

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 A new coinage was issued, and the old withdrawn.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.