

X.

THE CONQUEROR AND HIS POLICY.—GREEN.

[Although the great victory at Senlac did not put William in possession of the whole country, it, nevertheless, decided the fate of England. He advanced upon the capital and, two months after the battle, was elected and crowned as king. Even then he was in real possession of only a third of the kingdom. But he met, henceforth, with no general, organized resistance. Revolts here and there were easily crushed, and gradually his authority was extended over the whole land. In three years the Conquest was complete. It was not a conquest in the ordinary sense. It was not the complete subjugation of one people by another people. The Norman duke had taken the place of the English king, and he had taken it by force; but he presented himself to the conquered nation as its legitimate ruler. The ultimate results of the change were almost incalculable, but the immediate results were few. The old laws and customs were preserved, and the continuity of English history remained unbroken.]

It is to the stern discipline of our foreign kings that we owe not merely English wealth and English freedom, but England herself. And of these foreign masters the greatest was William of Normandy. In William the wild impulses of the Northman's blood mingled strangely with the cool temper of the modern statesman. As he was the last, so he was the most terrible outcome of the northern race. The very spirit of the sea-robbers, from whom he sprang, seemed embodied in his gigantic form, his enormous strength, his savage countenance, his desperate bravery, the fury of his wrath, the ruthlessness of his revenge. "No knight under heaven," his enemies owned, "was William's peer." Boy as he was at Val-ès-dunes, horse and man went down before his lance. All the fierce gayety of his nature broke out in the warfare of his youth. No man could bend William's bow. His mace crashed its way through a ring of English warriors to the foot of the standard. He rose to his greatest height at moments when other men despaired. His voice rang out as a trumpet when his soldiers fled before the English charge

at Senlac, and his rally turned the flight into a means of victory. In his winter march on Chester he strode at the head of his fainting troops, and helped with his own hand to clear a road through the snow-drifts. And with the Northman's daring broke out the Northman's pitilessness. When the townsmen of Alençon hung raw hides along their walls, in scorn of the "tanner's" grandson, William tore out his prisoners' eyes, hewed off their hands and feet, and flung them into the town. Hundreds of Hampshire men were driven from their homes to make him a hunting-ground, and his harrying of Northumbria left Northern England a desolate waste. Of men's love or hate he recked little. His grim look, his pride, his silence, his wild outbursts of passion, left William lonely even in his court. His subjects trembled as he passed. "Stark man he was," writes the English chronicler, "and great awe men had of him." His very wrath was solitary. "To no man spake he, and no man dared speak to him," when the news reached him of Harold's seizure of the throne. It was only when he passed from his palace to the loneliness of the woods that the king's temper unbent. "He loved the wild deer as though he had been their father."

It was the genius of William which lifted him out of this mere Northman into a great general and a great statesman. The wary strategy of his French campaigns, the organization of his attack upon England, the victory of Senlac, the quick resource, the steady perseverance which achieved the Conquest, showed the wide range of his generalship. His political ability had shown itself from the first moment of his accession to the ducal throne. William had the instinct of government. He had hardly reached manhood when Normandy lay peaceful at his feet. Revolt was crushed; discord was trampled under foot. The Duke "could never love a robber," be he baron or knave. The sternness of his temper stamped itself throughout upon his rule. "Stark he was to men that withstood him," says the chronicler of his English system

of government; "so harsh and cruel was he that none dared withstand his will. Earls that did aught against his bidding he cast into bondage. If a man would live and hold his lands, need it were he followed the king's will." Stern as such a rule was, it gave rest to the land. Even amid the sufferings which necessarily sprang from the circumstances of the Conquest itself, from the erection of castles or the inclosure of forests or the exactions which built up William's hoard at Winchester, Englishmen were unable to forget "the good peace he made in the land, so that a man might fare over his realm with a bosom full of gold." Strange touches, too, of a humanity far in advance of his age contrasted with this general temper of the Conqueror's government. One of the strongest traits in his character was an aversion to shed blood by process of law; he formally abolished the punishment of death, and only a single execution stains the annals of his reign. An edict yet more honorable to his humanity put an end to the slave-trade which had, till then, been carried on at the port of Bristol. The contrast between the ruthlessness and pitifulness of his public acts sprang, indeed, from a contrast within his temper itself. The pitiless warrior, the stern and awful king, was a tender and faithful husband, an affectionate father. The lonely silence of his bearing broke into gracious converse with pure and sacred souls like Anselm. If William was "stark" to rebel and baron, men noted that he was "mild to those that loved God."

But the greatness of the Conqueror was seen in more than the order and peace which he imposed upon the land. Fortune had given him one of the greatest opportunities ever offered to a king of stamping his own genius on the destinies of a people; and it is the way in which he seized on this opportunity which has set William among the foremost statesmen of the world. The struggle which ended in the fens of Ely had wholly changed his position. He no longer held the land merely as its national and elected king. To his elective

right he added the right of conquest. It is the way in which William grasped and employed this double power that marks the originality of his political genius, for the system of government which he devised was, in fact, the result of this double origin of his rule. It represented neither the purely feudal system of the Continent nor the system of the older English royalty; more truly, perhaps, it may be said to have represented both. As the conqueror of England, William developed the military organization of feudalism so far as was necessary for the secure possession of his conquests. The ground was already prepared for such an organization. We have watched the beginnings of English feudalism in the warriors, the "companions" or "thegns" who were personally attached to the king's war-band and received estates from the folkland in reward for their personal services. In later times this feudal distribution of estates had greatly increased, as the bulk of the nobles followed the king's example, and bound their tenants to themselves by a similar process of subinfeudation. The pure freeholders, on the other hand, the class which formed the basis of the original English society, had been gradually reduced in number, partly through imitation of the class above them, but more through the pressure of the Danish wars and the social disturbances consequent upon them which forced these freemen to seek protection among the thegns at the cost of their independence. Even before the reign of William, therefore, feudalism was superseding the older freedom in England as it had already superseded it in Germany and France. But the tendency was quickened and intensified by the Conquest. The desperate and universal resistance of the country forced William to hold by the sword what the sword had won; and an army strong enough to crush at any moment a national revolt, was needful for the preservation of his throne. Such an army could only be maintained by a vast confiscation of the soil, and the failure of the English risings cleared the ground for

its establishment. The greater part of the higher nobility fell in battle or fled into exile, while the lower thegnhood either forfeited the whole of their lands or redeemed a portion by the surrender of the rest. We see the completeness of the confiscation in the vast estates which William was enabled to grant to his more powerful followers. Two hundred manors in Kent, with more than an equal number elsewhere, rewarded the services of his brother Odo, and grants almost as large fell to William's counselors, Fitz-Osborn and Montgomery, or to barons like the Mowbrays and the Clares. But the poorest soldier of fortune found his part in the spoil. The meanest Norman rose to wealth and power in this new dominion of his lord. Great or small, each manor thus granted was granted on condition of its holder's service at the king's call; a whole army was by this means encamped upon the soil, and William's summons could at any hour gather an overwhelming force around his standard.

Such a force, however, effective as it was against the conquered English, was hardly less formidable to the crown itself. When once it was established, William found himself fronted in his new realm by a feudal baronage, by the men he had so hardly bent to his will in Normandy, and who were as impatient of law, as jealous of the royal power, as eager for an unbridled military and judicial independence within their own manors here as there. The political genius of the Conqueror was shown in his appreciation of this danger and in the skill with which he met it. Large as the estates he granted were, they were scattered over the country in such a way as to render union between the great landholders, or the hereditary attachment of great areas of population to any one separate lord, equally impossible. A yet wiser measure struck at the very root of feudalism. When the larger holdings were divided by their owners into smaller sub-tenancies, the under-tenants were bound by the same conditions of service to their lord as he to the Crown. "Hear,

my lord," swore the vassal, as kneeling bareheaded and without arms he placed his hands within those of his superior, "I become liege man of yours for life and limb and earthly regard; and I will keep faith and loyalty to you for life and death, God help me!" Then the kiss of his lord invested him with land as a "fief" to descend to him and his heirs forever. In other countries such a vassal owed fealty to his lord against all foes, be they king or no. By the usage, however, which William enacted in England each sub-tenant, in addition to his oath of fealty to his lord, swore fealty directly to the Crown, and loyalty to the king was thus established as the supreme and universal duty of all Englishmen.

 XI.

THE RED KING.—HUNT.

[On the death of the Conqueror, and in accordance with his wishes, the duchy of Normandy went to his eldest son, Robert, while England fell to his second son, William Rufus. William succeeded in making good his claim to the kingdom, notwithstanding the opposition of Robert and the Norman nobles, who did not like to have their hereditary estates in Normandy separated from their conquered estates in England. After a few years Robert pledged Normandy to William in order to raise money with which to join in the first Crusade, so that the duchy and the kingdom were again virtually united under one ruler. The Red King, as he was called, had great energy and ability, but he was utterly reckless and unscrupulous, and a man of the foulest life. "Never day dawned," says his chronicler, "but he was a worse man than when he lay down; never sun set, but he lay down a worse man than he had risen."]

No form of election seems to have preceded the coronation of William Rufus. His accession to the throne was the work of Archbishop Lanfranc, acting on the instructions of the Conqueror. Conscious of the character of Rufus, who had been his pupil, Lanfranc made him, in addition to the ordinary coronation oath, give a special promise that he would govern well, and would in all things be ruled by him.

For, as he had knighted him, and had brought him up, Lanfranc had a claim on his reverence, besides that which the archbishop derived from his office, and from having been the chief minister of his father. Promises had little sanctity in the eyes of Rufus, unless they concerned some matter of military honor. "Who is there that can do all he promises?" was his wrathful answer to the archbishop, when he reminded the king of his own words. In 1089 the death of Lanfranc freed him from a restraint which he regarded with impatience. From this date his true character showed itself. Unlike his father, William Rufus put no check on his evil nature. Of no other can it be more truly said that he feared not God, neither regarded man. The hideous depravity of his life reveals the depth to which man can sink when, owning no law, he gives himself up to work all uncleanness with greediness. The special form of his immorality was, perhaps, an effect of the connection of the Normans with the people of the south and east of Europe, which arose from the conquest of Sicily. Thence, too, it may be, came that habit of speaking evil of God and his saints, in which he constantly indulged. When he recovered, for instance, from an illness in which, with the fear of death before him, he promised to live a better life, he swore that "God should never find him a good man in return for the ill He had done him." And when certain men, accused of deer-stealing, were acquitted by the ordeal, he loudly impugned the justice of God's judgment. For such offenses men were, in his reign, condemned to death, for he set aside the law of his father, which forbade capital punishment. Although he was not guilty of delighting in the bodily suffering of others, he was utterly careless of the welfare of his subjects. He rejoiced in hurting men's feelings, and in shocking their prejudices. He took a bribe from the Jews of Rouen to make some of their people who had become Christians turn back to their old religion. In a spirit of mockery he made the bishops in England hold a set disputation with the Jews, and declared

that if they were worsted he would become a Jew himself. William Rufus was a dutiful son to his father while he lived, and ever held his memory in honor. His filial admiration led him to try to imitate his father's dignity, and his boastful insolence was a travesty of his father's majesty. The mighty oath of the Conqueror gave place to the adjuration, "By the holy face of Lucca!" or the yet more senseless form, "By this and by that." He loved to boast of his power, and to talk of his kingly dignity; but there was, in truth, nothing kingly in him. An assumed scowl and a blustering tone were the means by which he sought to make men feel the fear inspired by the fierceness of his father's mien and his terrific voice. At the same time Rufus loved to jest with his companions, and to make his own wickedness the subject of their laughter. Men bandied words with him as they would not have dared to do with his father. They even played tricks upon him. Thus one day it chanced, as he was putting on some new boots, that he asked his chamberlain how much they cost, and when he said, "three shillings," Rufus abused him, for he held them to be too cheap for a king's use. The man went and fetched a cheaper pair, telling him that they cost more. "Ay," said he, "these are fit for a king's majesty." Not so, we may be sure, did his servants treat his father. The story is told by William of Malmesbury to illustrate the king's wastefulness. New fashions of effeminate luxury prevailed in his court. Men went about with long hair and flowing robes, and long, pointed shoes. Extravagance and folly were encouraged by the example and by the prodigal gifts of the king. His empty treasury was supplied by the devices of his low-born minister, Ranulf Flambard, who oppressed all alike, caring for no man's hatred if only he might please his master. These extortions were the more galling because they were committed under the guise of law, for every court was made by the justiciary the means of pressing the claims of the Crown.

Chief among the causes of the extravagance of Rufus was his love of all that pertained to arms. From his youth he excelled in all knightly exercises. A man-at-arms was to him something different from the rest of mankind. The word of such a one was more worthy of belief than that of others, and to such a one he held that a man should keep his word. To speak "as a good soldier" was to give another the highest assurance of truth. Some relation there was between such ideas and the arbitrary and imperfect code of chivalry. Yet, while chivalry exalted certain virtues to the neglect of others, and regarded a certain part of mankind as alone worthy of consideration, the system was founded on the idea that this regard was paid to the members of an order on the ground that they were pledged to exercise the virtues which were thus honored. Rufus, on the other hand, exalted no virtue, and honored men, not because they spoke the truth, but because they belonged to a profession which he loved. For this reason he held them to be entitled to privileges which he would not extend to others, and was careful to attach them to his service. When Rufus rewarded and enlisted a soldier who unhorsed him at St. Michael's Mount, or when he refused to believe that the knights at Ballon could break their word, he seems to exhibit the spirit of Francesco Sforza when, in 1424, he spared the lives of the captains whom his father bade him put to death, rather than to resemble Bayard, who, imperfect as were his ideas of right, poured scorn with his dying breath on the greatest captain of his age because he was "false to his country, his king, and his oath." Nor do the ideas of Rufus seem to me to have much in common with those of his ancestor, Richard the Good; for the king made his privileged class of soldiers, while an accident of birth was the sole recommendation for promotion at the court of the duke. Rufus would have made no bad captain of mercenaries, and these troops flocked to him in great numbers. He paid them highly, and if sometimes his treasury was empty, still their

services were not unrequited, for he let them do as they liked. The license extended to these men caused much suffering to his people. In other cases he was stern enough. Death was a common penalty, until he found it more profitable to make men give him money than to hang them.

No dependence could be placed on the word of Rufus. Three times he promised that he would govern well, and three times those who believed him were deceived. The first of these promises he made to Lanfranc. Again, in 1088, when the Normans rebelled against him, and he was driven to seek the support of the English, "he promised them the best laws that ever were before in this land; and every unjust geld he forbade, and granted them their woods and hunting, but it stood no while." The third time he made such a promise was in 1093, when he was sick, and this, too, he broke when he recovered from his sickness. Great as the help was that he gained from the English *fyril*, on one notable occasion he shamefully betrayed the loyalty of the people. In his war with Robert, in 1094, he sent over from Normandy to Flambard and bade him levy twenty thousand Englishmen to come over to him. The English then, as ever, obeyed the call of their king. The host came together at Hastings, each man with ten shillings given him by his shire for his expenses on the campaign. Then Flambard came and took this money away, and dismissed the men. So the king gained £10,000 by this transaction, and used the money in buying off the French king from his brother's side. Impetuous at the beginning of all his undertakings, Rufus lacked the steadfastness to carry them out to a distinct issue. Unstable as water, he never made a great war or a firm peace. In his attempt, in 1098, to bring Maine again under the Norman power, he took Le Mans, and then left the country unsubdued. Before he finished his work there, he began a war in the French Vexin, and that also, after a while, ceased without any definite ending. The vague and spasmodic character of his foreign rela-

tions make them of no real importance. At last the life of foul depravity and the reign of great undertakings and of small achievements came to an end; the tongue that boasted great things was silenced; the time of military license and administrative iniquity was cut short; the Red King was slain in the place made desolate by his father's cruel selfishness, and was carted away like one of those high deer which the Conqueror loved so well.

XII.

HENRY I., THE SCHOLAR-KING.—PEARSON.

[The tragic death of the Red King summoned his younger brother, Henry, to the throne. The claim of the elder brother, Robert, who was still absent in the east, was simply ignored. Robert, on his return, attempted to assert his rights in England, but without success. Weak, vacillating, and extravagant, he was soon unable to maintain his ground against the powerful barons in his own duchy. Henry, on pretext of being alarmed for the safety of his continental possessions, invaded Normandy, met Robert in battle, captured him, and kept him in prison until his death, in 1134. Henry's rule both in Normandy and England was stern, but, perhaps, no sterner than the times demanded.]

THE Conqueror's youngest son had the stature and general features of his family; but the high forehead, inherited from his father, the dark complexion and quiet, thoughtful eyes peculiar to himself, indicated a statesman rather than a soldier. Thrown early upon the world, Henry had been trained in a rough school. He had spent a large portion of his inheritance in buying the government of the Cotentin from Robert, who discharged the obligation by throwing him into prison. A reconciliation was effected, and Henry did good service in the revolt of Rouen, recovering the town when the duke fled from it in a panic. A few weeks passed, and the fickle Robert had united with William to besiege Henry in his castle of

Mont St. Michel. That Robert behaved with knightly courtesy, in refusing to starve his brother out, is true; but he continued the siege till the castle was surrendered; and Henry spent the next few years of his life without money or men, with a beggarly household of one squire and a priest. He was, probably, the better scholar, but not the milder man, for these experiences. As king he soon made himself respected; he was a pleasant companion at times; but no man could withstand "the imperious thunder of his voice;" and it was remarked that he was inscrutable; his praise was often a sure sign that he meant to ruin. He brooked no rivalry, and forgave no insult; the old favorite, who had boasted that he could build as grand a monastery as the king, was ruined by suits at law, and died broken-hearted. The foreign knight, who satirized Henry in songs, was blinded, in spite of the Earl of Flanders' intercession, and dashed out his brains in despair. When the king's ambition was interested, he was careless what suffering he caused; he oppressed the people with intolerable taxes; and punished one of his own daughters for rebellion by dragging her through a frozen moat.

Yet Henry possessed merits of a high order. He was not moral, but he was not shamelessly vicious; he was moderate in dress and food; his conversation was pure, and his court decorous. He honored learning and talent, formed a menagerie at Woodstock, and promoted the formation of a vernacular Norman literature. He advanced the fortunes of Robert the Great, whom he had chosen chaplain for his skill in hurrying through the mass, but who proved a first-rate justiciary, and adorned his see with the splendid cathedral of Salisbury. He brought over Gilbert the Universal, the first scholar north of the Alps, to be bishop of London. A great historical school flourished in his reign, and the zeal of his son, the Earl of Gloucester, for these studies, may well have been derived from a father who looked back with affection on his own "tumultuary" scholarship through all the troubles of his

life. Nor was he indifferent to religion; he preferred being served by good men if good men would do his will. He was clear-sighted enough to perceive the importance of uniformity in standards. He fixed the length of the English yard, it is said, by his own arm; and at some immediate hardship he substituted payments in coin, which was instantly smelted down, for payments in kind by which the taxes had been discharged. Above all, he had a statesmanlike love of order; and devoted himself to the cares of government, when his ambition was satisfied by the conquest of Normandy. He was called by one who survived him: "The peace of his country, and the father of his people." . . .

It is difficult to say whether Henry introduced any new principles into his government; but he struck vigorously at the great abuses. The most monstrous of all, the purveyance of the royal officers, was repressed. The coinage had been debased until the king's soldiers in Normandy were unable to use it. Accordingly the coiners throughout England were summoned to Winchester, and were there one by one blinded and otherwise mutilated. It does not seem that any trial was held; it was mere Lynch law; but the people applauded it. A new coinage was issued, and the old withdrawn. The stern measure dealt out to outlaws was less popular. Henry revived the punishment of death; in 1124 the grand justiciary was sent down into Leicester, which had been peculiarly infested with thieves, and forty-four men, accused of burglary, were hanged, and six mutilated, at a single session. The sympathies of the people were with the sufferers, of whom several were said to be innocent, while the guilty had probably practiced upon the rich. These executions, however, effected their purpose; the land was restored to complete order, and Henry obtained the title of the Lion of Justice. . . .

Henry's marvelous prosperity was darkened by one great loss. His only legitimate son, William, had already received the barons' oath of homage as their future king, when he ac-

companied Henry on a visit to Normandy (1120). When they were about to return by the port of Barfleur, a Norman captain, Thomas Fitz-Stephen, appeared, and claimed the right of taking them in his ship, on the ground that his father had been captain of the *Mora* in which the Conqueror crossed to invade England. The king did not care to alter his own arrangements, but agreed that his son should sail in the *Blanche Nef* with Fitz-Stephen. William Ætheling, as the English called him, was accompanied by a large train of unruly courtiers, who amused themselves by making the sailors drink hard before they started, and dismissed the priests who came to bless the voyage with a chorus of scoffing laughter. It was evening before they left the shore, and there was no moon; a few of the more prudent quitted the ship, but there remained nearly three hundred—a dangerous freight for a small vessel. However, fifty rowers flushed with wine made good way in the waters; but the helmsman was less fit for his work, and the vessel struck suddenly on a sunken rock, the *Ras de Catte*. The water rushed in, but there was time to lower a boat, which put off with the prince. When in safety, he heard the cries of his sister, the Countess of Perche, and returned to save her. A crowd of desperate men leaped into the boat; it was swamped, and all perished. As the ship settled down, all but three of those on board were washed away. One of these, Fitz-Stephen, drowned himself when he learned that the prince was lost; one perished from cold; the third, a common sailor, was kept warm by his thick sheep-skin dress, and survived to tell the tale. It was a fresh horror of this tragedy that scarcely any bodies were found to receive Christian burial. For more than a day no one dared to tell the king of his loss; at last a page was sent weeping to his feet. Three of Henry's children, but, above all, the heir of all his hopes, for whom he had plotted and shed blood, were taken from him at a blow. It is said that from that hour he was never known to smile.