faith in the account of the death of the eldest son of the first Henry, who, when the ship in which he had sailed for England went down, and he was safely within the boat, put back to save his favourite sister, and perished along with her." * We may trust the relation of Malmesbury, a contemporary writer, and need not lose faith in the affection of the ill-starred youth. His narrative is not so minute as that of Ordericus, but it is perfectly distinct and circumstantial. He says,—"The water washed some of the crew overboard, and, entering the chinks, drowned others; when the boat having been launched, the young prince was received into it, and might certainly have been saved by reaching the shore, had not his illegitimate sister, the Countess of Perche, now struggling with death in the larger vessel, implored her brother's assistance; shrieking out that he should not abandon her so barbarously. Touched with pity, he ordered the boat to return to the ship, that he might rescue his sister; and thus the unhappy youth met his death through excess of affection; for the skiff, overcharged by the multitudes who leaped into her, sank, and buried all indiscriminately in the deep. One rustic alone escaped, who, floating all

* "Landmarks of the History of England," by the Rev. J. White.

night upon the mast, related in the morning the dismal catastrophe of this tragedy." We are told by Ordericus how the stern king was made acquainted with the deepest sorrow of his life. The news reached England. The king was in great anxiety; but no one dared to tell him of the event. By a concerted plan a boy threw himself at the king's feet, weeping bitterly, and told his tale. Henry instantly fell to the ground. That proud heart was stricken; and in the solitude of his chamber he might have thought of the agony of his daughter Juliana weeping for her children.

In 1121, King Henry married Adelaide, the daughter of the Duke of Louvain. They had no issue. The unhappy death of Prince William excited renewed attention to the claims of his cousin, the son of Robert. He seemed destined to the throne of England. Fulk of Anjou affianced the Norman prince to his daughter. But Henry set in motion all his instruments of policy, and succeeded in preventing the marriage. His enemies in Normandy took up the cause of the son of Robert, and the king of France bestowed on him the hand of his sister-in-law. Finally he succeeded to the earldom of Flanders. He was now in a position of great power and prosperity, and stood in the way of the far-seeing designs of the king of England. Henry's only legitimate child, Matilda, was destined by him to inherit his greatness. The empress of Germany had become a widow in 1124; and at the Christmas of 1126, at a solemn assembly at Windsor, of nobles, and bishops, and the great tenants of the crown, it was declared that the ex-empress was the next heir, failing any future legitimate male issue to the king. They then all swore to maintain her succession; and amongst the nobles who took the oath was Stephen, Earl of Boulogne, the son of Adela, the daughter of the Conqueror; and Robert, Earl of Gloucester, the illegitimate son of Henry. David, king of Scotland, who was present as an English earl, also swore to maintain the succession of his niece Matilda. That Christmas day of 1126 was to be fruitful of years of calamity for England.

Fulk, the earl of Anjou, had surrendered his European states to his eldest son Geoffrey, for he had accepted the higher dignity of King of Jerusalem. An alliance with the Plantagenets was one of the great objects of Henry's ambition; and he negociated a marriage of Matilda with the young earl. Their nuptials were solemnised at Rouen at the Whitsuntide of 1127. This marriage of policy was not a happy one. The king had constantly to interfere between the husband and wife. Matilda had much of her father's

imperious spirit; and Geoffrey made demands which Henry resisted. There was deep enmity between them. But in 1133 Matilda bore a son, Henry. The oaths to maintain the succession were renewed. Before this period, however, the king had been freed from much disquiet, by the death of his nephew, William the earl of Flanders, who was wounded under the walls of Alost in 1128, in a revolt headed by the Earl of Alsace, and fomented, no doubt, by the intrigues of the English king.

The hour at last came when the fine scholar was to feel that his learning had not taught him the highest wisdom, and his ambition had not conducted him on the path of happiness. The castle of Lions, about six leagues from Rouen, was his favourite hunting-seat, and he arrived there on the 25th of November, 1135. He had not lost his active habits at the age of sixty-five, and he gave orders for the chace on the next day. But the next day saw him sick. He had feasted upon a dish of lampreys, and after four days he died, beating his breast, and lamenting his sins. *

Towards the end of the reign of Henry I., Geoffrey of Monmouth, at the desire of Alexander, bishop of Lincoln, made a Latin translation of the prophecies of Merlin, from the British tongue. To publish a book, at that period, was to set the transcribers to work in the European monasteries; and thus the knowledge of any remarkable performance very soon became general. These prophecies, which were afterwards incorporated in Geoffrey's "Historia Britonum," were, like the semi-fabulous history of which they now form a portion, filled with the most startling images of dragons, white and red; wolves, lions, serpents, goats with golden horns and silver beards, and foxes with asses' heads; brazen horses and brazen men; Orion and the Pleiades; Saturn, Mars, Jupiter, and Venus; Gemini, that forget their embraces; and Libra with oblique scales.†

* "The death of great men is not always proportioned to the lustre of their lives. Hannibal, says Juvenal, did not perish by a javelin or a sword; the slaughters of Cannæ were revenged by a ring. The death of Pope was imputed by some of his friends to a silver saucepan, in which it was his delight to heat potted lampreys."—Johnson's "Lives of the Poets."

† Shakspere was well read in Merlin:—

"Sometime he angers me,
With telling me of the moldwarp and the ant,
Of the dreamer Merlin, and his prophecies;
And of a dragon and a finless fish,
A clip-winged griffin, and a moulten raven,
A crouching lion, and a ramping cat,
And such a deal of skimble-skamble stuff
As puts me from my faith."—*Henry IV*. Part i. act iii. sc. 1.

How this "skimble-skamble stuff" would delight and terrify an ignorant and superstitious people is not difficult to imagine. It is only when Merlin comes into the immediate times in which Geoffrey produced the prophet, in a tongue which the monks could read and expound, that there is a distinctness and reality which contrasts with the vagueness with which he pretends to look at the distant future through this wonderful atmosphere. That portion of the prophecies which clearly relates to the time of Henry I. is extremely curious, as showing the popular estimate of some of the leading characteristics of the man and of his reign; and it will be at least amusing to compare the mystical allusions with the historical facts.

"A people shall come over, on timber, and in coats of iron, who shall execute vengeance for iniquity." Geoffrey, if of doubtful value as a prophet, is an excellent witness to the still enduring hatred of the British race to the Saxon. The ship-borne Normans, in their coats of mail, "shall restore the ancient inhabitants to their homes." The Saxon race, that of "the strangers," shall be "decimated," and "they shall bear the yoke of perpetual servitude, and shall tear their mother with ploughs and harrows." This is no untrue picture of the Saxon serfs, as they laboured for the Normans seventy years after the Conquest. We come to two dragons, one of whom is clearly Rufus, who is "slain by the darts of malice,"—the other, Robert of Normandy, "the shadow of a name." We are now in the midst of Geoffrey's contemporary history. "A lion of justice shall succeed." By this name was King Henry ever after popularly known. The "lion of justice" did indeed make wild work with thieves and other offenders. Upon his accession the country was ravaged by spoilers. In 1124 "the lion of justice" put to death forty-four robbers who had been tried and convicted at a court at Huncot, in Leicestershire. The coin was debased and worn, and those who counterfeited this miserable currency were to be found in every town. The evils were enormous, as they have always continued to be when no man could take a piece of silver with certainty that he had received value for his goods. The lion terrified the culprits into honesty, by mutilating them in such numbers that on one occasion out of fifty, only four escaped the loss of the right hand. Horrible barbarity of a barbarous age, we exclaim. And yet, after five hundred years of civilisation, the Stuarts cut off the ears of libellers with as little remorse. The roar of the lion caused "the towns of France to tremble." We have

seen something of the consequences of this roar. But "the dragons of the island" also trembled. The ravaging barons were these dragons. "In his days gold shall be extorted from the lily and the nettle." The submission of the lily (the Church), and the resistance of the nettle (the army), could not save their treasures from the king's gripe. "Silver," too, "shall be scattered abroad by the hoofs of lowing kine." The herdsman was as severely taxed as the priest and the soldier. There is a curious illustration of the mode in which the various classes of the nation bore the royal exactions. A legend is related by the Chroniclers, that, in 1130, Henry dreamed a terrible dream, which had a warning influence upon his subsequent conduct. He first saw a great multitude of rustics, with spades, and forks, and scythes, who stood over him with threatening looks; and when they vanished soldiers, with spears, and swords, and shields, were ready to destroy him; and these passing away, bishops, with crosier in hand, gazed on him with countenances in anger, as if their mission of peace were at an end. The legend, as told in an ancient manuscript, is illustrated with three drawings of the several stages of the dream. Eadmer relates, that in the merciless taxation of that reign, the very doors were taken off the houses when the people could no longer pay; and another contemporary writer says, that a troop of unhappy cultivators came, on one occasion, to the king's palace, and threw down their plough-shares at his feet, for the capital was exhausted which alone could set the ploughs at work.

The prophecy goes on to speak of "the men with crisped locks," who wore "clothes of various textures and colours"—the abominations denounced by the Churchmen, as we have seen. It then proceeds to a more serious evil. "The feet of lurchers shall be struck off. The beasts of chase shall be undisturbed." The historical facts are told by Ordericus: "Reserving for his own sport the beasts of chase in the forests of England, he even caused all dogs kept on the verge of the woods to be mutilated, by having one of their claws chopped off; and reluctantly licensed some few of the greater nobles and his particular friends to have the privilege of hunting in their own forests." Amongst those who had this privilege were the nobles, bishops, and burgesses of London,—the citizens, according to Henry's charter,* being warranted to "have their hunting grounds for hunting, as was best and most fully enjoyed by their predecessors, that is, in Chiltern, in Middlesex, and in

* This charter will be more particularly noticed in a subsequent Chapter.

Surrey." This is a remarkable proof of the high position which London had attained in this reign. Merlin then prophesies about a circumstance which illustrates the importance which the government so properly attached to the establishment of a standard measure of value—"The tokens of commerce shall be cut in sunder." On the reverse of the silver penny was a cross. But smaller coins than the penny were required; and thus, by once dividing the penny, by either of the lines of the cross, it became two halfpennies; and by twice so dividing, it became four farthings. The small coins, thus rudely produced, were often refused, and their value disputed. The currency was thus insufficient for the needful interchanges. "The halves shall be round," says the prophecy. It appears somewhat doubtful whether these round halfpennies and farthings were coined till the time of Edward I. But Eadmer, a contemporary, records that the halves and quarters were made round in the time of Henry.* We shall leave Merlin with one last quotation. "The rapacious kites shall perish, and the teeth of wolves be blunted." The despotism of Henry was most effectual in putting down the petty despots who had domineered over England; and to this salutary exercise of his power we may attribute much of the undoubted advance of the country during this reign of thirty-five years.

* See note in Lingard, vol. ii. p. 193, octavo edition.