

## XIII.

## THE ASSASSINATION OF BECKET.—MILMAN.

[The untimely death of Prince William seemed certain to involve the country in all the miseries of a disputed succession. Henry I. made every effort to secure the succession to his only remaining legitimate child, his daughter Matilda. She had married the German emperor, Henry V., and, after his death, in 1125, she became the wife of Geoffrey Plantagenet, count of Anjou. This second marriage was displeasing to the English barons, who feared the influence of a foreign prince in England; and, moreover, it was repugnant to feudal principles that a woman should wear the crown. At Henry's death the throne was seized by Stephen, count of Blois, who was the third son of Adela, fourth daughter of the Conqueror. Matilda attempted to make good her claim, and the result was civil war. The barons divided between the two claimants, or went from one to the other, as their own interests demanded. For nearly twenty years the feudal spirit was rampant in England. At length the ruinous contest was stopped by the treaty of Wallingford (1153), brought about by the influence of the clergy, by which it was agreed that Stephen should remain king during his life-time, and that Henry, son of Matilda, should succeed him. In less than a year after the treaty was ratified Stephen died.]

The young Henry—the first of the Plantagenets—stood pledged to reform. He proved equal, on the whole, to the gigantic problem which he had to solve, that of bringing order out of chaos, and of establishing a strong centralized government, which was the greatest need of his time. He had difficulties to meet such as had confronted no other English king. By inheritance and by marriage he was ruler over many heterogeneous peoples, with varied and often conflicting interests. His dominions stretched from the Scottish borders to the Pyrenees.

In the work of governing his vast dominions Henry was ably assisted, during the first few years, by his chancellor, Thomas Becket. One of the king's chief objects was to bring all classes of his subjects, rich and poor, high and low, clergy and laity alike, under the rule of the common law. In furtherance of this object, he determined to make Becket archbishop of the realm. This was a great mistake. As chancellor, Becket had steadily upheld the royal authority; as archbishop he felt it his duty to uphold the authority of the Church. The antagonism between Church and State was such as to make a collision between them inevitable. It soon came. Becket fled from the country. Henry, whose aims were largely right, resorted

to unwise and unwarrantable means to bring him to terms, and the archbishop retaliated by measures equally unwise. At length a partial reconciliation was effected, and Becket returned to England. But his temper was unchanged; he seemed to have a veritable passion for the glory of martyrdom, and it may be fairly said that he forced the issue between himself and the king. Henry lost patience. In his rage he uttered some hasty words, which were interpreted too literally by a few of his attendants. They hastened to England, sought out the archbishop in his own cathedral, and entered into an angry altercation with him, which resulted in his death.]

THE assassination of Becket has something appalling, with all its terrible circumstances seen in the remote past. What was it in its own age? The most distinguished churchman in Christendom, the champion of the great sacerdotal order, almost in the hour of his triumph over the most powerful king in Europe; a man, besides the awful sanctity inherent in the person of every ecclesiastic, of most saintly holiness; soon after the most solemn festival of the Church, in his own cathedral, not only sacrilegiously but cruelly murdered, with every mark of hatred and insult. Becket had all the dauntlessness, none of the meekness, of the martyr; but while his dauntlessness would command boundless admiration, few, if any, would seek the more genuine sign of Christian martyrdom.

The four knights do not seem to have deliberately determined on their proceedings, or to have resolved, except in extremity, on the murder. They entered, but unarmed, the outer chamber. The archbishop had just dined, and withdrawn from the hall. They were offered food, as was the usage; they declined, thirsting, says one of the biographers, for blood. The archbishop obeyed the summons to hear a message from the king; they were admitted to his presence. As they entered there was no salutation on either side, till the primate, having surveyed, perhaps recognized them, moved to them with cold courtesy. Fitz-Urse was the spokesman in the fierce altercation which ensued. Becket replied with haughty firmness. Fitz-Urse began by re-



proaching him with his ingratitude and seditious disloyalty in opposing the coronation of the king's son, and commanded him, in instant obedience to the king, to absolve the prelates. Becket protested, that so far from wishing to diminish the power of the king's son, he would have given him three crowns and the most splendid realm. For the excommunicated bishops he persisted in his usual evasion, that they had been suspended by the pope, by the pope alone could they be absolved; nor had they yet offered proper satisfaction. "It is the king's command," spake Fitz-Urse, "that you and the rest of your disloyal followers leave the kingdom." "It becomes not the king to utter such command: henceforth no power on earth shall separate me from my flock." "You have presumed to excommunicate without consulting the king, the king's servants and officers." "Nor will I ever spare the man who violates the canons of Rome, or the rights of the Church." "From whom do you hold your archbishopric?" "My spirituals from God and the pope, my temporals from the king." "Do you not hold all from the king?" "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's." "You speak in peril of your life!" "Come ye to murder me? I defy you, and will meet you front to front in the battle of the Lord." He added that some among them had sworn fealty to him. At this, it is said, they grew furious, and gnashed with their teeth. The prudent John of Salisbury heard, with regret, this intemperate language: "Would it may end well!" Fitz-Urse shouted aloud, "In the king's name I enjoin you all, clerks and monks, to arrest this man till the king shall have done justice on his body." They rushed out, calling for their arms.

His friends had more fear for Becket than Becket for himself. The gates were closed and barred, but presently sounds were heard of those without, striving to break in. The lawless Randulph de Broc was hewing at the door with

an ax. All around Becket was the confusion of terror; he only was calm. Again spoke John of Salisbury with his cold prudence: "Thou wilt never take counsel: they seek thy life." "I am prepared to die." "We who are sinners are not so weary of life." "God's will be done." The sounds without grew wilder. All around him entreated Becket to seek sanctuary in the church. He refused, whether from religious reluctance that the holy place should be stained with his blood, or from the nobler motive of sparing his assassins this deep aggravation of their crime. They urged that the bell was already tolling for vespers. He seemed to give a reluctant consent; but he would not move without the dignity of his crozier carried before him. With gentle compulsion they half-drew, half-carried him through a private chamber, they in all the hasty agony of terror, he striving to maintain his solemn state, into the church. The din of the armed men was ringing in the cloister. The affrighted monks broke off the service; some hastened to close the doors; Becket commanded them to desist: "No one should be debarred from entering the house of God." John of Salisbury and the rest fled and hid themselves behind the altars and in other dark places. The archbishop might have escaped into the dark and intricate crypt, or into a chapel in the roof. There remained only the canon, Robert (of Merton), Fitz-Stephen, and the faithful Edward Grim. Becket stood between the altar of St. Benedict and that of the Virgin. It was thought that Becket contemplated taking his seat on his archiepiscopal throne, near the high altar.

Through the open door of the cloister came rushing in the four, fully armed, some with axes in their hands, with two or three wild followers, through the dim and bewildering twilight. The knights shouted aloud, "Where is the traitor?" No answer came back. "Where is the archbishop?" "Behold me, no traitor, but a priest of God." Another fierce and rapid altercation followed: they demanded the absolu-



tion of the bishops, his own surrender to the king's justice. They strove to seize him and to drag him forth from the church (even they had awe of the holy place), either to kill him without, or carry him in bonds to the king. He clung to the pillar. In the struggle he grappled with De Tracy, and with desperate strength dashed him on the pavement. His passion rose; he called Fitz-Urse by a foul name, a pander. These were almost his last words (how unlike those of Stephen and the greater than Stephen!) He taunted Fitz-Urse with his fealty sworn to himself. "I owe no fealty but to my king!" returned the maddened soldier, and struck the first blow. Edward Grim interposed his arm, which was almost severed off. The sword struck Becket, but slightly, on the head. Becket received it in an attitude of prayer—"Lord, receive my spirit," with an ejaculation to the saints of the Church. Blow followed blow (Tracy seems to have dealt the first mortal wound), till all, unless perhaps De Morville, had wreaked their vengeance. The last, that of Richard de Brito, smote off a piece of his skull. Hugh of Horsea, their follower, a renegade priest, surnamed Mauclerk, set his heel upon his neck and crushed out the blood and brains. "Away!" said the brutal ruffian, "it is time that we were gone." They rushed out to plunder the archiepiscopal palace.

The mangled body was left on the pavement; and when his affrighted followers ventured to approach, to perform their last offices, an incident occurred which, however incongruous, is too characteristic to be suppressed. Amid their adoring awe at his courage and constancy, their profound sorrow for his loss, they broke out into a rapture of wonder and delight on discovering not merely that his whole body was swathed in the coarsest sackcloth, but that his lower garments were swarming with vermin. From that moment miracles began. Even the populace had before been divided; voices had been heard among the crowd denying him to be

a martyr; he was but the victim of his own obstinacy. The archbishop of York, even after this, dared to preach that it was a judgment of God against Becket—that "he perished, like Pharaoh, in his pride." But the torrent swept away at once all this resistance. The government inhibited the miracles, but faith in miracles scorns obedience to human laws. The Passion of the martyr, Thomas, was saddened and glorified every day with new incidents of its atrocity, of his holy firmness, of wonders wrought by his remains.

The horror of Becket's murder ran throughout Christendom. At first, of course, it was attributed to Henry's direct orders. Universal hatred branded the king of England with a kind of outlawry, a spontaneous excommunication. William of Sens, though the attached friend of Becket, probably does not exaggerate the public sentiment when he describes this deed as surpassing the cruelty of Herod, the perfidy of Julian, the sacrilege of the traitor Judas.

It were injustice to King Henry not to suppose that with the dread as to the consequences of this act must have mingled some reminiscence of the gallant friend and companion of his youth and of the faithful minister, as well as religious horror at a cruel murder, so savagely and impiously executed. He shut himself for three days in his chamber, obstinately refused all food and comfort, till his attendants began to fear for his life. He issued orders for the apprehension of the murderers, and dispatched envoys to the pope to exculpate himself from all participation or cognizance of the crime. His ambassadors found the pope at Tusculum; they were at first sternly refused an audience. The afflicted and indignant pope was hardly prevailed on to permit the execrated name of the king of England to be uttered before him. The cardinals still friendly to the king with difficulty obtained knowledge of Alexander's determination. It was, on a fixed day, to pronounce, with the utmost solemnity, excommunication against the king by name, and



an interdict on all his dominions, on the continent as well as in England. The ambassadors hardly obtained the abandonment of this fearful purpose, by swearing that the king would submit in all things to the judgment of his Holiness. With difficulty the terms of reconciliation were arranged.

XIV.

DEATH OF HENRY II.—STUBBS.

[Political and domestic troubles brooded over the last years of Henry's reign. With the former he would have been able to cope, but the latter weighed heavily upon him, and ultimately broke him down. His own wife and children made common cause with his enemies against him. Their disaffection was partly due, no doubt, to his own injudicious management and conduct; yet he was an indulgent father, and had striven to do his best for his children. Only Geoffrey, his natural son, remained faithful to him to the last. Worn-out with chagrin and disappointment and ceaseless toil, he died at the age of fifty-six.]

AND now Henry nerved himself for an interview which he knew could have but one issue. Ill as he was, he moved from Saumur to Azai, and in the plain of Colombieres met Philip and Richard on the day after the capture of Tours.

Henry, notwithstanding his fistula and his fever, was able to sit on horseback. His son Geoffrey had begged leave of absence, that he might not see the humiliation of his father; but many of his other nobles, and probably two of his three archbishops, rode beside him. The terms which he had come to ratify had been settled beforehand. He had but to signify his acceptance of them by word of mouth. They met face to face, the unhappy father and the undutiful son. It was a clear, sultry day, a cloudless sky, and still air. As the kings advanced toward one another a clap of thunder was heard, and each drew back. Again they advanced, and again it thundered louder than before. Henry, wearied and

excited, was ready to faint. His attendants held him up on his horse, and so he made his submission. He had but one request to make; it was for a list of the conspirators who had joined with Richard to forsake and betray him. The list was promised, and he returned to Azai. Before he parted with Richard he had to give him the kiss of peace; he did so, but the rebellious son heard his father whisper, and was not ashamed to repeat it, as a jest, to Philip's ribald courtiers, "May God not let me die until I have taken me due vengeance on thee."

But not even his submission and humiliation procured him rest. Among the minor vexations of the last months had been the pertinacious refusal of the monks of Canterbury to obey the archbishop in certain matters in which they believed their privileges to be infringed. Henry had, as usual with him in questions of ecclesiastical law, taken a personal interest in the matter, and had not scrupled to back the archbishop with arms at Canterbury and support of a still more effective kind at Rome. A deputation from the convent, sent out in the vain idea that Henry's present misfortunes would soften his heart toward them, had been looking for him for some days. They found him at Azai, most probably on his return from the field of Colombieres. "The convent of Canterbury salute you as their lord," was the greeting of the monks. "Their lord I have been, and am still, and will be yet," was the king's answer; "small thanks to you, ye traitors," he added, below his breath. One of his clerks prevented him from adding more invective. He bethought himself, probably, that even now the justiciar was asking the convent for money toward the expenses of the war; he would temporize, as he had always seemed to do with them. "Go away, and I will speak with my faithful," he said, when he had heard their plea. He called William, of S. Mere l'Eglise, one of the chiefs of the chancery, and ordered him to write in his name. The letter is extant, and is dated at Azai. It is



probably the last document he ever issued. It begins, "Henry, by the grace of God, king of England, duke of Normandy and Aquitaine, and count of Anjou, to the convent of Christ Church, Canterbury, greeting, and by God's mercy on his return to England, peace." The substance of the letter is, that the monks should take advantage of the delay in his return to reconsider their position and the things that make for peace, that they might find an easier way out of their difficulties when he should come.

The monks, delighted with their success, retired, and the king lay down to rest. It was then, probably, that the fatal schedule was brought him, which he had so unwisely demanded at Colombieres. It was drawn up in the form of a release from allegiance; all who had adhered to Richard were allowed to attach themselves henceforth to him, in renunciation of the father's right over them. He ordered the names to be read. The first on the list was that of John. The sound of the beloved name startled him at once. He leaped up from his bed, as one beside himself, and, looking round him with a quick, troubled glance, exclaimed, "Is it true that John, my very heart, the best-beloved of all my sons, for whose advancement I have brought upon me all this misery, has forsaken me?" The reader had no other answer to make than to repeat the name. Henry saw that it was on the list, and threw himself back on the couch. He turned his face to the wall, and groaned deeply. "Now," he said, "let all things go what way they may; I care no more for myself nor for the world." His heart was broken, and his death-blow struck.

He could not, however, remain at Azai. His people carried him in a litter to Chinon, where Geoffrey was waiting for him. It was the fifth day of the fever, and, in all probability, he was delirious with the excitement of the morning. It was remembered and reported in England that after he was brought to Chinon he cursed the day on which he was born, and implored God's malison on his sons; the bish-

ops and priests about him implored him to revoke the curse, but he refused. But Giraldus, bitter enemy as he was, somewhat softened by his misfortune, tells a different tale. He draws the picture of the dying king leaning on Geoffrey's shoulder, while one of his knights held his feet in his lap. Geoffrey was fanning the flies from the king's face, as he seemed to be sleeping. As they watched, the king revived and opened his eyes. He looked at Geoffrey and blessed him. "My son," he said "my dearest, for that thou hast ever striven to show toward me such faithfulness and gratitude as son could show to father, if by God's mercy I shall recover of this sickness, I will of a surety do to thee the duty of the best of fathers, and I will set thee among the greatest and mightiest men of my dominion. But if I am to die without requiting thee, may God, who is the author and rewarder of all good, reward thee, because in every fortune alike thou hast shown thyself to me so true a son." Geoffrey, of whose sincere sorrow there can be no doubt, was overwhelmed with tears; he could but reply that all he prayed for was his father's health and prosperity. Another day passed, and the king's strength visibly waned. He kept crying at intervals, "Shame, shame on a conquered king." At last, when Geoffrey was again by his side, the poor king kept telling him how he had destined him for the see of York, or, if not York, Winchester; but now he knew that he was dying. He drew off his best gold ring, with the device of the panther, and bade him send it to his son-in-law, the king of Castile; and another very precious ring, with a sapphire of great price and virtue, he ordered to be delivered out of his treasure. Then he desired that his bed should be carried into the chapel and placed before the altar. He had strength still to say some words of confession, and received the "Communion of the Body and Blood of the Lord with devotion." And so he died, on the seventh day of the fever, on the sixth of July, the octave of the apostles Peter and Paul.



## XV.

## HOW THE GREAT CHARTER WAS WON.—PEARSON.

[Richard, the Crusader, was remarkable for his personal prowess, but lacked the essential characteristics of a great military leader. As king, he spent but a brief period in England, and cared nothing for English interests. His exploits in the East, his captivity, and the tragic circumstances of his death, have surrounded his name with a halo of romance; but he was selfish, cruel, tyrannical, vicious, a bad son, and a bad husband. During his reign the strong administrative system which his father had built up was successfully maintained by such statesmen as William Longchamp and Hubert Walter, in spite of the intrigues of his brother John.

John began his reign under favorable auspices, but the essential badness of the man soon displayed itself. He quarreled with his suzerain, the king of France, and thereby lost a large portion of his continental possessions. He quarreled with the Church, brought an interdict upon England and excommunication on himself, and then pusillanimously yielded up his kingdom, to be held as a fief from the Holy See. He quarreled with his barons, and at length united nine tenths of the English people against him. It was this last quarrel which led to the signing of Magna Charta.]

ALTHOUGH John had been able to keep an army and a contingent in the field, many of his barons had remained behind in England, and those of the north especially had again put forward their plea of exemption from all service except on the marches. As it was certain from the first that the king would try, on his return, to revenge himself, and as the government of Peter des Roches, bishop of Winchester, who had succeeded Geoffrey Fitz-Petre as justiciary, was intolerably oppressive, the nobles resolved on resistance; and, within a few days after John had landed and begun to levy scutage on all who had neglected to follow him, a meeting of nobles was held at Bury St. Edmunds, under pretext of celebrating the saint's festival (November 20). The charter of Henry I. and the laws of Edward the Confessor were read aloud, and the barons swore, one by one, on the high altar, to demand the observance of these liberties from the

king, and to constrain him by arms and the withdrawal of fealty if he refused a peaceable consent. As men, however, who knew the risk of their enterprise, at a time when every fortress in England was garrisoned by royal mercenaries, they agreed to collect men and arms, and to meet after the approaching Christmas and urge their petition with an army at their back. The precaution was the more necessary as John, vaguely sensible that there was thunder in the air, and alarmed by the recall of his partisan, the legate, tried to detach the clergy from the national cause by granting them absolute liberty of election.

This remarkable charter was issued the very day after the barons' meeting at Bury St. Edmunds, and it reflects the highest credit on Stephen Langton and his followers that the enormous bribe to their feelings as churchmen, backed, as it was in many cases, by restitution of honor and estates, failed to make them forget that they were citizens. To the barons, of course, the new charter was of no interest, except as an item in John's degradation, and a declaration of war against themselves. Accordingly, as soon as John came from Worcester, where he had held his Christmas court, to London, the confederates, in unwonted military array, waited upon him, and claimed that he should perform the oath which he had sworn at Stephen Langton's bidding in Winchester, and confirm the constitution as defined by the charter of Henry I. The king feared to refuse compliance with the demand of armed men, ready for action, and begged for time, that he might think the matter over and give his answer at Easter. The barons reluctantly consented, their cause being as yet espoused only by about half of the nobility, and the primate, the bishop of Ely, and the earl-marshal, were persuaded to become sponsors for the king's good faith.

The pledge was a perilous one, for John meditated nothing less than observance of his word. He was singularly destitute of counselors and supporters, for the legate had



left the country in disgrace for maladministration, and Geoffrey Fitz-Petre and the bishop of Norwich were dead; but he took instant steps to procure the release of the earl of Salisbury, abstained for a time from any gross act of oppression, and sent commissioners to the different counties to explain his quarrel with the lords and enforce new oaths of homage on the free tenants. But he counted too much, in a time of popular excitement, on the silent, unceasing feuds between gentry and baronage. Men generally refused to take the oath with the new clause inserted, that they would support the king against "the now talked-of charter," and John was obliged to desist from the attempt. He had thought of bringing over troops from Poitou, but the tidings of disaffection alarmed him, and he hastily recalled his orders. Nothing now remained but to claim the protection of the Church, and hold his castles till the barons were wearied out, or till a royal party arose. That no precaution might be omitted, he assumed the white cross, in the hope of investing himself with the inviolable character of a crusader. But his chief trust was in Innocent. The pope had been applied to by Eustace de Vesci, as the barons' agent, in the preceding autumn, and had sternly admonished them not to disturb the course of royal justice. The cruel irony fell upon deaf ears. Both parties now sent commissioners to Rome, and Innocent unhesitatingly supported his vassal. He blamed the barons, who demanded, sword in hand, the rights they ought to have, prayed humbly and devoutly of "our dearest son in Christ, the illustrious King John," and he blamed the bishops who had sympathized with the barons. But the apostolical counsels reached England when the whole nation was in revolt.

By Easter the party of reform, numbering four earls and forty great barons, had assembled a large and well-appointed army. They halted at Brackley, in Northamptonshire, to receive the primate and earl-marshal, who came as royal commissioners to learn their demands. When these were reported

to John, who was then at Oxford, he asked, with a bitter laugh, why the barons did not at once ask for the kingdom, and swore that he would never yield liberties which would leave himself in the position of a slave. As soon as his answer was known, the barons declared Robert Fitz-Walter "Marshal of the Army of God and of Holy Church," and proceeded to invest Northampton. But, wanting all engines of war, they could effect nothing, and accordingly marched on London, receiving admittance, by the way, into Bedford from the governor, William Beauchamp. London was opened to their advance-guard by a friendly party among the citizens (May 24), and the royal troops were easily overpowered, though the garrison of the Tower held out to the last. The soldiers of the Church filled their purses with the spoil of royal partisans and of the Jews, who always suffered in time of civil commotion, and who saw the very stones of their houses taken away to strengthen the city walls. The metropolis became the center of operations; but the whole country was in rebellion. Alexander of Scotland and Llewellyn of Wales were said to favor the revolt, and it often happened that where the father was royalist the son was in the camp of the insurgents. Presently one party seized Exeter, another Lincoln, and a riot took place in the streets of Northampton, in which many of the king's garrison were slain, the remainder retaliating by burning part of the town. As always happened in civil wars, the royal parks and forests were among the first objects of attack.

John had tried in vain to induce the primate to excommunicate the rebels, and the letters of Innocent were mere waste paper. In his extremity the king resorted to his favorite expedient, and called over his mercenaries from Poitou and other parts. The unpopular act probably contributed to detach the remainder of his adherents, and he found himself, by the beginning of June, with scarcely seven horsemen in his train. Even the bishops, who were nominally on his



side, except the deeply injured Giles de Braose of Hereford, were of doubtful loyalty, and the earl-marshal himself had a son, his eldest, among the insurgents. In this extremity, fearing to be overpowered and dreading the arrival of the northern barons, who were known to be on their way, and who were his bitterest foes, John consented to a conference between Staines and Windsor. The army of the barons encamped on the broad plain of Runnimeade, on the southern bank of the Thames; the royal forces were on the north, and the negotiations were carried on in an island. John came prepared to concede every thing, and the Great Charter was agreed to and received the royal seal in a day.

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## XVI.

### DEATH OF KING JOHN.—PEARSON.

[John at once sought to break away from the obligations of the Great Charter. He summoned mercenaries to his aid, and displayed so much ability and energy that the barons were forced to look abroad for assistance. They invited Lewis, son of the king of France, to become king of England. It was a dangerous move, and would probably have resulted in a hopeless division of the baronial party, had not the timely death of John relieved it from its embarrassing situation.

As soon as he had effected the object of relieving Lincoln and learned that the barons were not in pursuit of him, John decided to march southward again. In passing over the Wash, between the Cross-keys and the Foss-dike, he marched too near the sea at a time when the tide was still high, and lost many of his sumpter-mules and household retinue, with his jewels, including the crown, and a shrine containing relics which he especially prized. At the abbey of Swineshead, where he passed the night, he is said, by the more credible account, to have eaten peaches in excess;

vexation, fatigue, and the surfeit bringing on a dysentery. Later legends declared that a monk, who heard him boast he would raise the price of the loaf from a half-penny to a shilling, devoted himself for his country and poisoned the fruit he presented, eating of it himself, to inspire confidence, and dying. The illness, however caused, did not hinder John from proceeding the next day, to Steaford, where he learned that Dover still held out and had obtained a truce till Easter, but was probably bound to surrender if it were not relieved by that date.

The news was bad medicine for a sick spirit, and the king's next stage, to Newark, was his last. His last acts were to write a letter to Pope Honorius (Oct. 15), recommending his young son to him, and to dictate a short will, by which he constituted what may be called a council of regency, with the legate Gualo at its head. But its provisions are chiefly the work of a craven conscience, desiring to purchase pardon of heaven by alms to the poor, and to religious houses, by "aid to the land of Jerusalem," and "by making satisfaction to God and holy Church for the damage and injury done them." The sacrilege wrought in Croyland monastery, where Savary de Mauléon's men had carried off spoils and captives in mid-mass, not three weeks before, may, perhaps, have risen up accusingly before the king's fevered fancy. On whom the furies should wait, if not on John, may indeed well be questioned. We seem to trace his gradual depravation in his history. The fair boy, his father's darling, who lets his courtiers pull the beards of his Irish lords, in the very wantonness of youthful arrogance, and bandies rough jokes with Giraldus Cambrensis, grows up reckless of all self-restraint, of all honorable sentiment, false to his father, false to his brother, false to his associates in treason, casting off the wife who has made his fortunes, slaying the nephew whom he has sworn to spare. He has all the lower talent of his family, is a pleasant boon companion, fond of



books and of learned men, irresistible among women. A few friends held by him to the last, with more of what seems personal regard than Edward II. or Richard II. conciliated. He has partisans in London at the time of his deepest humiliation, and is welcomed rapturously in Lynne a few days before his death. The Cinque-ports seem to have been steadily faithful to his interests. It is evident that, while his clergy and his nobles hated him, a portion of the towns were with him, either grateful for past favors or liking his enemies less. The loss of Normandy was chiefly due to his quarrel with his English subjects; he held England against the pope with singular success; and his last campaigns prove that he had organized his tyranny till he was an overmatch for half the realm, and could still do something when France had succored the rebellion.

Yet, allowing all this, which has, perhaps, been too often overlooked, it may be doubted if it be not an aggravation of the infamy that clings to John's name. He favored the cities, not in the interest of freedom, but to gain money by the sale of charters, or to set class against class. His power was based on the systematic employment of foreign mercenaries; he tortured to extort wealth, and murdered freely when his avarice was disappointed. His great struggle against Innocent began in the attempt to usurp the rights of a corporate body, and was carried on by confiscations and violence. Lastly, like all voluptuaries, John perpetually broke down at the critical moment of his fortunes. He scoffed at religion, and was cowed by a strolling prophet's utterances. Bearing to be excommunicated for years, giving churches freely to be plundered, he yet attached a superstitious reverence to the relics he carried with him. Perhaps the best summary of his life is the simple record of the great facts of his reign, that he lost Normandy, that he became the pope's vassal, and that he died fighting against Magna Charta. Never, probably, was there an English king who

would more cordially have indorsed the Roman tyrant's wish: "When I am dead let the earth be consumed in fire;" never one of whom the poet might have said, with greater truth, that "he wearied God."

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 XVII.

## ENGLAND IN THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY.—LONGMAN.

[John left, as his heir and successor, a little boy nine years old—Henry III. His long reign covers more than half of the thirteenth century, one of the most brilliant and eventful periods of the world's history. It was the age of great statesmen, great scholars, and great architects. It was, for England, an age of great constitutional progress; but in this the king himself had little share. He was essentially weak and untrustworthy—a mere figure-head; during his minority under the control of able ministers; then the tool of foreign favorites; while, later, he became involved in a fateful struggle with the baronial party. Some idea of the condition of England at this period may be obtained from the following sketch of domestic life and manners.]

ABOUT twenty years before Edward became king, more than seventy woods and forests belonged to the Crown; and this was one of the great grievances of the people. These woods were full of game of all kinds: wolves were far from uncommon; wild cattle were found so near London as in Osterly Wood, in Middlesex; and the fens and marshes were the abode of cranes, storks, and bitterns.

Besides these woods belonging to the Crown, the whole land was scattered over with forest. Between London and St. Albans the country was so thickly wooded, and the woods were so much frequented by lawless freebooters, who robbed the passing travelers, that the abbots of St. Albans kept armed men to guard the road to London. Throughout the whole country, indeed, the woods were so much the haunts of robbers, that, in 1285, a law was passed, ordering that all