

Englishmen with Englishmen, and not of Englishmen with Northmen.

The death of Eadred, in 955, handed over the realm to a child-king, his nephew, Eadwig. Eadwig was swayed by a woman of high lineage, Æthelgifu; and the quarrel between her and the older councilors of Eadred broke into open strife at the coronation feast. On the young king's insolent withdrawal to her chamber, Dunstan, at the bidding of the Witan, drew him roughly back to his seat. But the feast was no sooner ended than a sentence of outlawry drove the abbot over sea, while the triumph of Æthelgifu was crowned, in 957, by the marriage of her daughter to the king, and the spoliation of the monasteries which Dunstan had befriended. As the new queen was Eadwig's kinswoman, the religious opinion of the day regarded his marriage as incestuous, and it was followed by a revolution. At the opening of 958 Archbishop Odo parted the king from his wife by solemn sentence; while the Mercians and Northumbrians rose in revolt, proclaimed Eadwig's brother Eadgar their king, and recalled Dunstan. The death of Eadwig, a few months later, restored the unity of the realm; but his successor, Eadgar, was only a boy of fourteen, and throughout his reign the actual direction of affairs lay in the hands of Dunstan, whose elevation to the see of Canterbury set him at the head of the Church as of the State. The noblest tribute to his rule lies in the silence of our chroniclers. His work, indeed, was a work of settlement, and such a work was best done by the simple enforcement of peace. During the years of rest in which the stern hand of the Primate enforced justice and order, Northmen and Englishmen drew together into a single people. Their union was the result of no direct policy of fusion; on the contrary, Dunstan's policy preserved to the conquered Danelagh its local rights and local usages. But he recognized the men of the Danelagh as Englishmen: he employed Northmen in the royal service, and promoted them to high posts in Church

and State. For the rest he trusted to time, and time justified his trust. The fusion was marked by a memorable change in the name of the land. Slowly as the conquering tribes had learned to know themselves by the one national name of Englishmen, they learned yet more slowly to stamp their name on the land they had won. It was not till Eadgar's day that the name of Britain passed into the name of England, the land of Englishmen, England. The same vigorous rule which secured rest for the country during these years of national union, told on the growth of material prosperity. Commerce sprang into a wider life. The laws of Æthelred, which provide for the protection and regulation of foreign trade, only recognize a state of things which grew up under Eadgar. It was in Eadgar's day that London rose to commercial greatness.

VII.

CNUT, THE GREAT DANISH KING.—FREEMAN.

[On the accession of the second Æthelred, named the Unready, the Danish wars began again, and soon passed into their third phase—an attempt on the part of the King of all Denmark to subjugate the kingdom of England. The fatal policy was adopted of buying off the invaders. This led to more frequent invasions, and to ever-increasing demands for money, until at length the country was exhausted and could pay no more; while, under the enervating influences of the time, the English military system seems to have utterly broken down. The Conquest, nearly finished by Swegen, was completed by his son Cnut, who thus became King of all England. He won his success by unscrupulous means, but a great change came over him as soon as his power was firmly established.]

THIS gradual change in the disposition of Cnut makes him one of the most remarkable, and, to an Englishman, one of the most interesting, characters in history. There is no other instance—unless Rolf, in Normandy, be admitted as a forerunner on a smaller scale—of a barbarian conqueror, en-

tering a country simply as a ruthless pirate, plundering, burning, mutilating, slaughtering, without remorse, and then, as soon as he is seated on the throne of the invaded land, changing into a beneficent ruler and lawgiver, and winning for himself a place side by side with the best and greatest of its native sovereigns. Cnut never became a perfect prince like Ælfred. An insatiable ambition possessed him throughout life, and occasional acts of both craft and violence disfigure the whole of his career. He always found some means, by death, by banishment, by distant promotion, of getting rid of any one who had once awakened his suspicions. Reasons of State were as powerful with him, and led him into as many unscrupulous actions as any more civilized despot of later times. But Englishmen were not disposed to canvass the justice of wars in which they won fame and plunder, while no enemy ever set foot on their own shores. They were as little disposed to canvass the justice of banishments and executions when, for many years, it was invariably a Dane, never an Englishman, who was the victim. The law by which the Dane settled in England presently became an Englishman, received its highest carrying out in the person of the illustrious Danish king. As far as England and Englishmen were concerned, Cnut might seem to have acted on the principle of the Greek poet, that unrighteousness might be fittingly practiced in order to obtain a crown, but that righteousness should be practiced in all other times and places. The throne of Cnut, established by devastating wars, by unrighteous executions, perhaps even by treacherous assassinations, was, when once established, emphatically the throne of righteousness and peace. As an English king, he fairly ranks among the noblest of his predecessors.

His best epitaph is his famous letter to his people on his Roman pilgrimage. Such a pilgrimage was an ordinary devotional observance, according to the creed of those times. But in the eyes of Cnut it was clearly much more than a mere

perfunctory ceremony. The sight of the holy places stirred him to good resolves in matters both public and private, and, as a patriotic king, he employed his meeting with the pope, the emperor, and the Burgundian king, to win from all of them concessions which were profitable to the people of his various realms. No man could have written in the style in which Cnut writes to all classes of his English subjects, unless he were fully convinced that he possessed and deserved the love of his people. The tone of the letter is that of an absent father writing to his children. In all simplicity and confidence, he tells them the events of his journey, with what honors he had been received, and with what presents he had been loaded by the two chiefs of Christendom, and what privileges for his subjects, both English and Danish, he had obtained at their hands. He confesses the errors of his youth, and promises reformation of any thing which may still be amiss. All grievances shall be redressed; no extortions shall be allowed; King Cnut needs no money raised by injustice. These are surely no mere formal or hypocritical professions; every word plainly comes from the heart.

The same spirit reigns in the opening of his laws. The precept to fear God and honor the king here takes a more personal and affectionate form. First, above all things, are men one God ever to love and worship, and one Christendom with one consent to hold, and Cnut king to love with right truthfulness. The laws themselves embrace the usual subjects, the reformation of manners, the administration of justice, the strict discharge of all ecclesiastical duties, and the strict payment of all ecclesiastical dues. The feasts of the two new national saints, Eadward the King and Dunstan the Primate, are again ordered to be observed, and the observance of the former is again made to rest in a marked way on the authority of the Witan. The observance of the Lord's Day is also strongly insisted on; on that day there is to be no marketing, no hunting; even the holding of folk-motes is forbidden,

except in cases of absolute necessity. All heathen superstition is to be forsaken, and the slave-trade is again denounced. The whole fabric of English society is strictly preserved. The king legislates only with the consent of his Witan. The old assemblies, the old tribunals, the old magistrates, retain their rights and powers. The king, as well as all inferior lords, is to enjoy all that is due to him; the royal rights, differing somewhat in the West-Saxon and the Danish portion of the kingdom, are to be carefully preserved, and neither extended nor diminished in either country. No distinction, except the old local one, is made between Danes and Englishmen, and no sort of preference is made in favor of Cnut's own Danish followers.

And as Cnut's theory was, so was his practice. No king was more active in what was then held to be the first duty of kingship, that of constantly going through every portion of his realm to see with his own eyes whether the laws which he enacted were duly put in force. In short, after Cnut's power was once fully established, we hear no complaint against his government from any trustworthy English source. His hold upon the popular affection is shown by the number of personal anecdotes of which he is the hero. The man who is said, in the traditions of other lands, to have ordered the cold-blooded murder of his brother-in-law, and that in a church at the holy season of Christmas, appears in English tradition as a prince whose main characteristic is devotion mingled with good-humor. In the best-known tale of all, he rebukes the impious flattery of his courtiers, and hangs his crown on the image of the crucified Saviour. He bursts into song as he hears the chant of the monks of Ely, and rejoices to keep the festivals of the Church among them. He bountifully rewards the sturdy peasant who proves the thickness of the ice over which the royal sledge has to pass.

In ecclesiastical matters Cnut mainly, though not exclusively, favored the monks. His ecclesiastical appointments,

especially that of the excellent Archbishop Æthelnoth, who had baptized or confirmed him, do him high honor. He was also, after the custom of the age, a liberal benefactor to various ecclesiastical foundations. He made provision for all the holy places which had in any way suffered during his own or his father's wars. Nor was his bounty confined to England, or even to his own dominions. On his Roman pilgrimage the poor and the churches of every land through which he passed shared his bountiful alms.

Such, then, was Cnut's internal government of England. The conqueror had, indeed, changed into a home-born king. At no earlier time had the land ever enjoyed so long a term of such unmingled prosperity.

VIII.

THE CLERGY IN THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES.—STEVENSON.

[It is almost impossible to estimate too highly the influence of the clergy during the five hundred years that followed the conversion of the English to Christianity. Foremost in Church and State, they were the civilizers and educators of the English people. They fostered agriculture and the arts; they protected the poor and weak against the rich and powerful; they were the only barrier against the brute force of the times, and in a thousand channels they made their influence felt for good. Their very success, however, demoralized them, and we shall find them, in the later ages, working rather for the interests of their own order than for the good of the nation.]

THROUGHOUT the earlier ages the clergy represented the true principles of democracy. In the best sense of the word they were popular. They were of the people and for the people. They mediated between the commonalty and the nobles; they were a barrier and a protection of the weak against the strong at a time when the throne was none. But for that interposition there would have been more grinding oppression, and more revolting cruelty. Men who laughed

at the laws enacted by the State, trembled at the censure of an ecclesiastical judge. That an independent power should be recognized as existing somewhere in the midst of the general anarchy, was an advantage; that it should be in the hands of those whose position secured them from abusing it, as the nobles did, was a blessing.

The Church did what the crown could not do; it enforced its own decisions. It established a system of legislation, and its sanctions reached the noble no less than the peasant. To give free scope to this system, it reconstructed society by introducing a new classification of ranks and dignities. The world and the Church had each their peculiar system; the rank which a man occupied in the State was not necessarily that which he occupied in the Church. No sooner did he cross the threshold of the sacred building than he was measured by a standard different from that which prevailed outside the fabric. Here worldly rank and power and influence went for nothing; he took his place, whoever he might be, according to his moral worth and his religious education. The Church exercised her authority over the serf and the sovereign equally, and this authority was not to be gainsaid. The system of public penance placed in the hands of the priesthood an authority from the operation of which no state, no condition of life, was exempted. It was for them to specify the nature of the temporal punishment due to the transgression of the law, to limit its application, and to fix its continuance. Except in a few extreme cases, its severity might be modified, or it might be withdrawn altogether, at the discretion of the bishop. In cases of extraordinary guilt the penitent was forbidden to enter the church, a distinctive dress was assigned him; he walked barefoot, his food was bread, water, and herbs. Mere worldly rank could plead no exemption for the guilty.

At a time when every man went armed, when human life was little valued, when it was considered meritorious to

avenge upon the spot every wrong, imaginary or real, when the opportunities of escape from the pursuit of justice were many, when the law was slow of foot and weak of hand, originated the privilege of sanctuary. It was a revival of that earlier law which had provided a place of refuge, "that the slayer might flee thither that should kill his neighbor unawares, and hated him not in times past, and that fleeing thither he might live." What the cities of refuge had been to the Jew, the Church was to the Christian. For centuries the clergy were the only representatives of the principle, now so generally acknowledged in all free states, that, until a man has been proved to be guilty, he shall be considered to be innocent. They went a step further, and declared that no man should be accuser, witness, advocate, judge, and executioner in his own cause. They preached and wrote against the dangerous theory, always apt to become dominant in an imperfect degree of civilization, that the survivor must avenge the blood of the slain. They refused to join in the cry which deifies "the wild justice of revenge." By extending its protection over those who fled to it for safety, the Church afforded time for the first burst of passion to subside, and the voice of reason to be heard, and all must have seen that, in mediating between the offender and the offended, it did so for the good of both.

The middle classes, to which England is indebted for a very large share of the wealth, intelligence, and independence which have made her what she is, originated in that fusion of ranks which constituted the clergy. In the earlier ages of society the two great divisions of the people are the noble and the ignoble, and the Church afforded the only common ground of approximation. Here, and here only, their interests met, blended, and harmonized. Recognizing, as has already been stated, none of the distinctions which prevailed in the world, the Church welcomed the highest and the lowest. It offered the same advantages and the same rewards to both. If the

son of the poor man could rise above the condition of his father, and emerge from the degradation to which feudalism had consigned the class to which he belonged, it was through the agency of the Church. The history of the Middle Ages shows how frequently the highest dignities which the State had to offer have been attained by ecclesiastics of the humblest parentage. If we have examples of kings, like Offa and Ceadwalla, Ceolwulf and Ini, who became monks, we have instances of monks, like Dunstan and Anselm, who became archbishops, and as such governed kingdoms and kings. Nicholas Breakspear, from a poor serving-lad at St. Albans, became pope of Rome. If the Church of the poor man opened up to him and his the road to fame and honor, we cannot wonder that it had his respect and his affection in return, and, as a thank-offering, the best that he had to give.

Again, the clergy of the Middle Ages secured no small accession of strength in public estimation from the struggle which they carried on against slavery. Here they fought the battle of the weak against the powerful, and in the end they were victorious through the force of public opinion. The circumstances of the times afforded ample scope for the exercise of this active benevolence. According to the spirit in which war was then conducted, the goods, the person, and the life of the vanquished were at the disposal of the victor. If he sacrificed his defeated enemy to the war-god of his nation, it was justice; if he sold him into captivity, or made him labor in his own service, it was clemency. Further, men might become slaves as a punishment for certain crimes, or they might be born in a state of slavery. Against this system in all its forms the clergy protested upon principles of pure and genuine philanthropy. They opposed it because they regarded it, as all good men will ever regard it, as affecting the dignity, the happiness, and the welfare, temporal and spiritual, of all who fall under its power; and the Church, by its laws and its example, its wealth and its influence, succeeded

first in mitigating, and then in suppressing, the crime of slavery, which for centuries polluted every nation of Europe.

Intimately connected with this subject, and with the whole condition of society in those early times, is the care with which the clergy watched over the poor, the widow, and the orphan. These they regarded as their especial inheritance, and upon them they spent willingly and liberally the funds which had been placed at their disposal.

But, more lasting still, as outliving all change of society, was the care taken by the clergy for the education of the people. For a long time they were the only teachers of the entire population of England. Instruction was nowhere to be had but from them. They collected, preserved, and transmitted the scattered fragments of learning which had descended to their own time. The monastery was the only school, the monk or the cleric the only teacher. The education which they could give was no trifling boon; and the laity could not fail to notice that it led to the substantial prizes of wealth, honor, and influence. With no better advantages than those which the school of the monastery at Wearmouth afforded, Beda achieved a reputation which carried his name over Europe. Alcuin, educated within the monastery of York, was competent to teach the teachers of Charlemagne, and he obtained from that monarch the proud title of the restorer of letters in France. The bishop in his palace, the monk in his monastery, and the parish priest in his parsonage, each contributed to the great work of education. Ecclesiastical laws were enacted to secure for the people the advantages which it was believed would result from a system so comprehensive. Nor were these schools instituted for professional purposes only. The benefits they conferred were not limited to those persons who were intended to recruit the ranks of the priesthood; for, although these schools were founded by the clergy, supported by the clergy, and conducted by the clergy, yet free access was afforded to all

who chose to profit by the advantages which they offered. Persons of different ranks of life were thus instructed in secular and religious learning, who might afterward marry and enter the world as laymen.

From these considerations it appears that during the early period there existed a remarkable unity of sentiment and interest between the clergy and the people. We have seen that the bishop and the parish priest cared as well for the temporal happiness as the spiritual progress of all sorts and conditions of men. They could help the Saxon serf and the Norman villein and his family in various ways, and they did not hesitate to lend a helping hand. By their influence the chain of the bondman's slavery was made less galling; his children were educated and advanced in life. They stood between him and the oppression of his feudal superior; and, if this were not enough, through them his wrongs found a way to the ear of the sovereign. They were his advocates in the courts of law, in prison they visited and comforted him. If he had been plundered, they (if any one could) obtained for him the restitution of his property. In sickness they were the physician of the body as well as of the soul, for the little skill in the art of healing which then existed was in the hands of the clergy. If the disease was of long continuance, the monastery was at once dispensary and hospital. The various offices of charity, kindness, usefulness, and brotherly love which were discharged by Churchmen alone for centuries, are now parceled out among a variety of religious and benevolent societies, each of which stands high in public estimation. They did the work of Scripture readers at home and of missionaries abroad. Their system, so long as it existed, rendered it unnecessary to tax the country for the support of the poor. For a long period, the monastery was the only inn; there the traveler was welcomed, housed, and fed; if overtaken by sickness he was tended there with unpaid skill and watchfulness until he could proceed upon his journey.

Their ready benevolence and untiring zeal originated and carried on the machinery which in our day requires the support of thousands of voluntary subscribers, and millions of involuntary taxpayers.

IX.

BATTLE OF SENLAC OR HASTINGS.—FREEMAN.

[The two sons of Cnut, Harold and Harthacnut, died childless, after brief and disgraceful reigns, and the nation restored the old line of kings in the person of Eadward, called the Confessor, son of Æthelred the Unready and a Norman princess. He had spent most of his youth at the Norman court. Weak, pious, well-intentioned, he was better fitted for a Norman monastery than for the English throne. His court became a gathering-place for Norman courtiers and ecclesiastics, whose influence, however, was largely counteracted by Earl Godwine, who had risen to power in the days of Cnut, and who had the chief management of affairs under Eadward, with one brief interval, until his death, in 1053. He was succeeded by his son, Earl Harold, who had married the king's sister. On the death of Eadward, without issue, early in 1066, Harold was elected to the vacant throne. His right was at once disputed by William, Duke of the Normans, on the ground that Eadward had promised him the crown, and that Harold had sworn to maintain William's claim. Though William's title had no legal basis, he determined to enforce it with the sword, and the two rivals met on the field of Hastings.]

MEANWHILE King Harold marshaled his army on the hill, to defend their strong post against the attack of the Normans. All were on foot; those who had horses made use of them only to carry them to the field, and got down when the time came for actual fighting. The army was made up of soldiers of two very different kinds. There was the king's personal following, his housecarls, his own thanes, and the picked troops generally, among them the men of London, who claimed to be the king's special guards, and the men of Kent, who claimed to strike the first blow in the battle. They

had armor much the same as that of the Normans, with javelins to hurl first of all, and for the close fight either the sword, the older English weapon, or more commonly the great Danish ax, which had been brought in by Cnut. This was wielded with both hands, and was the most fearful of all weapons if the blow reached its mark, but it left its bearer specially exposed while dealing the blow. The men were ranged as closely together as the space needed for wielding their arms would let them; and, besides the palisade, the front ranks made a kind of inner defense with their shields, called the *shield-wall*. The Norman writers were specially struck with the close array of the English, and they speak of them as standing like trees in a wood. Besides these choice troops there were also the general levies of the neighboring lands, who came armed anyhow, with such weapons as they could get, the bow being the rarest of all. These inferior troops were placed to the right, on the least exposed part of the hill, while the king, with his choice troops, stood ready to meet Duke William himself. The king stood between his two ensigns, the national badge, the dragon of Wessex, and his own standard, a great flag with the figure of a fighting man wrought on it in gold. Close by the king stood his brothers, Gyrrh and Leofwine, and his other kinsfolk.

By nine in the morning the Normans had reached the hill of Senlac, and the fight began. But before the real attack was made a juggler, or minstrel, in the Norman army, known as *Taillefer*, that is, the Cleaver of Iron, asked the duke's leave to strike the first blow. So he rode out, singing songs of Charlemagne, as the French call the Emperor Charles the Great, and of Roland, his paladin. Then he threw his sword up in the air and caught it again; he cut down two Englishmen, and then was cut down himself. After this mere bravado came the real work. First came a flight of arrows from each division of the Norman army. Then the heavy-armed foot pressed on, to make their way up the hill and to

break down the palisade. But the English hurled their javelins at them as they came up, and cut them down with their axes when they came near enough for hand-strokes. The Normans shouted, "God help us!" the English shouted, "God Almighty!" and the king's own war-cry of "Holy Cross"—the Holy Cross of Waltham. William's heavy-armed foot pressed on along the whole line, the native Normans having to face King Harold's chosen troops in the center. The attack was vain; they were beaten back, and they could not break down the palisade. Then the horsemen themselves, the duke at their head, pressed on up the hillside. But all was in vain; the English kept their strong ground; the Normans had to fall back; the Bretons on the left actually turned and fled. Then the worse-armed and less-disciplined English troops could not withstand the temptation to come down from the hill and chase them. The whole line of the Norman army began to waver, and in many parts to give way. A tale spread that the duke was killed. William showed himself to his troops, and, with his words, looks, and blows, helped by his brother, the bishop, he brought them back to the fight. The flying Bretons now took heart; they turned and cut in pieces the English who were chasing them. Thus far the resistance of the English had been thoroughly successful, wherever they had obeyed the king's orders, and kept within their defenses. But the fault of those who had gone down to follow the enemy had weakened the line of defense, and had shown the Normans the true way of winning the day.

Now came the fiercest struggle of the whole day. The duke and his immediate following tried to break their way into the English inclosure at the very point where the king stood by his standard with his brothers. The two rivals were near coming face to face. At that moment Earl Gyrrh hurled his spear, which missed the duke, but killed his horse and brought his rider to the ground. William then pressed

to the barricade on foot, and slew Gyrth in hand-to-hand fight. At the same time the king's other brother, Earl Leofwine, was killed. The duke mounted another horse, and again pressed on; but the barricade and the shield-wall withstood all attempts. On the right the attack of the French division had been more lucky; the palisade was partly broken down, but the English, with their axes and shields, still kept their ground, and the Normans were still unable to gain the top of the hill or to come near the standard.

The battle had now gone on for several hours, and Duke William saw that, unless he quite changed his tactics, he had no hope of overcoming the resistance of the English. They had suffered a great loss in the death of the two earls, and their defenses were weakened at some points; but the army, as a whole, held its ground as firmly as ever. William then tried a most dangerous stratagem, his taking to which shows how little hope he now had of gaining the day by any direct attack. He saw that his only way was to bring the English down from the hill, as part of them had already come down. He, therefore, bade his men feign flight. The Normans obeyed; the whole host seemed to be flying. The irregular levies of the English on the right again broke their line; they ran down the hill, and left the part where its ascent was most easy open to the invaders. The Normans now turned on their pursuers, put most of them to flight, and were able to ride up the part of the hill which was left undefended, seemingly about three o'clock in the afternoon. The English had thus lost the advantage of the ground; they had now, on foot, with only the bulwark of their shields, to withstand the horsemen. This, however, they still did for some hours longer. But the advantage was now on the Norman side, and the battle changed into a series of single combats. The great object of the Normans was to cut their way to the standard, where King Harold still fought. Many men were killed in the attempt; the resistance of the English grew slacker, but yet,

when evening was coming on, they still fought on with their king at their head, and a new device of the duke's was needed to bring the battle to an end.

This new device was to bid his archers shoot in the air, that their arrows might fall, as he said, like bolts from heaven. They were, of course, bidden specially to aim at those who fought around the standard. Meanwhile twenty knights bound themselves to lower or bear off the standard itself. The archers shot; the knights pressed on; and one arrow had the deadliest effect of all; it pierced the right eye of King Harold. He sank down by the standard; most of the twenty knights were killed, but four reached the king while he still breathed, slew him with many wounds, and carried off the two ensigns. It was now evening; but though the king was dead, the fight still went on. Of the king's own chosen troops it would seem that not a man either fled or was taken prisoner. All died at their posts, save a few wounded men who were cast aside as dead, but found strength to get away on the morrow. But the irregular levies fled, some of them on the horses of the slain men. Yet even in this last moment they knew how to revenge themselves on their conquerors. The Normans, ignorant of the country, pursued in the dark. The English were thus able to draw them to the dangerous place behind the hill, where not a few Normans were slain. But the duke himself came back to the hill, pitched his tent there, held his midnight feast, and watched there with his host all night.