

moment, over the head and with the consent of his elder brother Æthelstan.¹ A series of battles followed, in which Eadmund had decidedly the upper hand, till the last fight at Assandun, that is, Ashington in Essex, was lost by the treason of Eadric. The kingdom was divided; Eadmund took the south with a formal supremacy; Cnut took the north. The division was hardly made when Eadmund died mysteriously, by the practice of Eadric, as men deemed. And now another and final election gave Cnut the crown of the whole realm.

The personal character of Cnut, his gradual change from a barbarian conqueror into a king who stood beside Ælfred in the memory of his people, makes him one of the most interesting studies in our whole history. But we have here to deal mainly with the political results of his accession. England was now brought more closely than ever into relations with other parts of the world. But those relations took a shape which was altogether new and unexpected. Cnut was a conqueror, and his establishment in England was a conquest, so far as that a foreign king made his way to the English crown at the sword's point. And, when he had worn the crown, he did not scruple to secure it by the death or banishment of such Englishmen as he thought dangerous to him, either on account of their connexion with the former royal house or on any other ground. But, when he had once made himself safe on the throne, there was nothing more of the conqueror about him. England was neither oppressed nor degraded under his rule. His government, his laws, were framed after the pattern of those of the ancient kings. He sent home his Danish army, keeping only a body of chosen guards, the famous housecarls. These were the first standing army known in England, a body of picked men, Danes, Englishmen, or brave men from any quarter. Cnut gradually displaced the Danes whom he had at first placed in high offices, and gave them English successors. He raised an Englishman, the renowned Godwine, to a place second only to kingship, with the new title of Earl of the West-Saxons.

In her foreign relations, England, under her Danish king, was in no sense a dependency of Denmark. England was the centre, Winchester was the imperial city, of a northern empire, which rivalled those of the East and the West. Cnut, it must be remembered, was chosen to the crown of England first of all, while still very young. To that crown he added the crown of Denmark, on the death or deposition of his brother Harold. He won Norway, which had revolted against his father, from its king Olaf; and he seems to have established his power over part of Sweden and other parts of the Baltic lands. But all these were acquisitions made by one who was already "King of all England;"² they were largely won by English valour, and the complaint in Denmark and elsewhere was that Cnut made his northern kingdoms subordinate to England, and preferred Englishmen rather than natives to high offices in them. At home, after the first years of his reign, his rule was one of perfect peace. In 1018 a Scottish victory at Carham secured all Lothian to the Scottish king. This was the carrying out of the work which had been begun by the Scottish annexation of Edinburgh. Whether there had been an earlier grant, or an earlier conquest, of Lothian is uncertain. Of its Scottish occupation from

¹ This is merely a probability, not an ascertained fact; but several circumstances point to such a supposition, there is nothing to contradict it, and it would explain several difficulties. See *History of the Norman Conquest*, i. 691, ed. 3.

² Up to this time the title is always "King of the English," never "King of England." Cnut uses the special style of "King of all England," "Rex totius Angliæ." This is not strictly a territorial style; still less is it the style of a conqueror. The object is to distinguish his kingship over all England from his earlier divided kingship when the land was parted between him and Eadmund.

this time there is no doubt. But in 1031 Malcolm of Scotland, and two under-kings, the famous Macbeth and one described as Jehmarc, did full homage to the King of all England. The northern king thus held his dominions in three distinct forms. In Scotland proper he was simply under the terms of the old commendation. Cumberland, whatever extent of territory comes under that name, was strictly a territorial fief. Lothian was an earldom held within the kingdom of England.

The position of Cnut, both as a man and as a king, derives a special interest from his being a convert to Christianity. His father Swegen was an apostate. He had been baptized in his childhood or youth; but he cast aside his new faith, and carried war into England as a heathen conqueror. His son Cnut was baptized in the course of his English wars, and he appears in English history as a Christian king, a devout king, a special favourite of the Church and her ministers. His laws are strong on all ecclesiastical points, and they contain—what was needful in his day, but which had not been needful, in Wessex at least, for some ages—a crowd of provisions for the suppression of heathen worship. In Denmark he appears as completing the conversion of that kingdom which had already begun. His newly born religious zeal led him, like Æthelwulf, to make the pilgrimage to Rome. His reception there by the pope, the emperor, and the Burgundian king, helped to raise the position of England and her sovereign in foreign eyes; but it had no other political result.

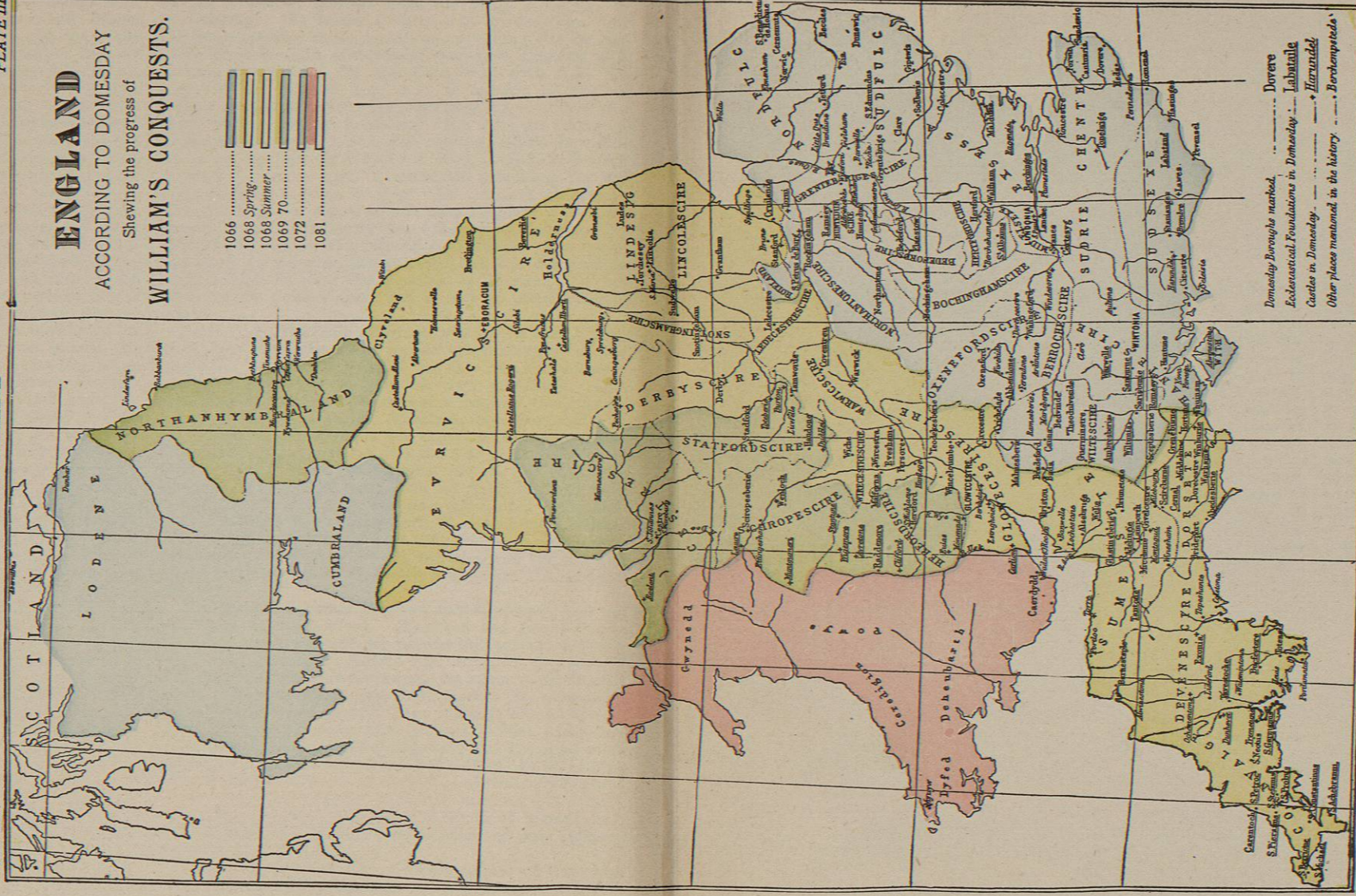
One change, the fruit of which was chiefly seen a little Cnut's later, was made by Cnut in the administration of the earls' kingdom. As far as we can see, the rule had hitherto been for each shire to have its own ealdorman. One ealdorman sometimes held several shires, and the arrangement, at any rate under Æthelred, was confused and fluctuating; under Cnut it was organized in a new shape. Four great chiefs were set over the four great divisions of the kingdom, Wessex, East-Anglia, Mercia, and Northumberland. The Danish title *Jarl* or *Earl*, hitherto used only in Northumberland, was now substituted for ealdorman. We find also smaller earls of one or more shires; but it is plain that these were subordinate to these great governors. Wessex, above all, received now for the first time, in the person of Godwine, a governor distinct from her king.

The relations between England and Normandy now get closer and more important. Æthelred had found shelter in the Norman court with his brother-in-law Duke Richard. The young Æthelings, Ælfred and Eadward, the sons of Æthelred and Emma, were brought up at the court of their uncle. But, strange to say, their mother Emma entered into a second marriage with Cnut himself, who must have been many years younger than she was. With Richard of Normandy Cnut kept unbroken peace; but Richard's more adventurous son Robert asserted the rights of his cousins and threatened—perhaps attempted—an invasion of England on their behalf. Robert presently died on his famous pilgrimage. In the same year (1035), Cnut himself died, still in the prime of life, after a reign of only eighteen years from his final election.

Such a dominion as the northern empire of Cnut was in its own nature ephemeral. Such a power can hardly endure beyond the life of its founder. The dominions of Charles the Great, geographically continuous and bound together both by Roman and by Frankish traditions, could not be kept under one ruler. Much less could the scattered empire of great islands and peninsulas which Cnut had brought under his power. Not only did his empire break in pieces, but his kingdom of England was again, for the last time, divided. Of his empire he himself had decreed

ENGLAND
 ACCORDING TO DOMESDAY
 Shewing the progress of
WILLIAM'S CONQUESTS.

- 1066
- 1068 Spring
- 1068 Summer
- 1069 70
- 1072
- 1081



Domesday Boroughs marked. ... Doreve
 Exchequer Foundations in Domesday. ... Labrante
 Castles in Domesday. ... Harwudde
 Other places mentioned in the history. ... Berkenpiedes

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the partition. He had in some sort begun it in his lifetime. His sons had been sent to reign as under-kings in Denmark and Norway. As his successor in England he named Harthacnut, his son by Emma, who at his death was under-king in Denmark. But the succession to the English crown was disputed. Godwine and the West-Saxons asserted the claims of Harthacnut, according to his father's will. Mercia and Northumberland declared for Cnut's doubtful or illegitimate son Harold. A civil war might have been looked for; but a decree of the Witan divided the kingdom between the two candidates. Harthacnut, now king of the West-Saxons, tarried in Denmark, and left his English kingdom to the care of Emma and Godwine. Now, and not under Cnut, the West-Saxon realm seemed to be dealt with as a province of Denmark. The offended subjects of Harthacnut voted the deposition of their non-resident king, and the crown of the whole realm passed to Harold. Since that day England has been an united kingdom. Its crown has often been disputed and struggled for in arms; but every claimant has been a claimant of the whole kingdom. The division of England between two kings has never been seriously proposed since the deposition of Harthacnut. The very thought of such a thing had altogether passed out of men's minds before the end of the century with which we are now dealing.

The divided reign of Harold and Harthacnut was marked by an event which is told in as many and as contradictory shapes as any event in our early history. But it is certain that Ælfred, the elder of the two Æthelings who were living in banishment in Normandy, came over to England to make an attempt on the crown. The case is an exact parallel to the coming of the two Stewart pretenders seven hundred years later. As Ælfred landed on the south coast, his immediate design must have been on the kingdom of Harthacnut; but he came, in some way or other, into the power of Harold. His Norman companions were put to cruel deaths; the Ætheling himself was blinded, and died soon after. Such dealings are quite contrary to either the English or the Norman practice of the age. It shows that the son of Cnut, unlike his father, retained the full spirit of a Scandinavian pirate. That Earl Godwine had a share in the crime was rumoured in his own day; but, as the tale is commonly told, it is absolutely impossible. If his guilt was asserted by some, it was carefully denied by others; he was tried on the charge, and was solemnly acquitted; and, in the state of our evidence on the subject, he is entitled to the benefit of that acquittal. The reign of Harold was short. On his death in 1040, Harthacnut was chosen to the whole kingdom. A son of Emma, therefore a half brother of the surviving Ætheling Eadward, he sent for that prince to his court. But Harthacnut proved as worthless and brutal as Harold, and his reign, like Harold's, was short. On his death in 1042, the English nation were thoroughly tired of Danish rule. The memory of Cnut could not outweigh the infamy of his two sons. There was still a Danish party, whose candidate was Swegen, the nephew of Cnut through his sister Estrith, a prince who afterwards ruled Denmark with consummate prudence. But the English people had made up their minds to go back to the old kingly stock of the West-Saxons. In two distinct elections the nation chose the Ætheling Eadward, an unwilling candidate, recommended by his birth. But at such a moment English and kingly birth outweighed every other consideration. It should be also remarked that Eadward, like so many other kings, was chosen over the head of a nephew, who, according to modern ideas, was the direct heir. This was another Eadward, the son of his elder brother Eadmund Ironside. But he was far away in Hungary and none thought of him.

The election of Eadward was in some sort the beginning of the Norman Conquest. The English nation had chosen Eadward, who seemed an Englishman, rather than Swegen, who seemed a foreigner. But Eadward was in truth far more of a foreigner than Swegen. Born in England, but taken to Normandy in his childhood, he was in speech and feeling far more Norman than English. His monastic virtues won him the reputation of a saint and the title of Confessor, but no man could have been less fitted to wear the crown of England in such an age. His reign falls into two parts. Elected mainly by the influence of Godwine, Eadward married his benefactor's daughter, and raised his sons to earldoms. But the greatness of the West-Saxon earls was looked on with more or less jealousy by central and northern England, or at least by the earls who ruled over them. According to the division of Cnut, Northumberland was ruled by the Danish Siward, Mercia by Leofric, seemingly a descendant of the ancient kings of Mercia. Leofric himself was, as a party leader, eminently moderate and conciliatory; but the rivalry between his house and the house of Godwine formed a marked feature in the reign.

Meanwhile the king himself filled every place that he could with Norman favourites, who plotted against English men of every district and party. Above all, the king was under the influence of the Norman Robert, a monk of Jumièges, whom he raised successively to the bishopric of London and the archbishopric of Canterbury. The influence of strangers was now at its height; so was their insolence. Against the king's foreign favourites no justice could be had. Godwine and his sons took up arms in the cause of the nation (1051). He was induced to abide by the decision of a national assembly, by which he and his sons were banished. The power of the strangers now seemed secure. William, duke of the Normans, a kinsman of Eadward through his mother, visited Eadward; and it was most likely now that Eadward made to him that promise of the succession to the crown on which William afterwards founded his claim to succeed him. It seemed as if the Norman conquest of England had been already brought about without slash or blow. The king was Norman in feeling; he was surrounded by Norman courtiers; Normans and other men of French speech held high offices and great estates. The peaceful succession of the Norman duke to the English crown seemed far from unlikely. But all this was only on the surface. It is needless to show that a king of the English had no right to bequeath his crown. The utmost that he could do was to recommend a candidate to the Witan, and their choice was, under all ordinary circumstances, confined to the royal house. William himself might doubtless see through all this; but his kindred to Eadward, the bequest of Eadward in his favour, worthless as either was in point of English law, were advantages which he well knew how to turn to his own purposes.

A peaceful conquest of this kind, had such a thing been possible, would have been an unmixed evil. When the actual Norman Conquest came, its final results were on the whole for good. But that was because the violent overthrow of our national freedom did in effect breathe a new life into the nation. It called forth the spirit of Englishmen, and step by step we won back more than we had lost. But had the Normanizing schemes of the Confessor been carried out, the ancient freedom would have been undermined rather than overthrown; there would have been less to call forth the full strength of antagonistic feelings, and England might, without knowing it, have sunk to the level of continental states. It is therefore not only in the patriotic view of the moment, but in the longest-sighted view of general history, that we set down the return of Godwine and his sons in the year after their banish-

Return
of God-
wine.

ment as one of the great events of our history. They came in arms; but the nation received them with all gladness, and the army which the king had brought together refused to fight against the deliverers. The restoration of Godwine and his sons, and the banishment of the archbishop and of a crowd of other Normans, was decreed in a national assembly which was one of the most memorable in English history. The old Teutonic constitution revived. At such a moment the Witenagemót ceased to be a mere gathering of the chief men of the realm. The nation itself came together. Such a name may fairly be given to an assembly made up of the citizens of London and of the two armies which had refused to fight against one another. This is the most conspicuous among several instances which show that, narrow as the constitution of the national assembly had become in ordinary practice, the rights of the common freemen were only dormant, and could still be made good whenever circumstances were favourable for making them good. It should be noticed also that this armed assembly of the nation took upon itself to depose an archbishop, and seemingly to nominate his successor. So to do was, there can be no doubt, fully within the powers of an English national assembly. But the breach of all ecclesiastical rule, as ecclesiastical rule was understood on the continent, was turned by Norman cunning into another count against England and her deliverers.

Adminis-
tration
of
Harold.

Godwine died the year after his return, and his place in the kingdom was taken by his son Harold. His policy was one of conciliation. The king was allowed to keep his personal favourites about him; but the Norman influence in public affairs was stopped. On the other hand, Harold cultivated the friendship of Germany, and many Lotharingian churchmen were promoted in England. The Welsh were now again formidable, having been united under a vigorous prince named Gruffydd ap Llywelyn. After some victories over other English commanders, the Britons were at last brought to more complete dependence by Harold himself, in a war in which Gruffydd was killed by his own people. Earlier than this, the Northumbrian earl Siward had overcome Macbeth, and had restored the Scottish crown to Malcolm, the heir of the former kings.

England thus, under the administration of Harold, held a high place at home and abroad. Still there were several sources of weakness, all of which the Norman knew how to make use of. When the Norman archbishop Robert was deposed and banished, his English successor Stigand was looked on at Rome as an usurper of the see. In the early years of Eadward, Roman influence had greatly grown in England, and the canonical scruple about Stigand's appointment was shared by many at home. And when at last Harold procured the acknowledgment of Stigand from Pope Benedict X., matters were only made worse; for Benedict himself was presently declared to be an usurper. It was of more importance still that Harold himself was alleged to have entered into some personal engagements with Duke William. The tale, which comes to us only from the Norman writers, is told with so much contradiction that it is impossible to get at the exact truth. The Normans gave out that Harold was sent by Eadward to announce his bequest of the crown to William, that he did homage to William, engaged to marry his daughter, and promised to promote his succession at Eadward's death and to give him immediate possession of the castle of Dover. This tale is altogether impossible; but it is very likely that Harold was shipwrecked on the shore of Ponthieu and imprisoned by its count Guy; that he was released by the interference of Duke William; that, in return for this favour, he helped him in his war with the Bretons; that he promised—though an older man than Duke William—to marry his daughter;

and that he did an act of formal homage to his intended father-in-law and temporary military commander. Here is most likely the germ of the story, a story about which the contemporary English writers are significantly silent, while the Normans improve it into such forms as suited their own purposes. It is plain that the canonical question about Stigand, and the story of Harold's oath, gave every opportunity, when the time came, to represent the English as a sacrilegious and schismatic people, and their ruler as a man faithless to his oath.

While these sources of danger were growing up abroad, a third source was growing up in England itself. The rivalry between the West-Saxon and the Mercian, between the house of Godwine and the house of Leofric, went on. The character of Leofric himself is without stain; but his son Ælfgar did not scruple to ally himself with the Welsh against England. Outlawed and restored, he held his father's earldom of Mercia till his death, when it passed to his son Eadwine. But, in the latter days of Eadward, all the rest of England was under the government of the sons of Godwine. Of these Tostig had succeeded Siward in Northumberland. He was a personal favourite of the king, and his appointment may well have been King Eadward's own act. In the last year of Eadward's reign the Northumbrians deposed Tostig, and chose as their earl Morkere, the brother of Eadwine. Rather than plunge the country into a civil war, Harold confirmed the choice of the Northumbrians. Tostig went into foreign lands to complain of his brother, and to plot against his country. Harold thus drew on himself the enmity of his brother, without winning the gratitude of the sons of Ælfgar.

Such were the threefold dangers which threatened England when Eadward died, January 5, 1066, while the Witan were assembled at Westminster for the Christmas feast. Eadward was childless, and the question of the succession must have been in men's minds during the whole of his reign. That he promised the crown to William at the time of the duke's visit is, as we have seen, very likely. But such thoughts passed away under the administration of Harold. Eadward sent for his nephew Eadward from Hungary, clearly designing him as his successor. The younger Eadward came to England and died. He left two daughters, and a son Eadgar, young and of little promise, who was at Eadward's death the only male left in the royal family. In such a strait, it was needful to look for a king beyond the royal family. Eadward on his death had recommended Harold to the choice of the electors, a recommendation which was willingly accepted. Harold was chosen and crowned, taking care to avoid any question as to the validity of the crowning rite, by having it performed, not by Stigand, but by Ealdred archbishop of York. The Northumbrians for a moment refused to acknowledge the election of the new king; but he won them over by his presence and the eloquence of his friend Wulfstan bishop of Worcester. It was most likely at the same time that he tried to win the northern earls to his side by a marriage with their sister Ealdgyth. This was a direct breach of his promise to William; and, as Ealdgyth was the widow of Gruffydd of Wales, this last fact was made a further charge against him by the Normans.

Of the lawfulness of Harold's succession, according to the English law of the time, there can be no doubt. He was nominated by the late king, regularly chosen, regularly consecrated. The Witan had always exercised a free choice within the royal house, and the same principle would justify a choice beyond the royal house, when the royal house contained no qualified candidate. Minorities had been endured after the death of Eadred and after the death of Eadgar. But then the only man in the land who held at all the same position as Harold now did was the

Banish-
ment of
Tostig.

Election
of
Harold.

churchman Dunstan. In fact the claims of Eadgar do not seem to have been put forward at the time. They begin to be heard of at a later time, when the notion of strict hereditary right was growing. When Harold is blamed at the time, it is not for disregarding the hereditary right of Eadgar, but for breaking his own personal engagement to William. Whatever was the nature of that engagement, its breach was at most a ground of complaint against Harold personally; it could give William no claim as against the people of England. According to English law, William had no shadow of claim. The crown was not hereditary but elective; and he was not elected to it. Nor had he even any hereditary claim; for he was not of the kingly stock of Cerdic. The alleged bequest of Eadward was cancelled by the later bequest in favour of Harold. The whole question was a personal question between William and Harold. A single act of homage done by Harold to William, when in William's military service could not bind Harold to refuse the crown which the nation offered him. The engagement to marry William's daughter was undoubtedly broken. To this charge we have Harold's own answer: A King of the English could not marry a foreign wife without the consent of his Witan.

Claims of
William.

William then had no claim to the crown on any showing, either of natural right or of English law. But, by artfully working together a number of points which had no real bearing on the matter, he was able to make out a plausible case in lands where English law was unknown. His kindred to Eadward, the alleged bequest of Eadward, the alleged perjury of Harold, the alleged wrong done to Archbishop Robert and the other Normans, were able to be worked into a picture which gradually won supporters to William, first in his own duchy, and then beyond its bounds. His own subjects, who at first listened but coldly, were before long stirred to zeal in his cause. Foreign princes encouraged him; to the Roman see above all it was the best of opportunities for winning increased power in England. Pope Alexander II., under the influence of his archdeacon Hildebrand, afterwards the renowned Pope Gregory VII., approved of William's claims. He was thus able to cloke his schemes under the guise of a crusade, and to attack England alike with temporal and spiritual weapons.

Wil-
liam's in-
vasion of
England.

Thus doubly armed, the Norman duke set forth on his enterprise against England. He had not a single partisan in the country; but Tostig, the banished Englishman, was indirectly doing his work. For Tostig William was too slow; he betook himself to Harold Hardrada, the famous king of Norway, and either stirred him up to an attempt on England or joined him in an attempt which he had already planned. Harold of England was thus attacked at once by two enemies, either of whom alone it might be hard to overcome. The Norwegian came first; he landed in Yorkshire, defeated Eadwine and Morkere at Fulford, and on September 24 received the submission of York. Harold of England on the morrow overthrew the Norwegian invader at Stamfordbridge. Three days later the Normans landed at Pevensey; the English king marched southward; the northern earls kept back their forces, seemingly in the hope of a division of the kingdom. On October 14, Harold, at the head of the men of Wessex, East-Anglia, and part of Mercia, met William and his host on the hill of Senlac. After a hard-fought struggle, the Normans by a stratagem made their way on to the hill; the king was wounded by an arrow and cut down by four Norman knights, and his personal following was slaughtered around him. The first step in the conquest of England was thus taken; but the work was far from being done. After the fall of Harold, William had never again to fight a pitched battle; the

land was without a leader, and therefore without union. Local resistance was often valiant; but it was only local resistance, and the land was conquered bit by bit.

On the death of Harold, the Witan in London chose Eadgar to the vacant throne. But the Mercian earls failed him, as they had failed Harold; and their treason hindered any general national resistance. Before the end of the year, the newly chosen king and a large body of the chief men of the realm found it expedient to submit to the invader. He had then subdued the shires south of London, whose forces had been utterly cut off at Senlac; he had crossed the Thames and threatened the city from the north. He was now chosen king and crowned at Westminster on Christmas day. He was thus king by the submission of the chief men, by the rite of coronation, and by the absence of any other claimant. But he was very far from having full possession of the whole kingdom. His actual authority did not go beyond the south-eastern part of the country. His dominions certainly reached from Hampshire to Norfolk. They probably took in Wiltshire, Oxfordshire, and Northamptonshire, with an outlying post in Herefordshire; but the north, the south-west, and the greater part of central England were still unsubdued.

His elec-
tion as
king.

The conquest of these still independent districts was the result of a series of local campaigns spread over about two years, from the beginning of 1068 to the beginning of 1070. In 1067 William visited Normandy, and the oppression of his lieutenants, his half-brother Odo, bishop of Bayeux and earl of Kent, and William Fitz-Osbern, earl of Hereford, stirred up revolts in Kent and in Herefordshire. The Kentish revolt took the strange form of an alliance with a foreign prince, Eustace count of Boulogne, who had been himself in William's service in his invasion. In Herefordshire the movement was more strictly national, though its chief, Eadric, surnamed the Wild, who had never submitted to William, did not disdain an alliance with his Welsh neighbours. Eadric in fact held out till a much later time; but the Kentishmen with their foreign allies were subdued before William's return. At the end of the year the king came back, and with the beginning of the next year he betook himself to the conquest of what was still unconquered. His first march was towards the west, where Exeter and the whole of western England were still independent. They were first subdued in the spring of 1068. After a revolt in the next year, after two attempts in successive years on the part of Harold's sons, western England was finally subdued in the course of 1069. Northern England, as far as the northern boundary of Yorkshire, was first conquered in the autumn of 1068. An attempt on Durham in January 1069 was defeated. York and the North generally revolted more than once. In September 1069 Sweegen of Denmark sent a great fleet to the help of the English, who were under the leadership of Eadgar, Waltheof the son of Siward, earl of Northampton and Huntingdon, and the other northern leaders. But, in the course of the winter of 1069-1070, the whole of northern and central England was finally conquered, Chester being the last point to hold out. After this time there were local revolts, but no very general resistance of any large part of the country. Early in 1070 William reviewed and dismissed his army at Salisbury. At the Easter feast of the same year, being now full king over all England, he was again solemnly crowned by legates from Rome.

A distinction must be carefully drawn between the resistance to William's arms in those districts which had never submitted to his authority and the revolts which happened after his power was fully established. The two are however divided by a very short interval of time. In the course of the summer of 1070 the fen-land was in

Progress
of the
conquest.
Plate III