

resistance of heathendom to the new faith. His alliance with Cædwalla gave the Briton his last chance of greatness at the cost of the Teutonic intruder. When Cædwalla and Penda had both fallen before the sword of the Northumbrian Bretwaldas, two questions were solved. The Teuton and not the Celt was to be dominant in southern Britain; but the rule of the Teuton was to be a Christian and not a heathen rule. But a third question, which of the Teutonic powers in Britain should become the head of Britain, was still undecided. This question took more than a hundred years to settle, and it was at last settled in a way which was hardly to be looked for. During the greater part of the seventh and eighth centuries the struggle seemed to lie wholly between Northumberland and Mercia. Wessex seems to have given up all her schemes of aggrandizement in central Britain. She gradually loses her dominion north of the Thames; it is sometimes more than she can do to maintain her own independence against Mercian supremacy. But all the while she is gradually extending her dominion at the expense of the Britons to the west. She is also, in the latter part of the period, establishing a supremacy over the smaller English kingdoms to the east. The Wessex of 800 A.D. was a state of a wholly different shape on the map from the Wessex of 600 A.D. The West-Saxon kings, from the seventh century onwards, ruled over a realm of quite a different character from any of the earlier English kingdoms. Their western conquests, from the northern Axe to the Tamar, made them, now that the days of mere slaughter and havoc were passed, masters of a realm which contained British as well as English subjects. In the laws of Ine (675-693) we find the picture of a land in which the Britons are under the full protection of the law, but in which they form a distinct class, marked as inferior to the dominant English. The Welshman's oath and the Welshman's life both have their value; but they are rated at a less value than the oath and the life of an Englishman of the same rank. When we turn to the laws of Ælfred (878-901), no trace of any such distinction is left. He legislates for a purely English realm. That is to say, the Welsh within the West-Saxon kingdom had, in the course of those two hundred years, become naturalized Englishmen. The impassable barrier of creed which divided the Christian Briton from the heathen Teuton had now passed away. There was nothing to hinder the conquered, when once admitted to legal protection, from gradually adopting the tongue and manners of their conquerors.

Advance
of
Mercia.

The same work must have been going on along the Mercian frontier also; but here we have not the means of studying it in the same detail. During these hundred and fifty years the Mercian kings spread their dominion a long way westward of the boundary stream of the Severn. But we hear far more of them as warring, often as conquerors, against the English powers to the north and south of them. But at the beginning of this period Northumberland still remains the greatest power of Britain. For a while after the death of Penda her supremacy was undoubted. Mercia then again became independent, and under Wulfhere (657-675) and his successor Æthelred (675-703), who died a monk, pressed far towards the dominion of southern as well as of central England. Meanwhile, Egfrith of Northumberland (670-685) was pressing on to the further north, as the West-Saxon kings were to the extreme west. Northumberland, it must be remembered, reached to the Forth; but to the west it was hemmed in by the British land which stretched to the Clyde. This last Egfrith incorporated with his dominions. Carlisle and its district, a land which was in after days to become English again, now became English for a moment, as well as the land to the west which was not to become English again. But Egfrith fell in a war with the Picts beyond the Forth, and

the dominion of Northumberland died with him. The northern land still remained for a while the chief seat of learning and culture, the land of Cædmon and Beda. But its political power fell with Egfrith. The stoutest Northumbrian kings of the eighth century could at most keep their own borders against the Mercian, or again win victories against the North Briton. Of the Bretwaldadom of the seventh century they had no hope. Towards the end of the eighth century Northumberland fell into a state of confusion and division which made it an easy prey for any enemy.

During the greater part of the eighth century everything looked as if the chief place in the island was destined for Mercia. Æthelbald (716-757), Offa (757-796), and Cenwulf (797-819), through three long reigns, taking in more than a century, kept up the might and glory of their kingdom. Meanwhile, in Wessex a series of valiant kings pressed westward against the Briton, and bore up against the Mercian. But to bear up was as much as they could do. The fight of Burford in 752, under the West-Saxon king Cuthred, secured the independence of Wessex; but it secured only her independence; her northern frontier was finally cut short by Offa. This last is the greatest name in Mercian history. Though none of these Mercian kings are enrolled on the list of Bretwaldas, yet the position of Offa was as great as that of any English king before the final union of the kingdoms. In one way it was higher than that of any of them. Offa held, not only a British, but an European position. Britain was now again threatened with annexation by a continental power. Charles the Great, not yet crowned Caesar and Augustus, but already virtual lord of Rome, exercised an influence in British affairs such as no prince of the mainland had ever exercised since Honorius withdrew his legions. That Englishmen, the famous Aleuin (Ealhwine) at their head, held high places at his court and in his favour was simply part of the wise encouragement which he held out to learning and merit everywhere. But the great Frankish king exercised direct influence, if not supremacy, in several parts of our island. The Scots are, at least by his own annalist, counted among his homagers. Northumberland took back a king at his bidding. A banished West-Saxon prince learned in his school the art of founding empires. But with the great king of the Mercians Charles corresponded as an equal. War was once threatened, but only threatened, between the great potentates of the island and of the mainland. In the next reign Cenwulf found it needful to put it clearly on record that neither the bishop of Rome nor the emperor of Rome had any jurisdiction in his realm of Mercia. These dealings with the continental empire should be marked, both on their own account and because of the light which they throw on some later passages in British history.

Charles, lord of the western world of Rome, was not fated to become lord of the island world of Britain. But a nearer approach to that character than had yet fallen to any English prince was in store for the friend and pupil of the great emperor. West-Saxon Egberht went back from the Frankish court to do in Britain as nearly as he could what Charles had done in Germany and Gaul. He went back to become the eighth Bretwalda, and more than a Bretwalda. The day of Northumberland and the day of Mercia had passed; the day of Wessex had come. The single reign of Egberht (802-837) placed her for ever at the head of the powers of Britain. Immediate king only south of the Thames, Egberht stretched his overlordship to the Forth, and, what no Bretwalda had done before him, he handed on his dominion to his successors. But the dominion of Egberht must not be mistaken for a kingdom of all England. He was king of the West-Saxons; once only does he call himself King of the English. But the

kingdoms of Kent, Sussex, and Essex were now, as the West-Saxon shires had once been, ruled by under-kings of the West-Saxon house. In Mercia, Northumberland, and East-Anglia native kings still reigned, but they held their crowns as the men of the West-Saxon overlord. And in neither was the West-Saxon supremacy a mere precarious dominion, like that of the earlier Bretwaldas. Both relations were steps towards more perfect incorporation; they were stages in the process by which Wessex grew into England.

The name of *England* is not yet found in any contemporary writer. It came into use in the course of the next century. In truth, the oldest name for the Teutonic part of Britain is not *England*, but *Saxony*. This is only what was to be looked for. The lands won by the Teutons would first receive a common name from the Celts of the island, and that name, according to their usage, would naturally be *Saxony*. The Teutonic settlers themselves would not give their country a common name till they had reached some degree of political unity; but when they gave it a name, that name was naturally *England*. England, in short, as a political unity, began to be formed in the ninth century; it received its name in the tenth. Now that the various English kingdoms are brought so closely together, we begin to feel the need of a geographical name which may take them all in. Some name is needed, some name was doubtless soon felt to be needed, to distinguish the English kingdoms now united under West-Saxon supremacy from the other parts of the island. The position of Egberht could not be so well described as by calling him king of the West-Saxons and lord of all England. Lord of all Britain he was not, though he came nearer to being so than any prince before him. West-Wales, if not actually incorporated, was brought into thorough dependence, and the princes of North-Wales—that is, Wales in the modern sense—were brought to acknowledge the West-Saxon supremacy. The Welsh of Strathclyde, the Picts, and the Scots, remained independent and untouched.

Thus, though a kingdom of England was not yet formed, the greatest of all steps had been taken towards forming it. But the work of Egberht had stood but for a little while when it seemed to be swept away for ever. Yet while it seemed to be swept away, it was in truth both quickened and strengthened by an event which forms one of the great landmarks in our story, an event which has no parallel since the first settlement of the English in Britain. The English conquest was in some sort wrought over again. Christian Britain was again attacked by heathen invaders, and a large part of it was again brought under heathen rule. The West-Saxon supremacy seemed to vanish away; the West-Saxon kingdom itself was for a moment overcome. But the blows which overcame kingdom and supremacy did in truth only enable Egberht's successors again to do Egberht's work more thoroughly.

The dominion of Egberht passed to his son Æthelwulf (837-858), and from him to four of his sons in succession, Æthelbald, Æthelberht, Æthelred (858-871), and the more famous Ælfred (871-900). This succession involves a constitutional point; for we hear of a will of Æthelwulf, confirmed by the Witan, by which the order in which his sons were to succeed to the crown was arranged beforehand. There is in this no formal surrender of the right of the nation to choose its king; for the confirmation by the Witan was equivalent to a conditional election in advance. But that the crown could be made the subject of bequest in any shape shows the growth of a whole crowd of ideas which had no place in the elder Teutonic system. We are, to say the least, on the way towards the doctrine that the leadership of men is not an office but a property. This is the first case of any attempt to settle the succession beforehand,

and, as in most other cases afterwards, the attempt failed. The sons of Æthelwulf succeeded; but they did not succeed in the order marked out by their father's will. Another point which marks the increasing intercourse between England and the mainland is the fact that Æthelwulf made the pilgrimage to Rome. More than one king had given up his crown, and had ended his days at Rome; but this is the first case of a reigning king thus absenting himself from his kingdom. On his return also he married a foreign wife, Judith the daughter of Charles the Bald. This is the first recorded case of the kind since the marriage of Æthelberht of Kent; and we shall find only one more in the whole line before the Norman Conquest. As long as England remained purely England, the mothers of English kings were Englishwomen.

Another point with regard to the succession should be noticed. On the death of Æthelred, Ælfred succeeded, though Æthelred had children living. This is of course simply an instance of the general law of choosing from the royal house, but of choosing only one who was personally qualified to reign. Minors were therefore passed by, as a matter of course, in favour of a full grown uncle or other kinsman. The children thus shut out might or might not be chosen at some future vacancy. The right of Ælfred to his crown was not disputed in his own day, nor has he commonly been branded by later historians with the name of usurper. But it is well to bear in mind that his succession was of exactly the same kind as that of some later kings to whom the name of usurper has been freely applied. In all such cases the mistake comes from forgetting that the strict laws of succession to which we have been used for the last two or three centuries were altogether unknown in the earlier stages of our constitution.

But the main history of England during these reigns, and indeed for a long time after, gathers round the successive Danish invasions. Christian England was now attacked by the heathen Danes, as Christian Britain had been attacked by the heathen English. But the results in the two cases were widely different. The Danes were not a people altogether foreign to the English; they were of kindred race, and spoke a kindred tongue. Had their inroads begun when the settlements of the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes were still new, they might have passed for a fourth branch of the same stock, come to share the spoil with their kinsfolk. As it was, their nearness in blood and speech made them disposed to accept a new religion at the hands of the English, and in the end to merge their own national being in that of the English, in a way in which the English themselves had been in no way disposed to do towards the wholly foreign races among whom they settled. The Danish invasions of England were part of a general movement which about this time began to carry the adventurous people of Scandinavia into all parts of Europe. Of the three great kingdoms into which they settled down about this time, Sweden had little to do with Western Europe; the advance of that power was to the east. But the people of Norway and Denmark ravaged everywhere, and settled in many places, along the coasts of Germany, Gaul, and the British islands. The Northmen founded powerful states, which have an occasional connexion with English history, in Ireland, Orkney, and the Western Islands; but the Scandinavian settlements in England itself were almost wholly Danish in the stricter sense.¹ Their

¹ That there were in northern England Northmen, as distinguished from Danes, appears from the record of the commendation of 924 in the Winchester Chronicle. The name *Northmen*, at an earlier time, meant the Scandinavian nations generally; it is now specially used to mean the men of Norway. The Danes settled on the eastern coast of Northumberland and East-Anglia; the Northmen would seem to have made their way into western Yorkshire by way of Cumberland.

Three stages of Danish invasion.

Invasions fall naturally into three periods. There is first a time of mere plunder; secondly, a time of local settlement, when Danish dynasties are set up in certain parts of England; lastly, when England, Denmark, and other European powers had grown into something more of definite shape and order, we find an attempt, and for a while a successful attempt, to place a king of all Denmark on the throne of a kingdom of all England. Of these periods it is the first two only with which we are concerned at this stage, and these two have their exact parallels in the two stages of English invasion in Britain. The first recorded inroad of the Danes in any part of England is placed in Northumberland in 789; but it was not till the latter years of the reign of Egberht that their incursions became formidable, at least in southern England. They plundered both in Kent and in Wessex, and they leagued themselves with the West-Welsh to meet a common defeat at the hands of the Bretwalda.

The actual settlements did not begin till the reign of Æthelred. In 870 the Danes, after ravaging various parts of Northumberland and Mercia, and setting up a puppet king in Bernicia, occupied East-Anglia, whose king, the famous local saint Eadmund, died a martyr. Then came their first great invasion of Wessex, and the battles of the last days of Æthelred and the first days of Ælfred. Then (874-888) Northumberland and Mercia came altogether into the power of the Danes. For a moment they overrun Wessex itself, and the realm of Ælfred was confined to the isle of Athelney. But the spirit of the great king never failed, and that of his people rose again. The Danes were driven from Wessex, and the peace of Wedmore settled the relations between the West-Saxon king and the Danes of East-Anglia. A line drawn from north-west to south-east divided Mercia into two parts. The south-western fell to the West-Saxon, the north-eastern to the Dane. The Danish king Guthrum embraced Christianity, and became a precarious and dangerous vassal of the West-Saxon overlord. His actual kingdom lay in East-Anglia; the chief power in Danish Mercia lay in the confederacy of the five boroughs, Lincoln, Leicester, Nottingham, Derby, and Stamford. In all these the Danish settlers seem to have formed a patrician order, holding the English inhabitants in bondage. Deira, with York for its capital, formed a Danish kingdom. In Bernicia English princes still reigned under Danish overlordship. In a large part both of Northumberland and Mercia the land was divided among Danish owners, and not a few places received new Danish names. It might have seemed that the Danish conquest of more than half England was only less thorough than the English conquest of Britain itself.

But in truth the Danish occupation of northern and eastern England did but make ready the way for the more thorough incorporation of those lands with the West-Saxon kingdom. Egberht had established his supremacy over the English powers in those lands. But it was the supremacy of an external master. The Danish settlements gave the West-Saxon kings a wholly new character. Unless we reckon the tributary kingship of Bernicia, all the ancient English kingdoms, with their royal houses, were swept away wherever the Danes established their power. The West-Saxon kings remained the only champions of Christian faith and English nationality. They were now Kings of the English, and they alone. Mark also that, by the treaty between Ælfred and Guthrum, while the West-Saxon king lost as an overlord, he gained as an immediate sovereign. The actual West-Saxon dominion, as distinguished from mere West-Saxon supremacy, again reached far beyond the Thames. English Mercia was ruled under Ælfred by an ealdorman of the old royal stock, the husband of his daughter the renowned

Æthelsæd. The Lord and Lady of the Mercians held a place intermediate between that of an under-king and an ordinary ealdorman. At the other end of Wessex, Kent and Sussex were completely incorporated, and ceased to be even distinct apanages. The West-Saxon supremacy was more fully established in Wales, and at last, in 893, even the Danes of the north acknowledged it. Ælfred had thus, in name at least, won back the overlordship of Egberht, combined with an enlarged immediate kingdom. As that immediate kingdom took in by far the greater part of Saxon England, and little or nothing that was not Saxon, he sometimes bears, neither the narrower style of King of the West-Saxons nor the wider style of King of the English, but the title, almost peculiar and specially appropriate to himself, of King of the Saxons. His overlordship over the heathen Danes was doubtless far less firmly established than Egberht's overlordship had been over their Christian predecessors. But now, in the eyes of the Christian inhabitants of Northumberland and Mercia, the West-Saxon king was no longer a stranger and a conqueror. He had become the champion of their race and faith against their heathen masters. In that character Ælfred himself hardly appeared. The last years of his reign were chiefly taken up in defending Wessex and English Mercia against new Danish invasions from without. But this Christian and English championship is the distinct characteristic of the kings who follow him, of his son Eadward the Unconquered (901-925), of his grandsons Æthelstan (925-940), Eadmund (940-946), and Eadred (946-955). Under them Wessex grew into England, and the overlordship grew into the empire of Britain. Eadward waged the war in partnership with his sister the Lady of the Mercians, who ruled alone after the death of her husband, and whose territory was on her death fully incorporated with Wessex. The son and the daughter of Ælfred gradually advanced their frontier, winning battles, fortifying towns, till Eadward, King of the English, held all England south of the Humber as his immediate realm. His overlordship was more fully admitted by the Welsh and the Northumbrians, and it was acknowledged for the first time by the Scots and the Strathclyde Welsh, who in 924 chose the English king as father and lord. Under Æthelstan Northumberland was incorporated, and the immediate realm of the one king of the English reached to the Forth. Still both he and his two successors had to fight against endless revolts and rival kings in Northumberland. The Danish land was won and lost and won back over and over again, till at last under Eadred Northumberland was finally incorporated, and ruled, sometimes by a single earl, sometimes by two, of the king's appointment. The kingdom of England was now formed.

The first half of the tenth century thus gave the West-Saxon kings a position in Britain such as no English kings of any kingdom had held before them. Dominant in their own island, claiming and, whenever they could, exercising a supremacy over the other princes of the island, their position in the island world of Britain was analogous to the position of the Western emperors in continental Europe. It was in fact an imperial position. As such it was marked by the assumption of the imperial titles, *monarcha*, *imperator*, *basileus*, *Augustus*, and even *Cæsar*. These titles were meant at once to assert the imperial supremacy of the English kings within their own world, and to deny any supremacy over Britain on the part of either of the lords of the continental world. When we remember that some both of the Teutonic and Celtic princes of Britain had been the men of Charles the Great, the denial of all supremacy in the Cæsars of the mainland was not needless. Indeed that denial was formally made over

Relations to Cumberland and Scotland.

and over again at various times down to the reign of Henry VIII.

On the other hand, we see during these reigns the beginning of the process which fixed the modern frontier of England to the north. The Picts and the Scots of Britain now formed what, as regarded their southern neighbours, was a single great kingdom north of Forth and Clyde. In the great fight of Brunanburh in 936 the Scots joined the Danes against Æthelstan, and shared in their defeat. After that time the relations of the Scottish kings to the English overlord seem for a long while to have been friendly. During this period the Scottish power began to make its way south of the two great firths. In 945 Eadmund conquered Cumberland. It might not be easy to say exactly what territory is meant by that name; but it was clearly the whole or a part of the ancient Strathclyde. It most likely took in Carlisle and its district, which had not been under direct English rule since the days of Egfrith. This territory Eadmund bestowed on Malcolm king of Scots, distinctly as a territorial fief. This is perhaps the earliest case of a grant of that kind in our history. It is something different from the commendation of either Scots or Britons to Eadward in 924. The northern kingdom of the Britons now became the ordinary apanage of the heirs of the Scottish crown. The Scottish royal house, if not the actual Scottish kingdom, thus obtained a great establishment south of the firth of Clyde, and soon afterwards the Scottish kings themselves made their way south of the Forth. In the reign of Eadred, Edinburgh, the border fortress of Northumberland to the north, became a Scottish possession. It is not clear on what terms this acquisition was made, or whether it was made in war or in peace. It is at least as likely, under the circumstances of the time, that it was a peaceful grant. But in any case it was the beginning of the process which brought the lands between Forth and Tweed into the possession of the Scottish kings, and which thereby turned them into English kings of a northern England, which was for a while more English than the southern England itself.

Legislation.

This period of war and conquest was also a period of legislation and intellectual advancement. In Ælfred we have the noblest name in all English history, the name of him who united more and more varied virtues than any other recorded ruler. The captain of his people, he was also their lawgiver and their teacher. His laws, the first that can be called a code, laws drawn up by himself and then submitted by him to the approval of his Witan, mark, as we have seen, when they are compared with those of Ine, a time when the distinction of Englishman and Briton had passed away from the West-Saxon kingdom. They are remarkable also for the great mass of scriptural and other religious matter which is brought in whole into their text. The laws of Eadward, of Æthelstan, and of Eadmund follow, and among them we have the text of the treaty between Ælfred and Guthrum, the earliest diplomatic instrument in our language. In all these laws we may trace the growth of the various new ideas which have been already spoken of as having gradually made their way into the older Teutonic system. The king grows greater and greater. Already a sacred, and fast becoming an imperial personage, he is something widely different from the old kings who ruled only over Wight or half of Kent. The increase of his dignity, the increase of the extent of his dominion, raise him at every step above the mass of his people. And as the kingdom grows, the right of the ordinary freeman to a place in the general assembly of the nation becomes more and more shadowy. That assembly shrinks more and more into an assembly of bishops, ealdormen, and king's thegns, made ever and anon more

splendid by the appearance of vassal princes and kings. As the king grows in greatness, his immediate followers grow also. The old nobility of the earls is finally supplanted by the new nobility of the thegns. The result of this change is the general depression of the churls as a class, while it becomes easier for this or that churl to raise himself to thegn's rank. On the other hand, the lowest class of all begins to have its lot lightened. The spirit of Christianity, if it does not yet venture to preach the emancipation of the slave, brings in provisions which lessen the rigour of the ancient law. And we now find the first of a series of well meant, though for the most part vain, attempts at least to hinder the slave from being sold out of his native land. Commerce and discovery are fostered. Thegn's rank is held out as a reward to the successful trader by sea. Intercourse with foreign countries becomes closer and closer. No foreign wife shares the throne of the *basileus* of Britain; but the sisters of glorious Æthelstan are given in marriage to the greatest princes of Western Europe. It was a great age for England, an age of great men and great events. The line of our hero kings, of Eadward the Unconquered, of Æthelstan the Glorious, and of Eadmund the Doer-of-great-deeds, is only less famous than it should be, because even their names must yield to the unequalled glory of their grandfather and father. Towards the end of the period we see, for the first time in English history, the person of a great minister, the wise counsellor of wise kings. Our first recorded statesman who was not a king is, as might be looked for in that age, a churchman, the great Dunstan, the guide of England through many stirring years of war and peace. The Church had made the English a nation; a great churchman was now foremost in making England a kingdom. A kingdom she now became, not yet indivisible, but still one. But one and strong and glorious as England stood in the central years of the tenth century, her unity and strength and glory were bought in no small degree by the loss of the ancient freedom of her people.

In literature this was a time which saw nothing short of the beginning of English prose. For a long time, as we have seen, the special home of learning and culture in England was in the north. Wessex had her scholars too, King Ine's kinsman Ealdhelm at their head; but the land of Bæda took the lead. In the confusions of the latter years of the eighth century the light of Northumbrian learning seems to have died out; yet even at the time of Ælfred's accession the great king places the greatest lack of learning south of the Thames. In the interval of peace between the wars at the beginning and the wars at the end of his reign, Ælfred largely devoted himself to wipe out this stain. He was himself the first English prose writer on a great scale; but his writings, in accordance with the modest and practical bent of his mind, were no displays of original genius, but translations, or rather paraphrases, of such Latin works, both on divine and on secular subjects, as he thought were fitted for the improvement of his people. But above anything that Ælfred wrote himself stands the really greatest literary work of his reign, the beginning of the English Chronicle as it now stands. The fragmentary chronicles of earlier times were put together; the history of Bæda and the records of other lands were pressed into the service; the work became contemporary in the minute and brilliant narrative of Ælfred's own reign. From his day it goes on, sometimes full, sometimes meagre, sometimes a dry record of names and dates, sometimes rising to the highest flight of the prose picture or of the heroic lay, but in one shape or another never failing us, till the pen dropped from the hand of the monk of Peterborough who recorded the coming of Henry of Anjou. We, and we alone among the nations of Western Europe, can read our own

The West Saxon kings.

Beginning of English prose.

Writings of Ælfred.

Second advance of Wessex.

Plate 11

The kingdom of England formed.

The imperial claims.

story from the beginning in our own tongue in which we were born. But it must be borne in mind that, as we go on, we shall find that the English Chronicle is not one chronicle but many. The record which began at the beginning of Ælfred was in the eleventh century continued in various monasteries, and the later parts of the several copies must be looked on, not as copies of a single work with some places where they differ, but as separate works which have some matter in common. The tale is told in different ways, with much difference of local feeling and even of political creed. The different chronicles stop at different periods. That of Peterborough, as we have hinted, stops suddenly in 1154.

England under Ælfred was a land where foreign merit was welcome, as under Charles the Great English merit had been welcome in other lands. The Briton Asser, the Old-Saxon John, the Frankish Grimbald, received at the West-Saxon court the same reception which Ealhwin had met with at the hands of the mighty Frank. Learning now prospered; the monasteries were schools; but the native tongue flourished also. Of the wars of Eadward and Æthelstæd the Chronicle gives us a full military narrative; in the following reigns the prose entries are meagre, but we get in their stead the glorious lay of Brunanburh and the shorter song of the deliverance of the Five Boroughs. Towards the end of our present period, Dunstan, the great statesman, began to appear as an ecclesiastical reformer. His name is connected with the movement of the last half of the tenth century for enforcing a stricter discipline on the monasteries and for substituting monks for secular priests in many cathedral and other churches. The English clergy, even those who formed collegiate bodies, were fond of the separate, and not uncommonly married, life of the secular priest. This supposed laxity now gave way in several episcopal churches to the strict Benedictine rule. Hence came the usage, almost but not quite peculiar to England, by which the bishop had, as his diocesan council and the ministers of his own special church, a body of men who had professedly renounced all the affairs of this world. That Dunstan shared in this movement there is no doubt. But it would be hard to show from real history that he was foremost in the movement; and it is far more certain that no merely ecclesiastical reform was the foremost object in Dunstan's policy. The unity and the greatness of England were the first objects of the statesman whom Glastonbury gave to England.

Under Eadred the unity of England was formed. On his death the newly-built fabric seemed to break in pieces. The days of the grandsons of Ælfred, like the days of his brothers, were days when brothers succeeded one another after short reigns, and died for the most part childless. When Eadred died, there was no other son of Eadward the Unconquered to succeed him; nor does there seem to have been in the more distant branches of the royal family any one likely to command the unanimous voice of the nation. For a man who, though of kingly descent, was not the son of a king to come forward as a candidate for the crown would hardly have been endured, except in the case of one who held a commanding personal position, such as was held by no man in the realm save the mighty churchman. England had therefore more than once during this age to risk the woes which are denounced against the land whose king is a child. And the realm so newly united risked the dangers not only of minority but of division. The young sons of Eadmund, passed by according to ordinary rule on the death of their father, succeeded, for want of better candidates, on the death of their uncle Eadred. The elder, Eadwig, received Wessex as his immediate kingdom; the younger, Eadgar, reigned over Northumberland and

Mercia as under-king. The division was followed by a period, short, confused, and obscure, but of the highest importance both on its constitutional and on its ecclesiastical side. The facts which stand out without doubt are that Eadwig was the enemy of Dunstan and that Eadgar was his friend; that in 957 the kingdom of England was altogether divided by the Mercians and Northumbrians declaring their under-king Eadgar full king in his own right; that in 959 the kingdom was again united by the death of Eadwig and the succession of Eadgar to the whole realm. But the causes which immediately led to these events are told with every kind of contradiction; the characters of the actors are painted in the most opposite colours. It is clear however that with the accession of Eadgar the party of the monks triumphed. It is clear also that under Eadgar's rule the land enjoyed sixteen years of unparalleled peace and of unparalleled prosperity. During his reign no word of foreign invasion was breathed, and the two or three disturbances within the island were of slight consequence. The well-known picture of the *basileus* of Britain rowed by eight vassal kings on the Dee, even if some of its details may be legendary, at least sets before us the popular conception of the dominion of Eadgar the Peaceful. On the other hand, when we turn to the personal character of the two brothers, it is dangerous to accept, without the closest examination, either the crimes which the monks lay to the charge of Eadwig or the crimes which the gleemen lay to the charge of Eadgar. At no time in our early history did England hold a higher position in the world in general. And when Old-Saxon Otto wore the crown of Rome, and West-Saxon Eadgar, in some sort his nephew, reigned over the island empire of Britain, the Saxon name had reached the highest point of its glory.

The reign of Eadgar, there can be no doubt, did much for the unity of England. By birth a king of the south, he owed his crown to the men of the north. He strictly preserved the distinct laws and customs to which the great divisions of the kingdom, now beginning to be distinguished as West-Saxon, Mercian, and Danish, were severally attached. Commerce and intercourse with foreign countries is encouraged. The ecclesiastical reform led to increased splendour in ecclesiastical buildings, and the land was covered with minsters built on a scale before unknown. The kingdom thus built up and strengthened had presently to undergo the shock of a disputed election for the crown. Again the immediate royal family contained none but minors, the two sons of Eadgar, Eadward and Æthelred. As far as we can see, Æthelred was supported by the party of the monks and Eadward by their enemies. Dunstan therefore distinctly sacrificed his party to his country when he brought about the election of Eadward, the elder of the boys, whose minority would therefore be the shorter. His short reign (975-979) was ended by his murder, done, there can be little doubt, at the bidding of his step-mother Ælthryth, the Elfrida of romance. Her young son Æthelred then entered on the saddest and most shameful reign in our annals. His time of thirty-seven years (979-1016) forms the most marked contrast to the short and vigorous reigns of the heroes who opened the century. For the first nine years of this unhappy time, Dunstan still lived; he was taken away before the fulness of evil came. The main feature of this time is the renewal of the Danish invasions, which, after some years of mere plundering incursions, take their third form, that of a distinct political conquest, the establishment of a Danish king on the throne of all England. The constitutional lesson of this time is that, limited as the powers of an English king were by law, incapable as he was of doing any important act without the consent of his Witan, the difference between a good and a bad king was something which words cannot set forth. It was for the

Witan to pass decrees; but it was for the king to put them in force; and under Æthelred nothing good ever was put in force. The unready king—that is the king without *rede* or counsel—seems to have been incapable of any settled or vigorous plan of action. He showed energy now and then in needless and fruitless enterprises; but under him the kingdom never showed an united front towards the common enemy. His only policy, the only policy of his cowardly or traitorous advisers, was the self-destroying policy of buying off the invaders with money. The invaders are met at London, at Maldon, at Exeter, with the highest valour and conduct on the part of the leaders and people of particular cities and districts; but it is always isolated cities and districts which resist. Such local efforts were naturally fruitless; the local force is either defeated by superior numbers, or, if victorious, it has, through want of concert with other parts of the kingdom, no means of following up its victory. Through a warfare like this, carried on year after year, the nation at last lost heart as well as its king. Local jealousies, hushed under the vigorous rule of earlier kings, now rose again. It is emphatically said that one shire would not help other. Under such a reign the efforts of the best men in the land were thwarted, and the places of highest power fell to the worst men. The successive advisers of Æthelred appear as a succession of traitors, who sold him and his kingdom to the enemy. The last of them, Eadric, whom Æthelred made earl of the Mercians and married to one of his many daughters, plays the chief part in the revolution which in the end placed the Dane on the English throne.

Begin-
ning of
inter-
course
with
Nor-
mandy.

The staple then of the history of this time is foreign warfare, and that mostly warfare which takes the shape of invasion of England. But this time is marked also by foreign intercourse of another kind, intercourse which may at the time have seemed of no great importance, but which helped, together with the Danish invasions, to lead the way to events greater even than the Danish conquest itself. English political intercourse with other lands had hitherto been mainly with the Franks in Germany and Gaul, and with their successors in Germany, the Saxon emperors. In the course of the tenth century, the new powers of France and Normandy had sprung up in what had been the western or Gaulish part of the Frankish dominion. The king of the French at Paris was cut off from the sea by his vassal the duke of the Normans at Rouen. While Normandy was a practically independent state, there could be hardly any dealings, in war or in peace, between England and France. But it was through its connexion with Normandy that England became entangled in the affairs of France, and the connexion between England and Normandy begins under Æthelred. England and France might doubtless in the end have become rival powers in some other way; but the way in which they actually did become rival powers was through a chain of events of which we have now reached the beginning. Two quarrels between Æthelred and the Norman duke Richard were ended by a peace and a marriage (1002) between Æthelred and Richard's daughter Emma. Here was the beginning of the causes which led to the Norman Conquest. Emma brought with her Norman followers, some of whom were trusted with commands in England. The kindred between the ruling families of the two lands which came of the marriage of Emma led to increased intercourse between Normandy and England, to Norman interference with English affairs, to the settlement of Normans in England, to the claims of Duke William and to the Norman Conquest. When Normandy and England were under a common sovereign, France became in some sort a neighbour and an enemy of England. The rivalry between Normandy and France led to a rivalry between England and France, and that

rivalry went on after France had swallowed up Normandy. Thus not only the Norman Conquest, and the internal changes which followed it, but the French wars of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and the long abiding enmity between Englishmen and Frenchmen, have their direct source in the events of the reign of Æthelred.

This last series of Danish invasions began, in the form of mere plundering incursions, in 980. In 991 a formidable invasion, Norwegian rather than Danish, and in which the famous Norwegian king Olaf Tryggvesson seems to have had a share, was marked by two opposite events, each alike characteristic of the time. Brihtnoth, the ealdorman of the East-Saxons, died with his thegns around him in the fight of Maldon, and his fall is recorded in one of the noblest of Teutonic battle-songs. Æthelred's earl, as he calls himself in the song, met the invaders with steel; but Æthelred himself had no arms but gold. The year of Brihtnoth's death was the very one in which the invaders were for the first time bought off with money. In 994 came a great joint invasion under the two kings of the north, Olaf of Norway and Swegen of Denmark. They were beaten off by the Londoners. Æthelred again bought peace; Olaf, converted to Christianity, kept the peace and vanishes from the story; but the war went on, if not with Swegen himself, at least with his Danes. After eight years of invasions, payments, brave local resistance, and inaction and treason at head quarters, came the general massacre of the Danes in England on the day of Saint Brice in 1002. This of course does not mean the slaughter of all the men of Danish descent in England, but simply the slaughter of those men of the invading host who had stayed in England, under cover of a treaty. Then came in 1003 a more terrible invasion by Swegen in person, when Exeter was betrayed to him by a Norman follower of the queen's. A valiant resistance in East-Anglia checked the invasion at the time, and Swegen himself did not appear again for some years. In the next stage, in 1006, the Danes first ravaged the inland part of Wessex. In 1010 comes the invasion of Thurkill; and the battle of Ringmere near Ipswich marks the last armed resistance. In 1013 Swegen came again. All strength and all hope was now gone; Æthelred was deposed, and took refuge in Normandy, and the Danish king was acknowledged as king—though native writers choose rather to call him tyrant—over all England.

Massacre
of Saint
Brice.

Swegen
acknow-
ledged
king.

This Danish conquest of England, taking the form of a forced election of the conqueror, is something widely different alike from mere plundering incursions and from mere local settlements. It shows that we have got into the age of great powers. The king of an established kingdom adds another crown to the one which he has already, and strives to give his conquest an outward show of legality. Swegen's conquest is in this way almost a literal foreshadowing of the more famous conquest of William. But Swegen's conquest was only for a moment; he died the next year; his Danish host chose his younger son Cnut as his successor; the English Witan voted the restoration of Æthelred. In Denmark, it must carefully be marked, Swegen was succeeded by his elder son Harold. Cnut was chosen king over England only. A Danish dynasty was to reign in England; it was not yet ruled that Denmark and England were to have a single king. The war was now renewed between Cnut and Eadmund, surnamed Ironside, one of the younger sons of Æthelred. Englishmen had again a hero at their head, and, under his guidance, the whole state of affairs was changed. In the midst of this second war, in 1016, Æthelred died. A double election took place; Cnut and Eadmund were chosen to succeed by two distinct bodies of the English Witan. Eadmund, it would seem, was chosen, at such